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(Im)plausibilities: A rhizo-textual analysis of policy texts and teachers' work

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Introduction

In this paper I argue for the use of Deleuzian theories in educational contexts. In particular, I am interested in the use of the concept of rhizomes, and the analysis of texts as rhizomes, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's work in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). I discuss the possibilities for using rhizomatics in educational contexts through an exploration of the construction of an 'apparatus of social critique' (Buchanan, 2000). I then describe a rhizomatic understanding of the relationships between teachers and policy texts, which can disrupt commonsense understandings of these relations. I provide examples from my own research (Honan, 2001) of a rhizo-textual analysis of policy texts. This rhizo-textual analysis involved an exploration of the construction of the subject position, *teacher*, within one policy text, as well as a mapping of two teachers' readings of this text. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for using Deleuzian theory in educational contexts, implications for both policy developers and educational researchers.

An Apparatus of Social Critique

Neo-liberal philosophies and new managerialist practices have infiltrated many education systems across the world during the last twenty years. The constitution of the teacher within such systems that pay more attention to outcomes, standards, and bureaucratic practices than to theories of pedagogical improvement, is that of a technicised bureaucrat, 'a routinized and trivialized deliverer of a predesigned package' (Goodson, 1997, p. 137; see also Apple & Jungck, 1990; Popkewitz, 1998; Robertson, 1996). Discourses that construct teachers as practical and atheoretical are embedded in recruitment and training programs such as the USA programme *Teach for America* (see Popkewitz, 1998), in the design and delivery of professional development programmes such as the Australian *First Steps Program* (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994), even in the legislation that authorises the devolution of funding and administrative decision-making processes to the school level (California Institute Capitol Hill Bulletin, 2001).

Within these contexts, of new managerialism, neo-capitalism, and the associated devaluing of teachers' professional work, it becomes more important than ever that

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those of us concerned with the promotion of democratic and socially just education systems continue to think differently, to mount a social critique, about the 'fundamental relationships between language and experience, pedagogy and human agency, and ethics and social responsibility' (Leach & Boler, 1998, p. 150). My particular ways of thinking differently about these relationships are informed by my readings and interpretations of Deleuzian theories, especially the approach to the relationship between texts and readers that Deleuze and Guattari name as 'rhizomatic'.

Possibly one of the key contributions made by poststructuralists to philosophical and educational thinking is the disruption of 'methodolatory' (Harding, 1987), wherein the method becomes more important than the process of inquiry itself (Commeyras *et al.*, 1996). This turning 'against Method' (Barthes, 1986, p. 319) is a thread that connects the work of many who have written about attempts to translate Deleuzian theory into some kind of methodological action. Donna Alvermann is concerned that she is 'concretizing a process' (2000, p. 125), Elizabeth Grosz suggests that certain methodologies 'may lead in directions Deleuze and Guattari may not go or even may not accept' (1994, p. 180), while St.Pierre avers that she is 'not much interested in any search for originary and correct meanings of their [Foucault and Deleuze] work' (2001, p. 150). This abandonment of the search for one true method becomes part of what Ian Buchanan has called 'Deleuzism', a term he coined in the hope of avoiding 'slavishness':

> The ambition of Deleuzism is rather to suggest the possibility of an other reading of Deleuze that would enable his work to be systematically applied (not just applauded). If this book is anti-Deleuzian, then it is so in what I take to be the spirit of Deleuze's project, namely the rejection of all forms of slavishness in favour of (liberating) creativity. My intent, in short, is to extract from Deleuze's project an apparatus of social critique built on a utopian impulse. Its insistent question is 'how does it work?' (Buchanan, 2000, p. 8)

This paper then is Deleuzist rather than Deleuzian, and is therefore written as part of an assemblage of texts, readings and interpretations that explore 'the multiplicity of the effects of [Deleuze and Guattari's] work' (St.Pierre, 2001, p. 150).

Also, this paper provides an illustration of the type of social critique that can be constructed from Deleuze's project. The rhizo-textual analysis of the relations between teachers and texts disrupts commonplace understandings about these relationships, understandings that currently inform much of the work done by policy-makers in the USA and in Australia, as they strive to homogenise teachers' work into circumscribed sets of technical practices that can be listed, described, standardised, and evaluated against sets of 'performance standards'.

