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# Rereading “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies”: Bodies, Texts, and Emergence

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## Abstract

In this article, we explore our concern with the way youth identities and literacy research and practices are framed through a dominant conceptual paradigm in new literacy studies, namely, as articulated in the 1996 New London Group’s “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures.” More than any other text, “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” streams powerfully through doctoral programs, edited volumes, books, journal reviews, and calls for conference papers, as the central manifesto of the new literacies movement. In what follows, we draw heavily from the work of Deleuze and Guattari to take issue with the New London Group’s disciplined rationalization of youth engagement in literacies. We organize our critical exploration of “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” around Lee, a 10-year-old boy we follow through one day as he engages in reading and playing with text from Japanese manga. Our goal with this rereading is to reassert the sensations and movements of the body in the moment-by-moment unfolding or emergence of activity. This nonrepresentational approach describes literacy-related activity not as projected toward some textual end point but as living its life in the ongoing present, forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways. Such activity is saturated with affect and emotion; it creates and is fed by an ongoing series of affective intensities that are different from the rational control of meanings and forms. It helps us to keep the distinction between description and prescription sharp and to begin imagining what else might be going on.

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In this article, we explore our concern with the way youth identities and literacy research and practices are framed through a dominant conceptual paradigm in new literacy studies, namely, as articulated in the 1996 New London Group's "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures." More than any other document, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" streams powerfully through doctoral programs, edited volumes, books, journal reviews, and calls for conference papers, as the central manifesto of the new literacies movement. In what follows, we draw heavily from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and their major North American interpreter, Brian Massumi, to take issue with the New London Group's disciplined rationalization of youth engagement in literacies. We organize our critical exploration of "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" around Lee, a 10-year-old boy we follow through one day as he engages in reading and playing with Japanese manga. We work from this example because it does not privilege new technologies and therefore allows us to assert that questions arising in the context of new literacies are not simply a function of changing technological times. We also note that in some ways, Lee is precisely the child that "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" sought to address—a child heavily invested in practices, consumption, and representations from global media; a Japanese American child with uneasy local identifications; and a child who was seen by his teachers as failing within the framing of literacy in his elementary school.

"A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" presented a powerful redefinition of texts and practices, moving the field from "literacy" to "literacies," through recognizing multiple ways of communicating and making meaning, including such modes as visual, audio, spatial, behavioral, and gestural (New London Group, 1996, p. 64; hereafter, all references to "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," New London Group, New London, and NLG are to New London Group, 1996). They argued for the critical importance of moving from a perspective on literacy as passive consumption of texts to understanding and enacting literacy practices. This involved youth actively recognizing and using the "available resources" of multiple modalities as dynamic representational materials and tools for "designing" and then critically "redesigning" their identities, opportunities, and futures as global citizens of an increasingly connected yet diverse world. This vision was important for legitimating new literacy practices in pedagogy and research, particularly with the rise of digital technologies that provided rapidly expanding ways for youth to produce multimodal texts.

Although we acknowledge our own professional and intellectual debt to "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" and recognize that the New London Group had no control over the many ways their work has been used, this article reflects our concern with the limitations both of the original document and with how its assumptions have been taken up in literacy research and pedagogy. Our critique proceeds along two tracks. The first is

the characterization in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” of youth literacy practices as purposeful, rational design. As we argue, this vision of practice involves a domestication that subtracts movement, indeterminacy, and emergent potential from the picture. Drawing heavily from systemic functional linguistics, in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” identities and futures were understood as essentially the same as texts, all susceptible to being designed and redesigned as projects under the rational control of students and teachers. The meanings and values of present and future identities, like texts, could be read off of their expansions across new modalities and ways of being in the world. For texts, a grammatical calculation of the organization and evolving systems of meanings structured the New London Group’s vision concerning the movement from print texts to multimodal texts. Text was conceptualized to include any artifact of production broadly conceived. This included the body-as-text (e.g., in “spatial,” “behavioral,” and “gestural” modalities). The human body was treated as a sign system and sign-generating system that expands our ways of writing and reading the world. For the New London Group, the nature of creating things, bodies, and identities as artifacts or products was organized through design grammars. Central to our first concern is that the interest of the New London Group was not the *difference* between bodies and signs but instead expanding and smoothing out grammars in the service of comprehending “the plurality of texts that circulate” in “increasingly globalized societies” (p. 61).

