

# Mapping Territories and Creating Nomadic Pathways with Multiple Literacies Theory

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*...we write not through childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p.168)*

## Part One – Introduction

**I**N THIS ARTICLE, Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) is the centre-piece, situated within a poststructural paradigm informed by Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari. We propose that in MLT literacies are processes and from investment in literacies as processes, transformations occur and becoming *Other* is effected. Becoming *Other* opens up to differences and the potential lines of flight or creativity to go beyond what is (Masny, 2009b). Also, citing the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Pinar (2004) views curriculum theory as “the creation of ‘untimely’ concepts” (p. 22). With MLT, we join Pinar’s efforts to create nomadic pathways for curriculum theorizing. Within the area of language and literacy education specifically, MLT is a complementary experiment to those being conducted by curriculum theorists such as Smitherman (2005) with chaos and complexity theory and Jacques Daignault (1992; Hwu, 2004) with Deleuze’s concepts of difference and sense. These poststructural theoretical experiments view curriculum as “a paradoxical and nomadic object, which is always transient (moving)” (Hwu, 2004, p. 183). As such, curriculum is not a static thing, but rather a dynamic event that *happens*. Curriculum is a constant becoming. MLT is a lens to study what happens with literacies, with teaching and learning in a way that dovetails with Daignault’s vision of how to “do curriculum poststructurally” (Hwu, 2004, p.199). Following a parallel nomadic pathway, MLT can be viewed as a form of curriculum theorizing within literacies education because of its connections to literacies as becoming and its foregrounding of difference. One aim of this

journal is to contribute to reconceptualizations of curriculum. In a similar manner, MLT reconceptualizes what literacies and literacies education are about in order to inform and affect classroom practice and accordingly challenge textual boundaries implied by conventional forms of literacy.

Before proceeding to the presentation of MLT, some concepts related to the Multiple Literacies Theory need to be presented for they connect to ways of becoming through reading, reading the world, and self as texts. Accordingly, the second section situates MLT epistemologically in relation to other predominant approaches to literacies theorizing and presents a literature review on children and multiple writing systems within each approach. The third section is devoted to a presentation of Multiple Literacies Theory. In the fourth section, methodology is deterritorialized and reterritorialized as rhizoanalysis. Through the lens of rhizoanalysis, vignettes are presented from a study<sup>1</sup> that focuses on how perceptions contribute to reading, reading the world and self in the process of a six-year old girl's simultaneous acquisition of multiple writing systems. With these vignettes, we aim to show that in the words of Honan et al. (2000): "...putting theory at the center of analysis ...shows how theoretical approaches radically influence what can be found in the data and how it can be found there" (p. 9). Therefore, the vignettes demonstrate how MLT functions and what it produces. The final section is open to creating potential for lines of flight in relation to curriculum theory and literacies through a lens of MLT in a Deleuzian perspective and to transforming experiences, thereby becoming *Other* through reading, reading of the world, and self: multiple literacies. MLT is about becoming and is itself in becoming.

## Part Two – Situating MLT

Our glocal world, with its political, cultural, and economic challenges, has been reconfigured as complex systems operating in non-linear ways. The characteristics of complex systems are adaptability, unpredictability, volatility, and creativity (Sumara, 2000). There is always some variability in a system. That variability cannot be fixed nor can it be predicted. Non-linear thinking has become a successful approach to understanding complex systems such as in medicine, physics, and economics. More specifically to education and literacy, Voithofer (2005) points out how various media (especially hypermedia) are brought together without a linear beginning, middle, or end. Electronic texts that "rupture linear, hierarchical presentations of textual information and narrative forms more closely approximate the nonlinear experience of learning" (p. 6). Therefore, recognizing that non-linear thinking often characterizes the spaces in which we live brings us to explore and reconfigure many concepts in education (Dufresne & Masny, 2005). This influence has extended to curriculum theorizing. Smitherman (2005), for example, has taken up specific aspects of chaos theory (from mathematics) and complexity theory (from science) to describe the unpredictable connections and creativity that arise in classrooms where "curriculum is an open system that retains its vitality through its complex relations" (p.169).

Research on literacy within a complex and non-linear thinking world has created a shift in conceptualizing literacy; the ability to use information has been added to the conventional association of reading and writing. Moreover, literacy has also come to be regarded in terms of multiplicities. We refer for instance to Multiliteracies, New Literacy Studies (NLS), New Literacies, and Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT). While many of the same words are used

across all approaches, the differences are conceptual. Conceptual differences are paradigmatically derived. In the following section, we conduct an epistemological review of these different approaches to literacies as well as a literature review on children and multiple writing systems within each approach.

#### Literature on literacies, writing and multilingual children: Situating MLT

The research literature on multilingual children and writing systems can be broadly described as following one of two contrasting models of literacies: autonomous and ideological. First, within the autonomous viewpoint, literacy is described as an “ability” or “skill” that is “acquired” and has universal appeal (Bialystok, 2007). The autonomous view of literacy is predicated on school-based literacy, devoid of social contexts promoting literacy as decontextualized. With respect to bi/multilingual children, research situated within this view often grows out of the field of second language learning and is thus informed by applied linguistics (Serrano & Howard, 2007) and psycholinguistics (Pellicer, 2004). Bi/multilingual children who are learning multiple writing systems are studied in terms of metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok, 2007) and cross-linguistic transfer (Gort, 2006). This form of research is interested in duplication of studies and aims for generalization of results. It is not uncommon for meta-analyses on writing research (Juzwik et al., 2006) to be conducted in order to develop a meta-narrative on writing research.