A Rhizomatic Understanding of the Relations Between Teachers and Policy Texts

Ball has drawn attention to the uneven nature of analysis of teachers' relations to policy texts:

> Generally, we have failed to research, analyse and conceptualize this underlife, the 'secondary adjustments' which relate teachers to policy and to the state in different ways. We tend to begin by assuming the adjustment of teachers and context to policy but not of policy to context. There is a privileging of the policymaker's reality. (1994, p. 19)

These assumptions and privileging of the policy-makers' status are predicated on a structuralist understanding of reading as linear and monological. Such an understanding not only ignores the multiple and varied readings of texts that occur but also ignores the multidimensional nature of these readings and of the texts themselves. Understanding both texts themselves, and the readings of these texts, as rhizomatic disrupts commonplace assumptions about the relations between teachers and policy texts. In the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to their text as a rhizome and point out that:

> Any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be … A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, social sciences, and social struggles. (1987, p. 7)

This ceaselessness of the connections between rhizomes shifts attention away from the construction, inner meaning, particular reading of any text towards a new careful attendance to the multiplicity of linkages that can be mapped between any text and other texts, other readings, other assemblages of meaning. A rhizo-textual analysis of the relation between texts and readers reveals a variety of 'scrupulous and plausible misreadings' (Spivak, 1996, p. 45). There is no one correct path to take through a rhizome, no one true way of reading rhizomatic texts. Elizabeth Grosz describes this understanding of texts as rhizomatic:

> A text is not a repository of knowledges or truths, the site for storage of information … so much as a process of scattering thoughts, scrambling terms, concepts and practices, forging linkages, becoming a form of action. (1995, p. 126)

Understanding texts as rhizomes, and the relation between texts and readers as rhizomatic, provides a new way of understanding how teachers make 'secondary adjustments' to policy texts. The (im)plausibilities of diverse, contradictory readings of texts is emphasised as the rhizo-analyst carefully maps the paths of meaning, the lines of flight, that readers take to forge linkages. There is an infinite array of mappings possible: no journey through, across, in and out of a rhizome is ever able to be duplicated exactly, no matter how hard we try to trace over our mappings. There are always offshoots, tangents, ways of linking particular rhizomes with other rhizomes. There is a ceaseless flow of connections between, across, and through rhizomes. Some of these connections are made through the constitution of the subject of the reader, in this case, the construction of the subject position, *teacher*, as it is constituted, not only within the rhizome of the policy texts, but by and through the various discursive systems in which teachers are located. A rhizo-textual

analysis is not concerned with following traditional, scientifically rigorous channels of inquiry; rather it is a mapping of connections, of the fleshy tubers that are the rhizome. The mapping draws on various and often contradictory work, ideas and concepts. Such 'disparate phenomena' can be drawn together to 'connect diverse fragments of data in ways that produced new linkages and revealed discontinuities' (Alvermann, 2000, p. 118). In one rhizo-textual analysis (Honan, 2001), I explored the 'new linkages' created between one particular set of policy texts and two primary school teachers.

A Rhizo-textual Analysis

Mindful of my ambivalence about the construction of something that could be called a Method, in this section I describe some of the methodological considerations that informed my analysis. The first of these considerations was to pay attention to the 'middles' of the texts under analysis. As Alvermann explains:

> Looking for middles, rather than beginnings and endings, makes it possible to decenter key linkages and find new ones, not by combining old ones in new ways, but by remaining open to the proliferation of ruptures and discontinuities that in turn create other linkages. (2000, p. 118)

This does not mean that I am here creating a binary between the 'centre' and 'outer' of the texts. Rather, looking for middles disrupts the taken-for-granted understanding of texts as linear. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 21) use the term 'plateaus' to perform this disruption, when they say, 'a plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end'. Their book is described as a rhizome that is 'composed of plateaus' that can be read as 'starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau' (p. 22).

This searching for middles, and mapping of plateaus, allowed me to produce an account of these policy texts that focused on the connections between various discourses operating within the texts rather than the differences. The policy texts under analysis were syllabus documents that governed the teaching of English in one Australian state education system (Department of Education, Queensland (DEQ), 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994e, 1994f, 1994g). There are a number of discourses operating within these texts that deal with the teaching of English and in my analysis I described these as discursive plateaus. A plateau is 'any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 22). In this case these multiplicities are formed by various discursive patterns that are recognisable to some readers as identifying particular pedagogical approaches to the teaching of English, named in the texts as 'skills; cultural heritage; growth, developmental, process and whole language; functional linguistic and genre-based; and critical literacy' (DEQ, 1994a, p. 1). Understanding these discourses as plateaus that are connected with each other, other parts of the rhizome, and other rhizomes, brought me to the methodological question: 'what are the provisional linkages that connect the various discursive plateaus within the policy texts?' I borrowed the term 'provisional

linkages' from Elizabeth Grosz when she describes 'assemblages' as 'the provisional linkages of elements, fragments, flows, of disparate status and substance' (1994, p. 167).