This domestication, smoothing over, or overwriting of indeterminacy is closely related to our second concern, a critique of what has been done with “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.” Although the New London Group described the original document as a pedagogy, it has been used to reframe understandings of the nature of literacy, literacy practices, and youth as literacy users in ways that not only affected curriculum and pedagogy, but have also been highly influential in new literacies research. Although the original document is often cited as an inspiration for ideas to be tested (e.g., Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003), there is also a great deal of slippage toward taking the work as empirical truth telling that describes characteristics of new literacy classrooms or practices in other sites (e.g., Kist, 2000; Rogers, Winters, LaMonde, & Perry, 2010), describes identity–text configurations that exist in the world (McGinnis, Goodstein-Stolzenberg, & Saliani, 2007), provides a means of claiming how students relate to multimodal texts (Hassett & Curwood, 2009) and defines qualities of optimal multiliteracy classrooms with which to assess teacher education courses (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000). These examples are not listed as exceptional; rather, they suggest only the frequent slippages through which this pedagogic prescription, in use, becomes positioned as empirical evidence and/or as received truth—an established “framework” that precedes and concludes any understanding of multiliteracies.

This unmarked collapsing of pedagogy and research has limited our awareness of the rationalized and interventionist assertions that underpin “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.” In “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,” and in its subsequent use by many researchers and teachers, the prescriptive shaping of youth as designed by teachers to become designers of an imagined social future has been collapsed with a description of youth read through text as designers. In our example, Lee is engaged in out-of-school

practices, which at first glance may make it seem like a poor example for discussing a document that was meant as pedagogic. However, being able to see Lee's practices in an out-of-school setting both allowed us to see things that might have been harder to recognize in a school setting and allowed us to wonder what is being missed when our understandings of literate practices function as too determining an analytic frame.

Central to our move to expand the analytic frame is Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) criticism of representationalism, which they associate with causal explanations, "tracing and reproduction," and describing de facto states and a priori, often overcoded structures (p. 12). Representational readings position us as researchers outside of Lee's focal literacy activity, as simply reading Lee and his activities as sets of signs that may be coordinated via expanded "grammars" to convey meaning. We follow Deleuze and Guattari (1987) in search of *nonrepresentational emergence*, which they associate with the "rhizome," an image they appropriated from bulb plants that have a root system—the rhizome—that spreads out endlessly, filling in available spaces and sending out new shoots that can connect to any other point on the rhizome. Rhizomes are, in other words, in a state of constant, unpredictable emergence. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call for what they call a rhizomatic analysis or rhizoanalysis, in which life is understood as emergent, having no natural directions of growth or boundaries or barriers. Like all rhizoanalyses, this article is intended to be an act of experimentation, to foster unpredictable connections in the present for the researcher or the reader, and to run counter to the expectation that we should be seeking to represent what actually happened or to locate causality in the subject or the event.

Equally important to our analysis is Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of "assemblage." An assemblage, simply defined, is the collection of things that happen to be present in any given context. These things have no necessary relation to one another, and they lack organization, yet their happenstance coming together in the assemblage produces any number of possible effects on the elements in the assemblage. In our description of Lee's day, texts that are already present and that are produced within the assemblage include, among others, hand gestures, spoken lines of dialogue, *Naruto* cards, performed scenes, volumes of *InuYasha*, the Amazon.com website, television programs, and hand-drawn images of weapons. The important shift is what texts are understood as doing; from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, texts are not "about" the world; rather, they are participants in the world. Texts are artifacts of literacy practice, but do not describe practice itself. What emerges is the production of desire in which Lee does not aim to produce texts but to use them, to move with and through them, in the production of intensity.

In the next section of this article, we provide a description of Lee's day drawn from Boldt's observation notes. This is followed by our analysis of "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" as it would apply to interpreting the description of Lee's day. In this section, we establish our critique of this representational analysis to prepare the ground for the nonrepresentational reading that follows. Our goal with the nonrepresentational rereading is to reassert the sensations and movements of the body in the moment-by-moment unfolding or emergence of activity. We look at Lee's engagement in activities

that involve text not primarily as efforts toward generating signs or meanings, but rather as generating intensity and the excitement of emergence. This nonrepresentational approach describes literacy activity as not projected toward some textual end point, but as living its life in the ongoing present, forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways. Such activity is saturated with affect and emotion; it creates and is fed by an ongoing series of affective intensities that are different from the rational control of meanings and forms. In our conclusion, we consider what this rereading offers to us and literacy researchers and educators.