Second, within the ideological viewpoint, literacies are described as ‘social practices’ (Street, 2003) that are socially, culturally, and politically situated in time and place. Literacy has come to be regarded in terms of multiplicities: Multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, 2009; New London Group, 1996), New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2002; Street, 2003), and New literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2008). The main distinguishing features of NLS, for instance, view literacy as socioculturally contextualized, social practice, and embedded in ideological structures of power that make literacies value-laden. What is also important to state is that the NLS is not monolithic. They are many variations of NLS depending on the conceptual framework (socio-constructivism, critical pedagogy, etc.) (Maybin, 2007; Pegrum, 2008). Dagenais, Day, and Toohey (2006), for example, take up an NLS framework using a socio-constructivist paradigm to investigate the connections between multilingual children’s literacy practices, their diverse linguistic resources, and their identities. They show “how a multilingual child is variously constructed as ‘literate child’ in the figured worlds of elementary school French Immersion classrooms” (p. 205) as her identities are mediated through literacy practices.

Regarding Multiliteracies, Street (1999) proposes that his perspective differs from the NLS in that the concept of Multiliteracies refers to *multimodality* (e.g. visual, media, print, etc.), whereas the NLS’s “emphasis is not so much on the medium as on the practices” (p.38). Multiliteracies originated in 1996 when the New London Group published their manifesto for “pedagogy of multiliteracies” hinging on the notions of design and multimodality. Learners are seen as designers of multimodal texts who draw on visual, audio, spatial, gestural, and linguistic semiotic modes to construct and negotiate meaning. Technology – digital and media literacies – is of particular significance in multiliteracies. A pedagogy of Multiliteracies is a transformative pedagogy, influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, in which learners are members of a community of practice and empowered to become designers of social futures as workers, citizens, and persons across workplace, public, and private domains of social life, respectively.

Over a decade later, Cope and Kalantzis (2009), writing on behalf of the New London Group, revisit the Multiliteracies project and observe that although the technologies have changed dramatically, their original framework still holds in today's socio-political context where neoliberalism continues to intensify. Research studies on children learning to write in more than one language (Lotherington, Holland, Sotoudeh, & Zentena, 2008; Taylor, Bernard, Garg, & Cummins, 2008) have emphasized multimodal aspects of Multiliteracies theory. Lotherington et al.'s (2008) empirical study suggested that through the use of digital technology, multilingual writing in classrooms can support English language writing development and contribute to heritage language maintenance. In short, Multiliteracies has become a highly influential theoretical perspective in literacies research.

With regard to Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) (Masny, 2006, 2009c), it is paradigmatically distinct from both the autonomous and ideological theories of literacies described above. MLT is situated within a poststructural paradigm, drawing on the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his collaborative work with Félix Guattari. To date, with respect to multilingual children's literacies, we have found no research that uses Deleuzian concepts to look at perceptions of competing writing systems. As Masny and Cole (2007) explain, predominate Multiliteracies theories "are philosophically based in phenomenology (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), whilst MLT is based in transcendental materialism (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)" (p. 195). Masny and Cole (2007) go on to enumerate the concomitant conceptual distinctions implicated in these paradigmatic differences in terms of power, creativity, communities, otherness, and the relative importance accorded to technology-based literacies in each case. We will not reiterate these distinctions here, but will instead emphasize two key points on which MLT differs from other literacy perspectives discussed above.

Firstly, both autonomous and ideological models continue to view literacy as an endpoint, something to be learned in a progression from 'illiterate' to 'literate.' In contrast, MLT differs significantly by conceptualizing literacies as *processes*. To be clear, we are not talking about developmental processes that lead to literacy. In this case literacy is still construed as an endpoint, an outcome to be achieved. Rather, with MLT, literacies *themselves* are creative and productive processes. They produce transformations. This brings us to our second point.

Secondly, the difference between MLT and Multiliteracies is clearest when considering how each perspective takes up the concept of transformation. Multiliteracies, under the influence of Freirean critical pedagogies, tend to view transformation in terms of social change that orients towards more inclusive and democratic structures. MLT makes a distinct break from Freirean discourses of emancipation (Masny, 2005) by maintaining that how transformations will actualize cannot be predicted. Instead, MLT's conceptualization of transformation is aligned with the Deleuzian concept of untimely *becoming* as an effect of creativity and desire (Deleuze, 1990/1995).

Finally, in our efforts here to situate MLT in relation to other literacy theories, we do not want to distinguish it negatively, that is, in terms of theoretical deficiencies. Rather, it is a question of *difference*. We are interested in MLT as an alternative theory, in its productive potential, in what new thoughts it makes possible with regard to literacies, learning, and curriculum. Like Reynolds and Webber (2004) in their introduction to *Expanding Curriculum Theory: Dis/positions and Lines of Flight*, who insist that "curriculum theory should be about developing new lines of flight" (p. 4), we recognize that MLT has the potential to open different lines of flight, and we want to see where MLT might take us.

Before concluding this section, there are some literacies researchers working within a Deleuzian perspective for thinking literacies differently that are reviewed in Waterhouse (n.d.) and warrant mention here. Deleuze's Spinoza-influenced conceptualization of *affect* has been taken up by language (Dufresne, 2006) and literacies researchers to conceptualize "affective literacies" (Cole, 2005) and the resistant politics of radical youth literacy practices (Hickey-Moody & Haworth, 2009). Also, the Deleuzian-Guattarian concept of the *rhizome* has been particularly useful in literacies research both theoretically (Honan, 2003; Rowan, Knobel, Bigum, & Lankshear, 2002) and methodologically (Alvermann, 2000; Hagood, 2009). Alvermann's (2000) methodological experiments with *rhizoanalysis* led other researchers to invent different, cartographic practices for going about literacies research involving, for example, the visual arts (Hagood, 2002), dramatizations (Eakle, 2007), and literacy performances (Leander & Rowe, 2006). In addition, Leander and Rowe (2006) produced a Deleuzian conceptual glossary. They also foreground one more central Deleuzian-Guattarian theme, "unpredictable *becomings*" (p. 442), as a way of thinking about the performance of student identities.