These provisional linkages are not 'localizable linkages between points and positions' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21) but connections between lines:

> The rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. (p. 21)

In the texts I analysed I found that these provisional linkages made connections between what seemed to be disparate 'lines of flight', and allowed teachers to follow their own particular lines of meaning through, across and within the rhizome of the texts. While at times these paths followed through the texts seemed to be contradictory and inconsistent, the teachers always produced equally (im)plausible readings. The provisional linkages I described in my analysis were assumptions about *literacy as power*, the *child as an individual*, and the *developing child* (Honan, 2001). These assumptions produced coherent flows and movements between and across various discourses to allow (im)plausible readings.

Identifying these linkages shifted one of my methodological questions, from: 'how is the subject position *teacher* constructed within the discourses operating in the policy texts?' to: 'how does the subject position *teacher* form a provisional linkage across discursive plateaus within the policy texts?' Rather than searching for one particular construction of the teacher within the texts, I was able to make visible the connections between quite different subject positions made available to teachers as they made their ways through the texts. The following sections of this paper describe how the texts constitute teachers as both *regulated* and *effective*.

Regulated Teachers

As Cormack and Comber (1996) point out, one of the tasks of policy documents is to 'write' the teacher:

> Such documents and their associated technologies, written for and about the teacher, construct authorised versions of the curriculum subject, teacher and student. These statements officially 'write' the teacher and the student—who they should be, what they are to do and say, and when and how they must do or say it. (1996, p. 119)

The 'authorised versions' of teachers in these policy texts can appear to be, at first glance, contradictory and oppositional, in that, at one and the same time, different versions of teachers are produced. However, I argue that these different versions actually work together, within and across each other, to enable teachers to produce their own plausible positions within the texts.

The governing of individuals occurs through the development of various regulatory mechanisms (Rose, 1999), influenced in recent years by the post-Fordist relationship

between government and corporate capitalism. Susan Robertson understands that this relationship creates two 'crucial issues' within education systems:

> firstly, how to align the schooling system with the new system requirements, and secondly, how to limit the margin for manoeuvre of teachers—and therefore the potential for resistance and contestation—in an environment where teachers would seek to claim expertise and have their authority constituted. (Robertson, 1996, p. 38)

Robertson believes that regulatory mechanisms have been developed in response to these crucial issues, and that these mechanisms 'significantly increase the degree of control over teachers' (p. 39). One regulatory mechanism that I identified within the texts I analysed was the presence of departmental assumptions that it is assumed will be adopted by teachers.

The 'P-10 Queensland English Syllabus' establishes itself as a vehicle for government policy in the Foreword and the Preface (DEQ, 1994b). The Foreword is signed by the Director-General of the Queensland Education Department. In the context of curriculum development and publication of official documents, the signature does not necessarily signify authorship, but does signify authorisation. Attaching the signature of the Director-General affixes the authority of the text that follows. This authority is affirmed by the first lines of the Foreword:

> This Syllabus is a statement of curriculum policy for the Department of Education, Queensland. It describes departmental assumptions about language and language learning, expectations for students' learning in the subject called English, and the need in Australian society for fluent, informed users of English. (DEQ, 1994b)

As Ball (1994) and Rose (1999) explain, policies are usually constructed as a solution to some problem. In this case, the problem is how to transfer 'departmental assumptions' about the teaching and learning of English to those who will take on the practice of the teaching of English; that is, teachers. It is taken for granted in the texts that these 'departmental assumptions' will be taken up, will be translated into, teachers' work. The first two sections of the syllabus framework (DEQ, 1994b) are 'Assumptions about language', and 'Assumptions about language learning'. Implicit in the labelling of these sections is the idea that these assumptions, clearly laid out and explained, will be taken up by teachers. Their own assumptions about language and learning language must be subsumed by the departmental assumptions included in the texts. The compliance of teachers to this regulation (regulation of their own thinking it could be said) is unquestioned.