Our approach to the following description of activity is to offer what we might term a *strategic sketch*. Although, for concerns of validity, we could have presented the data with thick description, or we could have engaged in other validating and ethnographic practices to support our interpretation, such practices would have been contrary to our own purposes here. We offer the strategic sketch as an invitation to an alternate means of experiencing data—to think and feel within the possibilities of the data and not “over” them toward conclusion.

## Lee Doing and Feeling Things With Manga

One fall Sunday, 10-year-old Lee spent 12 hours deeply engaged in reading and playing with the English translation of two Japanese graphic novel (manga) series, *InuYasha* and *Naruto*. These are both fantasy series rich with bawdy humor, epic battles, sexual intrigue, and family rivalry. First on his own and later with his friend Hunter, Lee spent the day engaged in many kinds of reading and play activities related to the two series.

Lee got up at 8:00 a.m., came into the living room of his home, settled into a chair and immediately began reading *InuYasha*.<sup>1</sup> After about 30 minutes, he put the book down and went to his bedroom to retrieve a headband and several plastic toy daggers from his costume play collection of *Naruto* toys. Lee returned to his chair, put the headband on, arranged the daggers carefully around him, and went back to reading. As he read, he seemed unconscious of the fact that he often touched or adjusted his headband and touched, held, or rearranged the knives. Sometimes while reading or looking up from his reading, he would practice hand gestures or looks, or verbalize sound effects, words, or phrases that were in the text. Sometimes he leaped out of his chair to try a particular pose or move, and then sank back into the chair to continue reading.

As the morning wore on, Lee began punctuating his reading with short turns (lasting between 5 and 30 minutes) at other activities. He watched bits of various cartoons on television, sorted through his *Naruto* trading cards, and played a *Naruto* video game. He went to the kitchen for food, which he brought back into the living room and ate while reading or watching television. He checked the on-screen TV guide and saw that the anime versions of neither mangas would be on television that day. He went online to look on Amazon and eBay for *InuYasha* toy weapons and costume accessories and searched the local library's web catalog to see what other *InuYasha* books or anime DVDs were available.

At 2:00 p.m., Hunter arrived. Lee and Hunter's ongoing friendship included regularly engaging in fantasy play, drawing sessions, costume creation, and discussion organized around their shared love of manga. Lee immediately showed Hunter the *InuYasha* books, and Hunter began reading the first in the series. After about 40 minutes, the boys equipped themselves with toy swords, knives, and Lee's collection of *Naruto* headbands and began playing their versions of scenes and themes from both series.

Throughout the afternoon and evening, Lee and Hunter moved freely among multiple spaces and activities. For example, at one point they carried their books, costume accessories, and weapons outdoors and sat reading in a porch swing. With no spoken planning, Lee stood up, grabbed a sword, and began swinging it at Hunter. Hunter dropped his book and picked up a sword, and for the next several minutes the battle moved between the porch and the front yard, with the porch steps offering a vantage point from which to make leaping lunges at one another. Just as suddenly as it began, Hunter sat down and started narrating a favorite scene, and then picked up a book and read for a few minutes while Lee continued swinging a sword and talking to Hunter and to himself. A few minutes later, Hunter leaped up and began fighting again. After an energetic 2-minute play fight, Lee went in the house, rummaged in the refrigerator, and then went to the basement to search for more toy weapons.

Later, they went online to look at and discuss fan sites. They spent 45 minutes referencing the manga books and drawing complicated scenes and images of weapons and characters. They discussed and reordered their collections of *Naruto* cards. At dinnertime, Lee and Hunter moved to the dining room table to eat pizza and read as they ate. Toward the end of the evening, Lee's father joined the boys at the dining room table and began reading the first *InuYasha* book, and they had a discussion about the differences between the television show, which Lee's father regularly watched, and the books. When Hunter's mother came at 8:00 p.m. to pick him up, she found Hunter, Lee, and Lee's father sitting around the dining room table, completely absorbed in different volumes of *InuYasha*.<sup>2</sup>

Lee's movement among the various activities of reading, play, drawing, conversation, and all the other parts of this engagement appeared to be quite fluid and in response to the rise and fall of needs and desires that he did not, for the most part, articulate but rather enacted. The boundaries between play and reading and between physically active and more passive activities were not maintained. Spontaneous movement characterized the entire event and related to the intense pleasure that Lee felt throughout the day. At times, Lee did articulate his feelings, saying in reference to *InuYasha*, "I love this so much" or "I don't know why I love this so much, but I do."