The previous paragraph illustrates that there is interest in Deleuzian concepts with respect to the study of literacies and curriculum. However, none has been articulated in terms of MLT and its conceptual links to Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari. Moreover, in this article MLT offers a way to disrupt what counts as curriculum research by disrupting disciplinary boundaries; bringing philosophy and the social sciences into a theoretical conversation (Masny, 2009a).

### Part Three – Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT)

Multiple literacies refer to literacies as a construct (machinic assemblages: social, medical, economic, etc.). Literacies consist of words, markings, gestures, attitudes, ways of communicating, human and non-human. Accordingly, literacies constitute ways of *becoming*: becoming with the world. They involve texts in the virtual that actualize as sense emerges. They are taken up as visual, oral, written, tactile, olfactory, and in multimodal digital. Literacies constitute texts, in a broad sense (e.g., music, visual arts (painting, sculpting), physics, mathematics, and digital remixes). Texts are assemblages of events. Moreover, literacies fuse with socio-political, cultural, economic, political, gendered, and racialized contexts. It is how literacies are coded. These contexts are not static. They are fluid and transform literacies, and that produce speakers, writers, artists, digital avatars: communities. Literacies are actualized according to a particular context in time and space in which they operate. Given the nomadic tendencies of literacies; they are not wed to *a* context, but are taken up in unpredictable ways across various contexts. Reading is both intensive (disruptive) and immanent. Literacies involve constant movement in the process of becoming *Other*. There is potentiality in releasing literacy from its privileged position as the printed word by not allowing it to govern all other literacies. In this way, literacies open themselves to what is not already given. In short, literacies are about reading, reading the world, and self as texts.

#### Literacies as Processes

Literacies are not endpoints. They are processes that shape becoming. Becoming implies indeterminacy. Becoming is a product continuously producing while literacies are processes that form becoming. By placing the emphasis on how, the focus is on the nature of literacies as

processes. An important aspect of MLT is focusing on how literacies intersect in *becoming*. This is what MLT produces: becoming, that is, from continuous investments in literacies literate individuals are formed. A person is a text in continuous becoming. Reading, reading the world and through text influences the text that a person continually becomes (Dufresne & Masny, 2001).

## Reading

Reading, according to Deleuze (1969/1990), is asking how a text works and what it does or produces, not what it means. Reading is about sense. Sense is not about interpretation; sense is an event that emerges (Colebrook, 2002a). Take this example: you are at work; you are walking down the hallway. You smell coffee and look at the clock to see that it is four o'clock. The coming together of the walk down the hallway, the smell of coffee, and seeing the time disrupts (reading intensively) and brings on the thought of vacation, the thought of it's time to go home, the thought of ... (reading immanently).

Reading is intensive and immanent. To read intensively is to read disruptively. To read immanently refers to the thought of reading and it is from investment in reading that a reader is formed. To read intensively and immanently extends the power to read differently and to think differently, to go beyond what is to what could be. Sense is virtual. It is activated when notations (e.g. words, notes, ad icons, etc.) are actualized and become expressive *in situ* and in interested ways.

## Reading, Reading the World, and Self (RRWS) as Texts

Literacies as processes, that is becoming, and RRWS are intricately intertwined but distinct. Literacies are processes of becoming that draw on the virtual and deterritorializations. RRWS is an effect of an assemblage of actualized (and immanent) experiences. In this sense RRWS can be thought of as the event of becoming (not to be confused with Heath's literacy events), since "events are changes immanent to a confluence of parts or elements" and "the product of the synthesis of forces" (Stagoll in the Deleuze Dictionary, 2005, p.87) (For detailed discussion of reading, reading the world and reading self, cf. Masny, 2009c)

## Part Four – Rhizoanalysis

In this section, MLT is the theoretical lens used to examine how competing writing systems in learning literacies transform a child and becomes *Other*. The research questions are: How do reading, reading the world and self impact a multilingual child's perceptions of writing systems? Conversely, how do perceptions of writing systems contribute to reading, reading the world and self?

Moreover, methodology is being deterritorialized and reterritorialized as a rhizomatic process that does not engage in methodological considerations in a conventional way. It resists temptations to interpret and ascribe meaning; it avoids conclusions. St. Pierre (2002) identifies two specific problems with received notions of qualitative data: (1) that they "must be translated into words so that they can be accounted for and interpreted" (p. 403); and (2) that they are produced and collected, coded, categorized, analyzed, and interpreted in a specifically *linear*

fashion. In our study we find ourselves facing these same issues as we encounter what St. Pierre (2002) has called ‘transgressive data’: data that escape language and become “uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of category ... [in short] the commonplace meaning of the category, data, no longer held” (p. 404). At the same time research processes becomes rhizomatic; the “linear process is interrupted because the researcher enters this narrative in the middle” (St. Pierre, 2002, p. 404). Instead, rhizoanalysis views data as “fluid and in flux,” thus keeping the way open and working rhizomatic in-betweens to ask what connections may be happening between multiplicities.

In this article, we present the complexity of these rhizomatic linkages in the form of selected vignettes around which questions are posed in juxtaposition with the theoretical framework. Each reading of ‘data’ texts and each selection of vignettes is an event wherein sense emerges; an immanent event suggesting not what data *is*, but rather, how it might *become*. Remembering that within MLT, events “are seen as creations...selected and assessed according to their power to act and intervene” (Colebrook, 2002b, p. xlv), we ask: What might the vignettes assembled here produce?

### Participant & Activities

We present Estrella in what is to follow. She participated in the project over a two-year period in Grades 1 and 2. She attended school where French is the sole language of instruction. English is considered as a second language and is taught in Grade 4. This French language school is within a school district in Ottawa. Ottawa is the capital of Canada, and, given that Canada has two official languages, Ottawa has the status of a bilingual city meaning that federal, provincial, and municipal services are available in both languages. Forty percent of the population claim French as their mother tongue. It is important to note that French, in the predominately English province of Ontario where Ottawa is located, is considered a minority language setting.