One of the means of solving this problem, of linking departmental and teachers' assumptions, is through the devaluing of the status of teachers as the intended audience of the texts. The focus of these texts is not teachers but students. The syllabus 'focuses on what students will learn to do and what they will learn about' (DEQ, 1994b, p. viii). This contradicts what I would read as the normative focus of any curriculum document; that is, teachers' interpretation of the policy documents into effective teaching and learning practices.

This normative focus of a policy document is visible in the following statement, where the purpose of the syllabus is to 'address the why, who, what, how and when of decisions about the nature and organisation of English curriculum development' (DEQ, 1994b, p. vii). It would seem to be taken for granted that these decisions will be made by teachers. However, this is refuted in the Foreword: 'this Syllabus provides a common reference for educators, students, parents and the wider community' (DEQ, 1994b).

So the syllabus is not only for teachers' use, but for many groups of people, who will all contribute to the decisions 'about the nature and organisation of English'. This widening of the intended audience for the syllabus allows a narrowing of teachers' claims to expertise, in that their roles as interpreters of the policy into practice are not uniquely representative of their professional status, but can be achieved by others, including 'students, parents and the wider community'.

There are two possible readings of the devaluing of teachers' expertise here. First, that the syllabus is part of the 'teacher-proof' curriculum development that Bill Green sees as a feature of the 'post-1960s period of crisis and change in English teaching' (Green, 1998, p. 178). Such development is related to Michael Apple's argument, that greater intensification of teachers' work, and greater control over curriculum development by the state, has led to the 'deskilling' of teachers (Apple, 1986). Removing the teacher from the focus of the syllabus contributes to this 'deskilling' of teachers, as the worth and value of their own curriculum development is lessened through their positioning as only one of many groups contributing to the decision-making process.

Second, the emphasis on the wider community's contributions to decision-making contributes to a popular view of education that is often expressed in the mass media; that is, everyone has the authority to speak about schooling, because everyone has once been part of the process. This view allows commentators in the popular media to make a series of judgements about schools, teaching and teachers, without needing to call on any educational credentials apart from having once been a schoolchild.

The assumptions made in this section of the policy texts operate as regulatory mechanisms in that they seek to control the assumptions made by teachers about their teaching of English. Teachers are constituted as non-professionals whose judgements about the teaching of English must be limited and governed by the syllabus content. Yet, at the same time, teachers are also constituted as effective professionals who take up various roles that prove their effectivity.

Effective Teachers

Effective teachers are 'elastic or infinitely flexible and ultimately dutiful figures who can unproblematically respond to new demands' (Cormack & Comber, 1996, p. 121). Cormack and Comber argue that, as each new curriculum document is published, the list of characteristics of effective teachers is added on to what has gone before. 'To the old "teacher musts" and "teacher shoulds", new collections of imperatives are simply added. Even when contradictory positions are posed, the text simply expands to incorporate them' (p. 121).

In the case of the Queensland texts, the expansion of the characteristics of *effective* teachers is linked to the need to reconstruct the teacher according to a post-Fordist model and the 'reconstruction of the teacher as learner-manager' (Robertson, 1996, p. 50). In these texts, teachers are given specific guidelines for completion of new management practices. Following these guidelines involves agreeing to the completion of equally lengthy and complex tasks while also complying with the regulation of the completion of these tasks. So the construction of the *effective* teacher makes possible, and is made possible by, the construction of the *regulated* teacher. In the syllabus texts (DEQ, 1994c), this expansion of tasks includes remaking the teaching of English to be about many more things than simply the teaching of literacy skills and knowledge.

The superhuman *effective* teacher is omniscient in her knowledge of each individual child in her class. This knowledge is not confined to an awareness of the child's language capabilities, but must also encompass a knowledge of how different 'equity' issues are realised in each child's characteristics, as well as their individual moral and social development (DEQ, 1994c, pp. 3–9). The need for such detailed knowledge can be traced back to the 'technological project' of pastoral pedagogy of the nineteenth century which 'required a particular, detailed and continual knowledge, not only of the general characteristics of the inner life of children, but also the specific inner world of each child to be governed' (Rose, 1999, pp. 77–78).