## Rereading "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies"

How do we look at this episode of practice? Where do we look—where do we address our attention, our gaze? It is important for our argument to assert that it matters not only where we look but also *when we look where*. Drawing from "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," we find that the first look is at texts and their associated modalities.

This privileging of texts organizes the New London Group's prospective vision of literacy practice and identities in the making. As we describe, privileging texts as the final outcome and purpose of literacy practice through their language of "available designs" and "the redesigned" leads the New London Group to an interpretation of practice as primarily driven by a rational orientation toward the future; the design of texts to achieve already-known goals is projected onto students as the trajectory of their activities. Texts are read over the practice and are also the outcome of practice. Furthermore, the identities and futures of students are constituted in much the same way as are their texts—"designed" as future-leaning projects, under the rational control of students and teachers. In what follows, we organize our critique of these framings in "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" into three categories: (a) text and bodies; (b) change, design, and identity; and (c) temporality.

### *Bodies and Texts*

Our analysis of the New London perspective begins with what stands out to us as the most salient feature of Lee's day alone and later with Hunter: their bodies in persistent and largely unpremeditated motion. In "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," youth practices are understood as discursive self-fashioning, the design of one's present and future. The document voices an urgent desire to recruit students' already-existing interests in the world toward the goal of understanding how texts—signs and symbols—work to structure the meanings, purposes, and possibilities present in diverse social contexts. Such an understanding allows for what New London describes as a "critical framing" of what is and what could be (pp. 86-87). Critical framing opens toward "Transformed Practice in which students transfer and re-create Designs of meaning from one context to another" (p. 83), with the goal of affording students greater access to symbolic capital along with an understanding of and respect for plurality and difference that does not require them to abandon their own identifications (p. 72). This is to be accomplished through helping students to develop a "flexible tool kit for working on semiotic activities" (p. 77), a "metalanguage for teacher and student use that describes meaning in various realms" (p. 77). The focus then is on developing the ability to understand how various texts draw on available discourses and point to preferred meanings.

Implicit (or not so implicit) in "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" is a future orientation comprising a goal directedness we would read in Lee and Hunter's engagements, a kind of planning and intentionality in their use of the various texts, and a sense of connection among where they are, where they are going, and its representation. Lee and Hunter are read through this document as at least potentially agentic designers of their social futures, gaining admission to particular communities and opportunities through their development of insiders' skills and knowledges.

Although we do not deny that part of what is produced through the boys' engagements may well be more expert capabilities, we are interested in what else is happening. Ignored in this characterization is that those things in Lee and Hunter's activity



that suggested script-like, purposeful, or rule-governed practices were in constant interaction with actions that were spontaneous and improvisational, produced through an emergent moment-by-moment *unfolding* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Lee and Hunter were energetic and engaged as well as ambivalent, at cross-purposes to each other and to themselves. It is only post hoc that we can press ambivalence, unawareness, randomness, spontaneity, improvisation, and contradiction out of practice; we rationalize practice and create intentions by working backward from our determined end points, including privileged textual outcomes.

If we begin with the body rather than with texts or design, our attention turns elsewhere. Drawing from Massumi (2002), who in turn draws from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), we conceptualize the body as always in relation to an ever-changing environment. This body is both material and incorporeal. Materially, we move within time and space as bodies. As bodies, we perceive and register, consciously or unconsciously, some of the infinite patterns and variations in our environment. It is in the body that we locate the affective sensations of those registrations that are available to our consciousness, often making meaning of them by giving them form and significance as emotion, physical sensation, response, or energy.