Estrella was born in Western Canada. Her mother is Mexican and speaks Spanish while her father speaks Portuguese. At age 2, Estrella moved to Ottawa with her mother. Her mother wanted to study French in Ottawa. Meanwhile, Estrella continued to speak Spanish with her mother, English with her friends, and Portuguese with her father. When time came to register Estrella for school at age 4 (Junior Kindergarten), her mother requested permission to enroll her daughter in a French school. By law, access to minority language schools is not open to all. Rather, the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms stipulates who can attend minority language schools, that is, parents and grandparents who had attended elementary school in French. Mother opted for a French language school because the French language was closer to Spanish structurally than English. This was her way to compensate for the fact that she was unable to send Estrella to a Spanish speaking school. Given that the mother was able to speak French, she was granted permission to enroll Estrella in a French school.

Research activities took place at school and in the home and included: (1) observations of Estrella, (2) interviews with Estrella and her mother, (3) a photo session, and (4) texts produced by Estrella. The researchers video-recorded observations of Estrella during regular classroom activities – in Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science classes. In addition, her mother video-recorded Estrella engaged in various activities connected to multiple literacies and languages in the home. In both cases (at home and at school), semi-structured, recorded interviews followed each observation session during which segments of the observation video were viewed. The

interview protocol was emergent and was modified as the interview progressed in response to the video viewing.

Since this article deals with writing systems through a Deleuzean lens, the focus is on open writing systems and on the processes of multiple literacies happening along rhizomatic pathways that produce transformation and becoming *Other*. Here we present five vignettes to experiment and see what lines of flight through multiple literacies will open.

### Vignette 1

In the following vignette, does the creativity around writing systems provide potentials for rhizomatic lines of flight? The researcher (R) asked Estrella (E) how writing happens for her (see Figure 1)<sup>2</sup>:

R: As you begin your work, what do you think of when you begin to write?

E: Nothing, only with my heart.

R: You write with your heart? And then does (Interruption)

E: Because when it's a message, I know what's in my heart. Well my heart is not there (pointing to her heart). It's like everywhere. Spirit, yes it goes higher and it is the one deciding. Like, it is the one that's sad. It's like my mind that thinks in my heart; and well, my heart that it is something that beats all the time. Love is not the heart. Love is not really the heart. It is your mind that thinks, I don't know. I began to write like that and that's it.

(April 20, 2006, after an activity in Language Arts)

Reading Estrella's description of the writing process through a Deleuzean lens, could there be a sense of the 'out of body' in Estrella's literacy engagement (it is everywhere)? Could there be a virtual aspect to the heart that is everywhere, a machinic assemblage actualized at the moment of writing when the mind, situated in the heart, is the site where thinking happens? Is it her mind, heart, and spirit that write? She is not the one controlling writing (the spirit decides). Moreover, when it comes to love, love is not the heart. Could love be an affect, not a feeling? How might love be working as an affect, a power to affect and be affected, in Estrella's developing multiple literacies? Love is an affect, a power to become. Affects are becomings that spill over whoever lives through them. "Sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man ... is himself a compound of percepts and affects" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p.164). Affects are forces that deterritorialize. They are potentials to affect, 'powers to' (Colebrook, 2006). Power is conceptualized as *puissance*, the power to become. Affects have the power (*puissance*) to become. How are affects intimately tied to flows of desire in multiple literacies? It is not the mind at work in writing. The mind is a site where connections happen, but affect is the creative force in multiple literacies as processes in becoming *Other*. There is a sense of the prepersonal. Affects are virtual. They exceed Estrella. Is Estrella caught up in a flow of events – experiences, connections, love – and becoming *Other*?

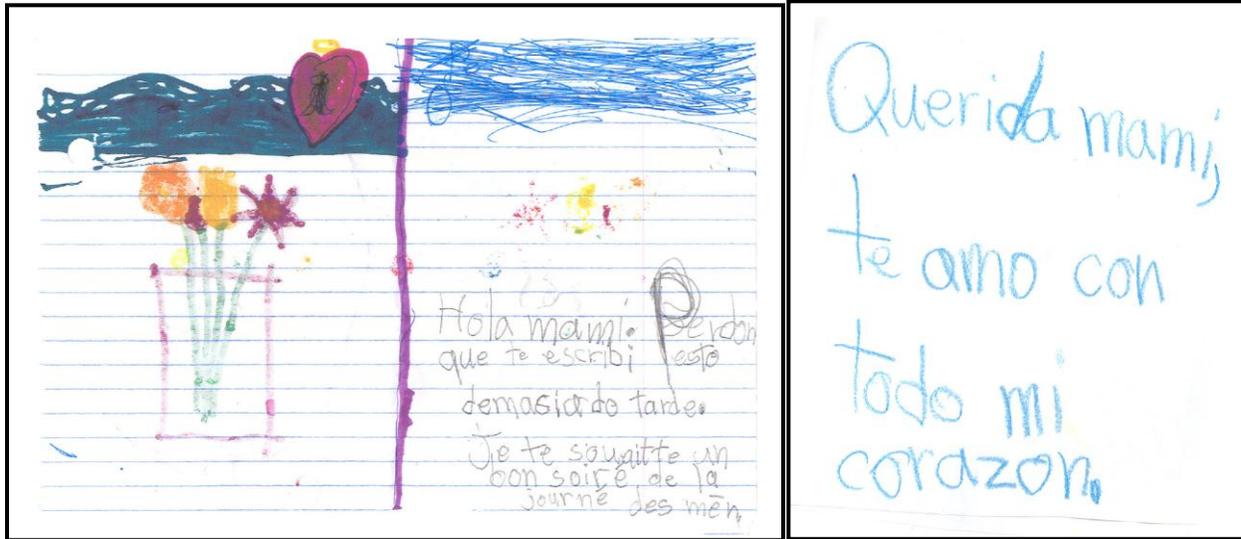


Figure 1. Estrella's Mother's Day card [Translation: Hello mommy. Pardon that my writing is a little late. I wish you a good Mother's Day evening. Dear mommy, I love you with all my heart].