Also, in the texts, teachers who desire to be effective must take on certain 'professional roles'. The *effective* teacher is a professional who develops teaching expertise in English. This expertise is defined as a combination of 'individual personal qualities with professional skills' (DEQ, 1994c, p. 14). The personal qualities of a teacher are not referred to again, but are subsumed by the emphasis on professional skills, that are 'realised through teachers' roles'. These 'interdependent' roles are interpersonal, communicative, executive, and professional development (DEQ, 1994c, pp. 14–15). Interpersonal roles involve the creation of 'a supportive and trusting environment'. To assume a communicative role, teachers must 'interact constructively with members of the school community and negotiate with students' as well as 'working collaboratively with colleagues'. The executive role involves teachers using information to 'plan, implement and evaluate programs'. The professional development role is 'evident' when undertaking 'classroom research' and 'valuing of information gathered through academic research, and research in business and industry contexts' (ibid.).

It is evident in this description of roles, that *effective* teachers must be particular types of people. These people are, at one and the same time, warm and caring communicators, and rational beings who make plans based on their own and others' research. These roles emphasise Robertson's 'managerial activity' that I mentioned earlier. The naming of the abilities as 'interpersonal, communicative, executive, and professional development' is part of the managerial discourses associated with new capitalism and the post-Fordist economy (See Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996, pp. 29–30).

Implicit here is the regulating and self-regulating work that the *effective* teacher must do, and the understanding that teachers will work to achieve the status of the

effective teacher. The regulating work of the *effective* teacher is illustrated by the collection of information undertaken on behalf of the state. The *effective* teacher's omniscience also allows her to become a regulatory tool for the state, as she collects and organises the information obtained from each student on each of these issues. Such information is collected under the guise of providing a way in which to teach English more effectively; in reality, the collection of such information does nothing more than provide a way to further govern the population. The collection, organisation, and recording of such detailed information contributes to the surveillance of each and every student. Student records today do not just include basic family and background details, but must also include information about each and every one of the issues listed above. The control and maintenance of these records has moved, from the administration office in schools to the classroom, where the responsibility for such control belongs to the teacher.

The *effective* teacher is, then, one who complies with the regulation of the self and becomes involved in the regulation of others. She agrees to the expansion of her tasks to incorporate new managerial activities necessary in a postcapitalist state. To undertake these new tasks she must become omniscient in her complete knowledge of each individual child in her class. The new tasks are not only associated with the teaching of English, but also with the surveillance of the student population.

(Im)plausible Readings of Policy Texts

How then do teachers make sense of the ways in which they are positioned within these texts as both regulated and effective? Undertaking a rhizo-textual analysis allowed me to explore this question through an examination of the connections between the talk of teachers, videotapes of their classroom lessons, and interviews with departmental advisers. In this section, I focus on some excerpts from interviews I conducted with two primary school teachers, Ann and Louise.

My analysis of the work engaged in by Ann and Louise, and their reflections on this work, informed my understanding of them as *bricoleurs* (Honan, 2001; see also Hatton, 1989), who assemble meaningful practices from a variety of sources in a considered, thoughtful fashion. The *bricolage* that is assembled in this way forms the teachers' classroom practices. These practices therefore cannot be clearly identified as examples of governed practices adapted or adopted from the policy texts. The teachers use the policy texts as only one form of reference. As well, each teacher uses the policy texts in very different ways. The following analysis of the interview extracts supports my understanding of the rhizomatic nature of their uses of the policy texts as they illustrate the different paths, different lines of meaning each teacher takes within the rhizome of the texts.

For example, consider the different approaches to teaching grammar explained by Ann and Louise. First, this is Ann explaining that she does not teach grammar at all:

> E: And what about the functional grammar type things that
> Ann: I ignore grammar

E: are coming through
Ignore all grammar?
Ann: Yep
E: Don't do any of it at all?
Ann: Nope
E: So you don't do like nouns
Ann: Nope
E: or
Ann: No
E: No
Ann: No
E: Ok. So what does the
Ann: I get in trouble from everybody as well so (laughter)
E: Everybody like who? Everybody
Ann: Like everybody who's not a teacher that I tell. Like everybody who is a teacher that I tell. So that must mean that all the other teachers in the world are doing it so that's fine then
E: […]
Ann: They'll get it from all them

Rather than passively translating the emphasis on functional grammar in the policy texts, Ann takes up another position; that of the teacher who must always find space in her programme to teach the things she sees to be important. To Ann, grammar is simply not important, the students will 'get it' from other teachers, so there is no need to waste time on it in her own classroom. In this transcript I, as researcher and interviewer, take up the position of regulator as I express my astonishment at this obvious flouting of the 'rules' of the syllabus. But Ann stands firm in the face of my astonishment, even laughs at it. Ann constructs for herself a strong position as independent, and one who ultimately controls her own decisions on her classroom practice. Here, she denies the reality of the regulatory work visible in the texts, while, of course, depending on its capacity to regulate others.