Although we say that we are located in our bodies, the limit of the body is not at the boundary of the skin. Rather, the body is always an assemblage, “the-body-and-.” If we begin with Lee-as-body rather than with either Lee-as-text or *InuYasha*-as-text, we notice that even Lee’s solitary reading experience is embodied in particular yet constantly changing ways. His experience of the story is accompanied by his experience of a comfortable reading chair in his living room on a Sunday morning. Environment, objects, body, internal states, story world, and time are coexperienced. In other words, we can say that Lee’s body is forever changing and emerging anew through its constant, responsive interaction with the assemblage of time, place, material objects, and the worlds of manga.

Such extensions and relations of the body become all the more apparent when Lee engages his body in response to reading manga in that moment, in that environment, as he enacts some of the affective flow of energies: Lee feels or perceives and touches his headband. Perhaps he unconsciously registers the sounds of a car horn from the street outside as he is rearranging his toy knives. He jumps up from his chair, jabs a toy dagger at an imagined enemy. Those movements and their accompanying sensations, emotions, and results are added to the mix and Lee is, in some insignificant or significant way, different than he was before. Even this small sampling of activity makes evident how Lee’s experience of the world around him is enacted through his body; text—in this case, manga—joins the flow or movement of multiple sensations and experiences as he sits, reads, performs, later searches the Internet, looks at trading cards, and engages in sword play. In the parlance of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Lee is, in a place-, time-, and movement/activity-specific way, becoming-manga.

Because the body is in constant movement in an environment that is itself always in motion, the potential for variation is almost infinite. The body is always indeterminate, in an immediate, unfolding relation to its own potential to vary; this is what

Deleuze and Guattari name as “emergence” (as cited in Massumi, 2002, pp. 4-5). That is, for humans the body is the site that experiences and gives (or doesn’t give) expression to the energies and potentials of the present that are constantly generated as the always-emerging body interacts with the always-emerging environment. Understanding the body in constant movement within an emergent environment shifts our view dramatically. Now, as Massumi (2002) argues, it is sameness that requires explanation, rather than change.

### *Change, Design, and Identity*

For Massumi, as for Deleuze and Guattari, change is the constant, normal state of things, as bodies, objects, events, institutions, and nations move in and out of ever-changing assemblages. The perspective on change or innovation in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” is quite different, drawing on Fairclough’s (1992, 1995) work in which social change is enacted in discursive change through a hegemonic model of discursive practice, where “existing configurations” are “disarticulated” and “new configurations” are “articulated” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 223). Fairclough’s theory of discursive hegemony draws from Gramsci’s (1971) analysis of Western capitalism and from Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) expression of hegemony and articulation. Discursive change is identified with conflicts and modifications around language conventions as a key site for the reworking of social conventions. Discourse conventions change as texts and “orders of discourse” or structured sets of conventions associated with particular semiotic activities enter into relations with other orders of discourse and texts (New London Group, 1996, p. 24); drawing on Bakhtin (1981, 1986) and Kristeva (1986), the New London Group positions intertextuality and the production of hybrid identities as the key forms of imagined discursive change:

The inherent intertextuality and therefore historicity of text production and interpretation builds creativity in as an option. Change involves forms of transgression, crossing boundaries, such as putting together existing conventions in new combinations, or drawing upon conventions in situations which usually preclude them. (p. 96)

This “built-in” creativity concerning conventions, created through discourse in practice, is at the heart of the construct of available designs (conventions, grammars), Designing and the redesigned in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.” Processes of hybridity (e.g., the articulation and combination of different styles of popular music) work alongside complex processes of intertextuality, where texts draw on the features and genres of other texts in historical chains (p. 82). Hybridity and intertextuality also become the working model of the changing (textual) “social subject” (p. 74), whose identities or identifications are presumably redesigned through hybrid articulations, intertexts, and the blending of conventions.

For several reasons, it may be difficult to take issue with the language of “design” in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,” including the ways in which “design” is a very broad signifier (a breadth New London considers productive and felicitous) with design applied to texts, identities, and futures, and the way in which it suggests freedom, creativity, and even personalization or identity work. In “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,” design is tied closely to the notion of the use of a grammar, or multiple grammars, in the process of meaning making. Design also brings together in a single discourse the activity of educational planning, the work of pedagogy, and the practices of students (p. 73). The intertwined relations of designing texts and designing the world are developed by drawing on Halliday’s (1978) macrofunctions of language. These macrofunctions—“ideational” (related to knowledge), “interpersonal” (related to social relations and identities), and “textual” (reflexively, on the capacity of texts to construct reality)—provide a framework for the discursive construction of reality. “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” positions the work of designing as central to the project of social reproduction and transformation, through the (new) articulation of conventions or norms (p. 75).