## Vignette 2

With Estrella, drawing and writing are integral parts of her world. As reading, reading the world and self is occurring “in her head,” writing and drawing can be ways to become. Estrella (E) tells us:

I love to write, and I love to write because it is very amusing. It is amusing because something is going on in my head. And as my head has a lot, it already wants to write stories professionally because one day I said, “My drawings...something is missing, writing!: And I didn't know it; I was in (senior) kindergarten. And after I wanted to write, I wanted to write, and I started to write, write, write (June 8, 2006, photo session activity).

Deleuze (1991/1994) characterizes a body as a compound of affects and percepts. Estrella is a compound of affects and percepts. They are pre-personal and virtual and exist independently of her. Affects are becomings that spill over whoever lives through them. Affects are living through Estrella. While Estrella's emotions may be recognized as feelings within the dominant discourses of schooling, on another plane, they are affects in the Deleuzean sense: signaling transformations happening as “unpredictable directions for ‘becoming’” (Boler, 1997, Poststructuralism section, ¶2).

Moreover, is there a desire to write? In the exchange, she claims something is missing from her drawings: writing. Deterritorializing desire as Deleuze and Guattari (1972/1983) once proposed would suggest desire as an assemblage of events. Since literacies are actualized according to a particular context in time and space in which they operate, could desire as an assemblage have included drawings and, at another time and space, writing as part of the assemblage? Given the nomadic tendencies of literacies, they are not wed to a context but are taken up in unpredictable ways, as Estrella exclaims, “writing!” In the following vignette, how

might love be working as an affect, a power to affect and be affected, in Estrella's developing multiple literacies?

### Vignette 3

In this next vignette, Estrella's class recently returned from a school field trip to the Cordon Bleu cooking school (Figure 2). Estrella (E) talked to the researcher (R) about the process of writing the thank you card.

R: When you begin to write, as you did earlier, what do you think of when you begin to write?

E: Nothing.

R: Nothing, then how do you know what to write?

E: With my heart, because messages are written with the heart.

R: Alright, are there (interruption)

E: Some are angry messages, but most are with love. Like sometimes a child breaks a (toy) car and the mother is elsewhere and it makes 'LALAH' and the mother is angry that the child broke the car.

R: I see. It's in the heart. What else is in your heart?

E: Love.

R: And love does what?

E: It does the message.

R: It does the message.

E: I just invent the words, and I write them.

R: How do you invent them?

E: Like I invent the message. I had already written it when I was younger. But in my head I wanted Cordon, but it didn't say Cordon Bleu. Therefore I put, she told me Cordon Bleu. I had the idea of my message when I was younger. It is Cordon Bleu. Therefore, I remembered. I made a Cordon Bleu message. I invented when I was little.

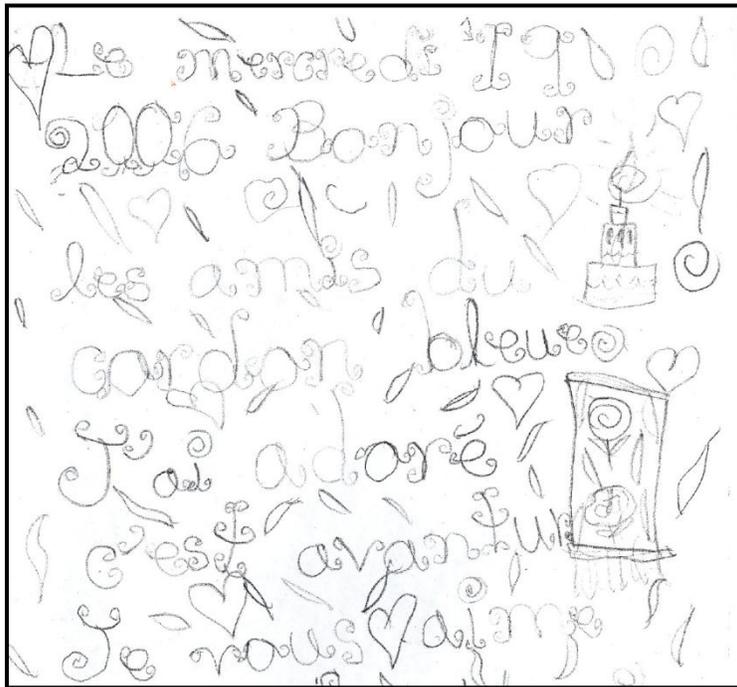
(April 20, 2006, after an activity in Language Arts)

In Masny (2009c), Estrella talks about the Cordon Bleu thank you card she put together after a field trip class visit to the culinary school. In her interview, she states that what she wrote are not letters (words); they are decorations that she does for special situations. For Estrella, writing and drawing might both be intimately connected to multiple literacies. Yet, there seems to be a distinction between them (writing and drawing). Are her decorations aesthetic figures and features of multiple literacies, ways of becoming *Other* through reading, reading the world, and self? In this nomadic situation, the "decorations" speak to the virtual pre-personal power of affect, for it offers potential for what Deleuze calls 'lines of flight' suggesting unpredictable directions for 'becoming' *Other*. The virtual potentials of affects are actualized through multiple literacies as aesthetic figures flowing from blocs of sensations – percepts and affects.

Estrella says that love does the message. Could there be a sense of the pre-personal? "I had the idea of a message." Could there be an event on a plane of immanence? Once actualized, Estrella invents words and writes. Could the invented message be situated on a pre-personal plane of immanence? The message becomes actualized *in situ*, Cordon Bleu.