In contrast, Louise constructs herself as competent expert, who struggles to teach the functional grammar approach outlined in the syllabus texts. Here, Louise explains 'how hard it is to teach functional grammar':

> Louise: Mmm. This, that's one thing that, from being an EA [educational adviser], I now realise how hard it is to teach functional grammar to kids. I suppose I've picked up a lot on the mood and modality within functional grammar because that's very up front with ads, and they now have, you know, quite a good understanding of what modality is, whether it be high or low.

To Louise, the difficulty lies with the 'teaching' rather than the approach itself. This turns the 'blame' or fault onto herself. When she was embedded in the position of 'expert' she did not see such difficulties. It is only now she 'realises how hard it is'. But rather than accepting these difficulties as her 'fault', Louise engages

in bricolage work. As competent teacher she can 'pick up' on parts of functional grammar and teach only those parts, so her students have 'quite a good understanding of what modality is'. Rather than giving up her expert status, or her position as competent teacher, Louise persists with using this pedagogy, but only parts of it, and using those parts allows her to maintain her position as competent expert.

Louise's position as competent teacher is affirmed when she talks about persisting with using functional grammar with her students, despite her difficulties:

> E: So is it important to you? I mean, if it wasn't in the syllabus, would you still be teaching it?
> Louise: Mmm.
> E: Would you still be using functional grammar?
> Louise: I think I would because I was never taught traditional grammar. I went through that, that time of, you know, in school at my age, that we were not taught any grammar. And I wouldn't say that I have a complete understanding of functional grammar …

As a competent teacher, Louise desires to give her students something that she feels she has missed out on herself. These comments also express Louise's understanding that the difficulty she has with functional grammar somehow is due to some lack of her own, not with the pedagogy or theory of the approach itself.

It is not the contradictions between these two teachers that I want to draw attention to here. It is the similarities in the ways they constitute themselves as effective teachers, and the connections to the texts of the syllabus. Both use these policy texts within a complex assemblage of meaningful practices, and this bricolage assists in the construction of them as effective and professional teachers. They take quite different paths through the rhizome of the texts, yet each construct plausible readings of the texts.

The teaching of grammar, and in particular the use of the 'functional grammar' approach derived from the work of systemic linguists such as Michael Halliday (see, for example, Halliday, 1985) was one of the focal points of the limited professional development offered to teachers around the implementation of the syllabus. The teaching of functional grammar became one of the paths that teachers could follow through the rhizome of the syllabus texts. The emphasis on this particular path, in professional development programmes, and by the departmental advisers who worked with teachers in their implementation of the syllabus, lent official status to this 'line of flight'. Teachers who used this path were then afforded some expert status, not only in their schools, but in the eyes of the advisers who acted as representatives of the department. Louise had been a departmental adviser (the EA position—educational adviser—that she mentions in the extract above), and was therefore comfortable in claiming expert status, not only in her conversations with me, but also in her relationship with her teaching colleagues. Her determination to follow this 'official' path of teaching functional grammar, despite her difficulties, is thus inextricably tied to her position as expert. In order to be seen as an effective teacher she must also be seen to be using this particular path through the rhizome of the syllabus texts.

While Ann attended these professional development sessions, and worked closely with an educational adviser on her implementation of the syllabus, she chose to ignore this official path. Her determination to avoid this path is much more than passive resistance. As Ball says, 'the crude and over-used term "resistance" is a poor substitute here, which allows for both rampant over-claims and dismissive under-claims to be made about the way policy problems are solved in context' (Ball, 1994, p. 20). In my analysis of the texts of the syllabus and the ways in which teachers talked about their uses of these texts, I did not want to engage in a discussion of teachers' resistance to the introduction of mandated policies. As Edwards says:

> Standard management texts invariably treat resistance to change as a fault or opposition to be overcome by the zealous reformer … Few educational theorists have attempted to examine teacher resistance in any light, let alone to uncover the sense behind the resistance, to discover if it possesses any altruistic or moral purpose; whether it is agentic or reactive. (2000, p. 2)

My understanding of the particular agentic choices made by Ann in the selection of paths to follow through the rhizome of the texts depends on the fluidity of power relations, and Deleuze's description of power as 'an affect':