Lankshear and Knobel (2006) offered a critique of “text-centricity” or “book-space” (p. 52) in literacy studies that is parallel with our own. In “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,” this text centrism appears in that novelty is more difficult to explain than conventionality. If grammatical metalanguages are the powerful guide for how rational subjects produce and interpret meanings, then how might we explain the emergence of unintended meanings? The New London Group addresses this problem through their concept of the redesigned—a suggested model of new resources being produced through hybridity and intertextuality. For the New London Group, the texts of performances (e.g., print, images, speech, gestures) primarily function to signify or re-present a world that lies behind them. Student actors and audiences produce recognition and order in their interactions, and researchers, in their work, contribute their own recognitions and order.

The foregrounding of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of “emergence” stands as an explicit critique of the limitations of such representational accounts of performance, social reproduction, and subject positions as they have been understood and used in Gramscian-inspired cultural studies and critical theory and as they shaped “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.” Massumi (2002) disputes limiting the body to discursive subject positions or identities, positioned by prescripts that determine “every possible signifying and countersignifying move as a selection from a repertoire of possible permutations on a limited set of predetermined terms” (p. 3). Text-centric or discourse-centric perspectives on the production of subjectivity ignore movement and sensation, favoring instead the story of ideological apparatuses or subject positions that “structured the dumb material interactions of things and rendered them legible according to a dominant signifying schema into which human subjects were interpellated” or that “opened a window on local resistance in the name of change” (Massumi, 2002, pp. 3-4). Such theories of positionality, as Massumi (2002) argues, capture bodies in “cultural freeze frame,” removing movement from the picture. “The notion of

movement as qualitative transformation is lacking. There is a displacement but not transformation; it is as if the body simply leaps from one definition to the next" (p. 3).

Lee and Hunter jump off the porch swing and have a sword fight. They leave their books behind in ways that makes text-centric literacy researchers nervous. There are leaps going on all right, but not from one predetermined signification to the next. What are those boys up to now? Should we interpret their embodied practices relative to the images, words, and subject positions presented in the manga text? Are their bodies the new text or a new resource for meaning making, for redefining identities or futures? How can we record and represent this activity? From a text-centric perspective, the quickest way out of this dilemma of moving bodies and representation is to let the bodies fall to the cutting room floor, or, more aptly, back into their seats of textual practice. Hunter and Lee's moving bodies—these sites where affect, imagination, passion, and energy are constantly being produced—cannot be well described as elements of design—textual or identificatory. Movement and affect fight back in the textual domestication of research. The boys wander off the grammar sheet. The questions for the New London Group are, "Where is this wandering taking them? Toward what future?"

### *Temporality*

Clearly, the modes and effects of language, as conceptualized in "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," can change. Nevertheless, it is as if change—the boundaries or definitions of what change can be or how it can be known—does not change. Potential, which Massumi (2002) names as the movement of the body, is subordinated to a post hoc naming of rational, predictable, controllable, and, in some cases, almost inevitable meanings and identities, whereas, Massumi notes, a body in motion is not identical to what we afterward describe (p. 4). What this raises for us is a question of whether we understand bodies as stepping through predetermined subject positions toward rationally designed change, as we read the New London Group describing, or as opening toward new possibilities that cannot be determined in advance. Our view of change shifts from a description of large ruptures and intentional, deliberate strategies and resistances—not that such things don't happen—to a view of the everyday and of what might emerge if we understand ourselves as both mediated and not reducible to mediation, and if we privilege indeterminacy and emergence over stasis and determination.

Massumi (2002) argues that such a reading requires that we part company with overly determining linguistic models. To be fair, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" does not describe a particular research framework concerning literacy practices, and its description of the "how of learning" (p. 83) as a preferred pedagogy involving situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice, would certainly critique any notion of practice or pedagogy being entirely understood through textual forms or grammar alone. Nevertheless, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" is saturated with text-centrism, a saturation that suggests as much about the ongoing history and social practice of literacy studies as it does about this particular document.