Creativity and invention are productive forces at work as connections are made in untimely ways: "... not memory but fabulation. We write not with childhood memories but through blocs

of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p.168). The essence of childhood “has the power to differ, eternally, according to the relations it encounters. An essence, the power to produce different connections, is what allows for invention, creation or time in its true sense, a time of change not a time of sameness” (Colebrook, 2006, p.15). Estrella’s becoming is not limited to becoming-child; it has nothing to do with her chronological status as “child.” It has to do with becoming *Other*. It could also be the experience of many different becomings: becoming-woman, becoming-animal, and becoming chef.



*Figure 2.* Estrella’s ‘decorations’ as a thank you note to the Cordon Bleu school [Translation: Wednesday the 19<sup>th</sup> 2006. Bonjour friends of the Cordon Bleu. I adored this adventure. I love you.]

#### Vignette 4

In this next vignette, Estrella wrote a story and proceeded to color certain words (Figure 3). How are blocs of sensations at work in Estrella’s color decorations with sense emerging as the story, words, and color actualize? How are these colored words another mode of thinking, another form of knowledge, or another way of inventing and creating? In short we can ask how these colored words constitute multiple literacies.

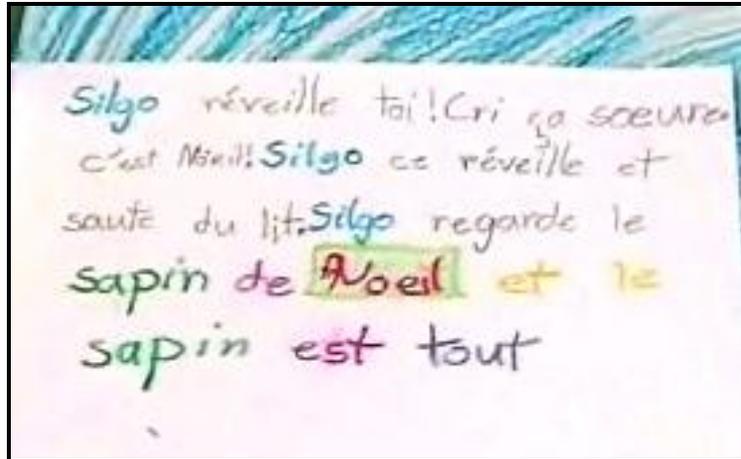


Figure 3. The colorful story of Silgo. [Translation: Silgo wake up! Cries his sister. It is Christmas! Silgo wakes up and jumps out of bed. Silgo looks at the Christmas tree and the tree is all...].

- E: But I know that if it is necessary because it is something important and someone says so I will do it. If it is not important, then I will not do it.
- R: You have chosen another color. You put all sort of colors in your story?
- E: Yes
- R: How come?
- E: It is the house that is the special part.
- R: Can you give me an example?
- E: Like when I have something special, the “n” I color it. Those that are not special I do not color them.
- R: Alright give me a word that is special.
- E: Something special is in color. Everything that you see is not special and are not in color.
- R: How do you know which? You have put words in red, words in orange.
- E: Because some were in orange, and then I used red. I like red a lot, and I use it a lot. Red is gift orange...
- R: Which color do you want?
- E: Red.
- R: And in the letter it is what color?
- E: Red, rose or magenta.
- R: Magenta?
- E: Because it is a lovely color. I have used others.
- R: And this word, gift.
- E: Orange, and then there is yellow.

Multiple literacies involve creativity and invention in the Deleuzean sense. Creativity is manifested in an event that produces new links, different assemblages, and becoming (Bonta & Protevi, 2004). The invention of colored special words by Estrella may be thought of as an actualization of creativity expressed through multiple literacies, a sense of immanence. However, if certain words are special and are colored, then what are they? Does their aesthetic quality make them art? Something else? What would Estrella say? Colors are nice; they are for nice

words in nice situations. So how do they work? What connections do they make? What kind of thinking becomes possible? What kind of becoming happens?

Flows of desire, as experiences in life that connect, and investment in multiple literacies produces untimely becoming. How is it that the thought of a cadeau (gift) is actualized as the colour orange? Why not red? How is one colour selected over another? Reviewing the video, some words are written in green (Silgo, the penguin's name), some in orange, some in red (Noël), and some in blue (tout). Colored words are special words, but what connections are there between *certain* colors for *certain* words? Machinic assemblages create the connections that bring together certain colors with certain words. Could this be about sense and the relationship between virtual and actual? *Noël* could have been any color, but it is red. It also receives some 'decorations' and is boxed in green. The accents on *Noël* are in yellow. What does this suggest about Estrella's emerging understanding of writing systems? How is it that accents are different? We can ask: Is this how Estrella expresses her becoming *Other*? And how is Estrella transformed by multiple literacies?

Recall the thank you card. Estrella stated that it was a special card for a special occasion and therefore special letters were called for. These were not words. These were not letters. These were decorations. As Deleuze (1981/2003) expressed in his book on Francis Bacon, might Estrella approach her thank you card, her story writing not as a blank page that needs to be filled up? Everything that is in her head is already on the page more or less virtually, more or less actually. As Deleuze would say, Estrella would not have to be concerned about filling out the card or the page, “but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it” (Deleuze, 1981/ 2003, p. 71). The aesthetic figures, the colored words, are already there on the page, more or less virtually, more or less actually.

### Vignette 5

The following vignette is taken from an interview with Estrella (E), following an observation where Estrella conducted a mini-lesson in which she was the teacher teaching two of her classmates Spanish (Figure 4).

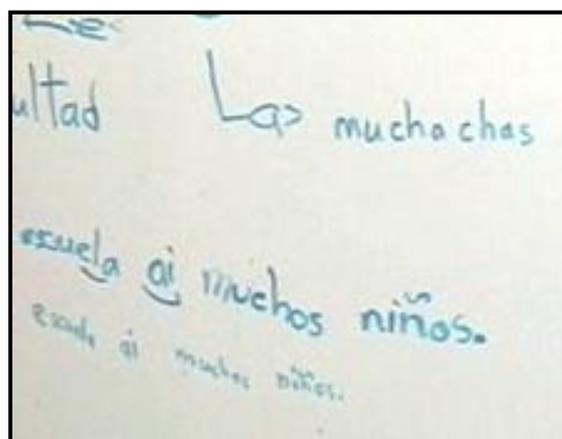


Figure 4. Estrella's mini-lesson on gendered forms in Spanish.<sup>3</sup>

R: Now tell me if there are any words in your head that are special to Spanish?