> An exercise of power shows up as an affect, since force defines itself by its very power to affect other forces (to which it is related) and to be affected by other forces. To incite, provoke and produce (or any term drawn from analogous lists) constitutes active affects, while to be incited or provoked, to be induced to produce, to have a 'useful' effect, constitutes reactive affects. The latter are not simply the 'repercussion' or 'passive side' of the former but are rather 'the irreducible encounter' between the two, especially if we believe that the force affected has a certain capacity for resistance. (Deleuze, 1988, p. 71)

The relationship between teachers and policy texts forms this 'irreducible encounter' between two power(full) forces. This exploration of the power relations between the teachers and texts affords agentic status to teachers rather than the power(less), passive resister status that is so often taken for granted in discussions about teachers' uses of policy texts.

This rhizo-textual analysis and its constitution of teachers as agentic bricoleurs has implications for the development and implementation of educational policies and for future research into the relationships between teachers and policy texts.

Creating New Circles of Convergence

I am deeply committed to the recognition of teachers as professionals who engage in rigorous theoretical work as they create assemblages of meaningful practices to be used in their classrooms. This recognition is currently lacking in the development of policy texts that attempt to narrow and regulate teachers' work while at the same

time constituting them as technical managers of student outcomes. The development of such curriculum packages denies the particular complexities of teachers' work, complexities that become visible during the undertaking of a rhizo-textual analysis of the relations between teachers and policy texts. Teachers will always continue to engage in the bricolage work that I have described. They will always take from various sources what has most meaning for them, meaning derived from their theoretical understandings of teaching and learning, as well as from their professional understandings of the particular needs of the group of students they are teaching at any particular time. While policy documents can provide valuable sources for the creation of assemblages of practices, they will never become the only source.

Understanding texts as rhizomatic contributes to a shift in the understanding of the relations between teachers and policy texts. Texts can never be read as linear, and readers will never take the only official path through the rhizome intended by the writers of these texts. The relationship between text and reader is not one-dimensional, nor unidirectional. As Deleuze and Guattari say:

> Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways: in this sense, the burrow is an animal rhizome, and sometimes maintains a clear distinction between the line of flight as passageway and storage or living strata (cf. the muskrat). (1987, p. 12)

The selection of a possible beginning within the rhizome affects the trails travelled. Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of a burrow to explain the multiplicity of openings into a rhizome: an animal using such a burrow can enter at any place and exit at any other. Entering into the burrow at any one particular place sets the animal onto one particular journey. Although that trail may then cross over, intersect, conjoin with other trails in myriad possible ways, it is the entryway that sets the beginning of the journey. The selection of each entryway is made by each particular animal (or reader). It cannot be predetermined, or preselected for the reader by the writer of any text. If policy developers could grasp this understanding of texts as rhizomatic, then it would become necessary to construct different kinds of texts as policy documents—texts that allowed for the selection of a variety of entrances, that took for granted that a variety of paths will be taken and that each path will produce plausible readings. In the context of the teaching of English, I would see such policy texts as including a theoretical and historical discussion of a variety of teaching approaches that could be used in schools, and a variety of models that could be drawn on by teachers as they construct their own assemblage of practices. These models would be presented as the outcomes of educational research involving academics and teachers as reflexive and professional co-researchers.

In this paper I have provided one illustration of the use of Deleuzian theories in educational contexts. I am not interested in providing methodological guidelines that would therefore establish some kinds of dichotomous boundaries between groups of educational researchers interested in Deleuze's work. Instead I remember Elizabeth St.Pierre's words: ' "your" Foucault or Deleuze cannot be "my" Foucault

or Deleuze, for they have inevitably entered into our very different assemblages' (2001, p. 150). I am much more interested in exploring the diverse possibilities that could result from groups of educational researchers coming together to construct an 'apparatus of social critique' from the work of Deleuze and Guattari. I would envisage such groups becoming themselves, 'circles of convergence' while at the same time creating new circles of convergence around and within the rhizome of Deleuzian philosophy:

> Follow the plants: you start by delimiting a first line consisting of circles of convergence around successive singularities; then you see whether inside that line new circles of convergence establish themselves, with new points located outside the limits and in other directions. Write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization, extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 11)

I hope that this paper has provided some illustrations of the new thinking about teachers and texts that can occur when such circles of convergence follow lines of flight that link educational practices, teachers' work, policy texts, with the theories of Deleuze and Guattari.

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