E: All words because at the end they have no *e*.

R: What do you mean?

- E: Well, it is like almost all words. Like if it is feminine, there is no need to put an *e*.
- R: Alright, then what do we put instead? Do we put anything?
- E: At that place, we do not put an *e*. Otherwise we would have to pronounce the *e*. We only put the words that finish just like in French but only without the *e*.
- R: Is there a difference between masculine and feminine in Spanish?
- E: No. There is no feminine. Only when it says *la* but no *e*. But it is a little bit more.  
There is no difference because there is no *e*, and there isn't feminine—only when it is *la* or *le*. It does not exist, only in strange words.
- R: What are strange words?
- E: There are a lot of them.
- R: Can you give me examples?
- E: Strange words because Spanish really ... that is ... Mexico, it isn't really Spanish.
- R: What makes them strange?
- E: Because in Spain, that is where Spanish is spoken but the Mexicans, that is not their language, like, for example, *chocolat*. We call it chocolate. But really, in Mexico, before they killed almost all the Mexicans, it was *chocolatle*. Therefore, it was really very different, but that isn't their language Spanish.
- R: What do you think about that you who speak Spanish?
- E: I am learning a bit the other [language]. It does not matter to me anymore that Spanish is now being used. But really I know some little words like: “*depure, pechaz*.” And also they are Mayans. Really before, it was not that name, Mexico was not Mexico.
- R: Then what was it?
- E: I can't remember. But there were other countries. Yes there was this country, and it was the same thing with Canada. I don't know exactly what happened. I know a little of Canadian history, but the Mexican one I know.

How are literacies and language territories mapping? For Estrella, French is a language territory associated with school and the writing that happens there. Spanish is a language territory associated with the home. But might these territories map over each other in interesting and unpredictable ways, as in the case of gender that exists in both languages? For Estrella, gender in French occurred at the end of a word with a certain letter *e*. There was no mention that in Spanish gender is also expressed at the end of a word although it was not with *e* as in French. Moreover, there was no connection with gender in French being also expressed by the article (*la, le*), just as in Spanish. While territories are seemingly being mapped like a cartography, is there some disruption (deterritorialized) in this multiple literacies text that draws on French *and* Spanish writing systems? Estrella speaks of strange words. What kind of reterritorializations might be produced? What kinds of perceptions are there of how competing writing systems work?

When Estrella talks about the words in the ancient language (pre-Spanish), words seemingly become invented. The episode with the Mayans and the conquistadores is taken from a book that her mother read from at home. While she may have had few actual experiences with Mayan language, can drawing on the virtual create an event where imagination and creativity flow in the invention of Mayan sounding words, a rather similar invention to when she created an Italian dessert, *mamagachi* (Masny, 2009c)? Is this resistance to the territory of the Mayan language? Of the Mexican language? Of the Spanish language?

In the second half of the vignette, when Estrella says that, “Mexico, it is not really Spanish ... It is really more different ...”, it brought a rhizomatic connection to Deleuze’s concept of difference in repetition, never a repetition of the same (Deleuze, 1968/1994). In this case, when the Spanish language is “repeated” in Mexico, it is different. It gets taken up differently. Language too is becoming as it interacts with other elements in an assemblage; in part its speakers (social machines), but also technology, politics, economics, education/language policy, and all kinds of machines that shape becoming. Is this a becoming through assemblages of reading about the Mayans, conversations with her mother, and all these experiences coming together in reading, reading the world and self?

### Part Five – Lines of Flight

In an era of glocalization, more and more children like Estrella experience multiple writing systems. Many children function in more than one language across the contexts of school, home, and communities. In these linguistically diverse settings, majority, minority, and heritage languages and literacies (English, French, and Spanish respectively in Estrella’s case) intersect in complex ways. Applying the lens of MLT on Estrella’s vignettes offers a glimpse into how learning multiple literacies involves not only an awareness of multiple writing systems, but also writing in creative ways that open potential lines of flight and unpredictable paths of becoming multiliterate and becoming *Other*. These transformations are effected in investments of reading, reading the world, and self in immanent, intensive (i.e. disruptive), and untimely ways. Under these circumstances, how can one-curriculum-fit-all? How can any one method for teaching multilingual children be established? As Daignault (1992) observes, “method is singular and definite: THE way; manner is singular but indefinite: A way. Curriculum translation is always plural: WAYS; neither definite nor indefinite” (Daignault, 1992, p. 200). Curriculum needs to be (re)invented as it happens in each pedagogical moment. Curriculum is also becoming *Other*.

What potential lines of flight do Estrella’s vignettes open with respect to transforming the teaching and learning of multiple literacies both in school and out (i.e. in the home and the community)? How might teachers and parents respond to the complexity of glocalized and multilingual contexts, to the fragmentation of boundaries, and to multiplicity in the world? The way an individual is becoming with the world constantly transforms as an effect of reading, reading the world and self.

What lines of flight might open for curriculum theory and literacies through a lens of MLT in a Deleuzian perspective? What philosophy or, rather, non-philosophy<sup>4</sup> gets woven into our lives, into how we might live? How can this study connect with curriculum theory to challenge the bounded territories of curriculum for literacy education to open different ways of becoming literate? How can this in turn disrupt what counts as effective literacy teaching practice and open different possibilities for curriculum? How can MLT, by activating Deleuzian and Deleuzian-Guattarian concepts in literacy education, contribute to new directions for the becoming of the multiplicity that is curriculum theorizing?

### Language territories and MLT

In multilingual contexts, linguistic territories are no longer fixed. Languages and literacy practices flow across contexts (home, school, community) and intermingle in texts. It is an open curricular system where various forces produce an assemblage. In Estrella’s case, French and

Spanish came together in her mini lesson, so did Spanish, Mexican, and Mayan. When they connect, some language aspects are foregrounded while others are eclipsed at different moments in time and space. Reading, reading the world and self happens intensively and on different planes. How can invisible be rendered visible? Current predominant literacies theory (e.g. New Literacy Studies) views literacies as situated social practices. Consequently, social context has tended to be underscored as a determining factor in literacies learning. MLT, by deploying Deleuze's philosophical concepts, has the effect of deterritorializing context as a determining factor and reterritorializing it in ways that point to more complex relations among language territories and literacies, and the contexts in which they are actualized. Contexts are places and spaces which create the potential for assemblage of machinic experiences. Experiences assemble and are linked to each context and *between* contexts in complex ways on various planes. This multi-layered milieu describes a space of becoming multiliterate.

### Invention, Creativity and MLT

With Deleuze and within MLT creativity is more than producing something 'original' and is not bound to only artistic pursuits. It is about life's creative power: proliferating connections and the continuous formation of different assemblages. As such, creativity is an important aspect of learning and becoming. When curriculum is theorized as an open, non-linear system, "education then becomes an experience that provides opportunities for connections" (Smitherman, 2005, p. 175). MLT and curriculum theorizing can challenge curriculum as a 'bounded' territory, as a closed system that can stifle creativity and that can affect classroom practice. That is what received notions of curriculum and literacy do. Conversely, in open systems, invention and creativity allow children to exceed the boundaries of given territories. Estrella's linguistic creation with the Mayan language affects this kind of deterritorialization. A child's creativity offers different paths to literacies, and this may suggest different interventions an adult may not have imagined. If we surpass the immediate limits of the text and go beyond the text, we may help to optimize creativity and see the links produced between the processes of becoming multiliterate and becoming *Other*. Creativity expressed in a child's text offers an entry point linked to becoming.

### Aesthetics, Affect and MLT

The aesthetic quality of writing systems connects up with affects and contributes to becoming *Other*. Affect and aesthetics come together to produce singularities that are experienced and actualized or perceived in the way Estrella's 'decorations' connect with love for special people or the coloring of special words. These are important aspects of learning multiple literacies that should not be left aside in the singular pursuit of producing 'correct' writing. Daignault highlights the tensions of the curricular paradox: "on the one hand, education transmits the cultural heritage of the past; on the other, it stimulates the youth to bring forth an improvement of present conditions" (Hwu, 2004, p.192). Although acknowledging that children need to learn to write in ways recognized as correct within dominant discourses of school-based literacies, we might also let loose pedagogical practices that encourage children to tell us more about their texts (a story, a drawing, a mathematical equation) and their affective investments in multiple literacies. In a Spinoza-Deleuzean perspective, affects are the power to disrupt, to deterritorialize. They constitute moments of becoming and how we might live.

## Desire, Rhizomatic and MLT

The role of desire in literacies curriculum, research, and theory has tended to be organized or territorialized in a particular way. Desire – that children *want* to read, to write – has been framed as a key link in the linear chain that will lead children to ‘become literate’ in school-based ways. MLT, by drawing on a specifically Deleuzian-Guattarian conceptualization of desire, seeks a line of flight, of escape from desire as want or lack. MLT accounts for the rhizomatic, pre-personal, and virtual dimensions of desire.

Desire, a machinic assemblage of an event that connects and is constructed, is central to literacies and becoming. The rhizomatic connections that happen to children through reading, reading the world and self, differ from one child to another and from adults as well (e.g. Estrella’s rhizomatic connections with Spanish, French, and Mayan). For this reason, it becomes important to understand texts produced by children in close collaboration with them, not to seek interpretations but to consider the potential of the desiring machine and the thought of the connections happening to the child while reading, reading the world, and self in drawing. What machinic assemblages in the child’s mind produce the text? How? What are the child’s perceptions and their links with different language contexts? Asking such questions is another significant way to promote curriculum theorizing that explores processes of becoming *Other* with multilingual children.

Philosophy and Deleuze’s nonphilosophy open lines of flight that shoot through our educational lives: curriculum, classrooms, and literacies. This is the important contribution recognized by Jacques Daignault (1992; Hwu, 2004) in his Deleuzian-inspired curriculum theorizing. Yet, philosophy needs nonphilosophical understandings, such as those offered by MLT, to address problems that present themselves in the world. MLT is an important theoretical development in literacies because the broader conception of text can account for aesthetic figures – blocs of percepts and affects – in ways traditional literacy theory might not (tending to privilege print-based literacies). This is particularly important given the broad range of literacies that pervade children’s worlds today including the artistic and the digital. As boundaries blur and literacies are deterritorialized and deterritorializing, desire and creativity become powerful affective forces in literacies as processes, in becoming other, in becoming literate and ultimately in how one might live.

## Notes

1. This research was funded by grants awarded to Diana Masny by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Heritage Official Languages Support Program.
2. Note that all vignettes presented are drawn from interviews that were conducted in French. Translation into English was completed by the first author. The content of figures has been similarly translated.
3. In Spanish *and* in French the articles and nouns require agreement according to gender (feminine, masculine) and number (singular, plural).
4. According to Lambert (2002), Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) would state that philosophy needs nonphilosophical understandings to comprehend it. For example, philosophical concepts such as percepts and affects are important to art. Nonphilosophy (e.g. art) is rooted in percepts and affects. Philosophical concepts apply to an understanding of art: percepts, affects, and sensation. At the same time, these concepts rooted in art as nonphilosophy create an understanding of philosophical concepts. Similarly, educational theory and literacies become sites for nonphilosophical understandings of philosophical concepts. What motivates this perspective is how one (human and nonhuman) might live (May, 2005). Reading, reading the world and self become a way to approach the question of living.

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