Through a text-centric perspective, episodes of practice become dominated and misread as they are sifted and pushed through textual funnels such that much that characterizes practice becomes sorted out, pushed aside, ignored. A text-centric perspective prompts us to interpret backward from texts to practices—to infer literacy practices from textual forms, even when other aspects of social practice are clearly evident. The representational forms and modes of manga become the lens for reading social practice.

In its retrospective version, text-centrism interprets dynamic temporality through ultimate effects; time is a trajectory that unfolds to the present moment. The present moment, evaluated in association with a particular text, provides the interpretation and evaluation of temporalities leading up to it. In contrast, a nonrepresentational reading requires an understanding of literacy practices that privileges Lee and Hunter as engaged in movements recognized as emergent or moment-by-moment unfoldings; these unfoldings call for interpretation of temporality and relationships of bodies to their environments that are not present in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” or in the new literacy studies broadly speaking.

What worries the New London Group (and us) are the subject positions—identities imposed and accepted—that for material, historical reasons have limited the lives of many human beings. Their solution is a well-planned subject who consults past knowledge (grammatical information, codes) to produce or interpret a particular meaning with a defined end-in-view. And although such a view describes something of literacy-in-use, it also overwrites much of the flow and surprise of practice with rationality and the well-intentioned hope for control. What is missing in New London is Lee, or Lee as our exemplar of the children and adolescents who are the objects of our teaching and research. This may in part be what happens in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” when the figure of “student” or “designer” comes to stand in place of “human.” According to “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,”

The notion of design connects powerfully to the sort of creative intelligence the best practitioners need in order to be able, continually, to redesign their activities in the very act of practice. It connects well to the idea that learning and productivity are the results of the designs (the structures) of complex systems of people, environments, technologies, beliefs, and texts. (p. 73)

Children or youth, in the role of “students,” here described as “practitioners,” are understood as powerful when they not only are able to read the modalities of texts, but also are able to use these designs in relation to redesign; or in other words to use the texts to design their own practices, activities, and texts. From this perspective, it is not enough to be able to simply access power; rather, new literacy learners also need to critique, resist, challenge, and change discourses. In “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,” we see the desire to achieve mastery over pedagogic practices that can promote change toward solutions to the inequities and alienations that are framed as being produced in and through literate practices and privileges in and out of school. It is, in this regard, very

much an Enlightenment document that expresses the wish that using research, technique, and pedagogy grounded in expert knowledge will enlighten us with the means to create a better social future. Unfortunately, its forward/backward orientation preempts descriptions both of what else is already happening and what else might happen through perspectives that close down and anchor the meaning of the texts, or of the identifications that have already emerged in the name of a future that has not yet happened.

Text-centrism prompts us to focus on the future possibilities of any text and any textualized subject. What horizon lies in front of the text/subject subsumes any significance or effects of the text/subject as emergent in practice. In the prospective version of text-centrism found in "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," our vision is fixed on a future goal; teachers' and students' investments and practices are measured in relation to some intentional design or intervention that leads to an imagined point in the future. The dynamic unfolding of living practices is dominated by a future conception of their desired results or effects, rather than through their affectivities in the dynamics of living practice.

In both cases, a living temporality of present, embodied practice is dominated by the collapsed temporality of the text-as-object. In considering both the retrospective and prospective versions of text-centrism, our criticism is of the constraint and subjugation of dynamic temporalities, through which alternate perspectives on the work and meaning of literacy as social practice could be realized. Text-centrism and the representational logic of design not only contract the social spaces within which literacy is practiced (Eakle, 2007; Leander & Sheehy, 2004; Sheehy, 2009) but also erase awareness of the unpredictable unfolding of time.

### *A Nonrepresentational Reading*

We now move to a different reading of Lee. Our emergent or nonrepresentational reading necessitates that we reposition both Lee and ourselves as analysts with respect to the time and space of literacy practice. This requires two key shifts in how we understand what is produced in the writing of research. First, it means that we do not read the meaning of practices as outsiders opening up others' key texts; we do not, for example, provide an interpretation of Lee's or Hunter's means of identifying with manga, made possible by reading their use of material artifacts. Neither do we offer a reading of their engagement in fight scenes as re-presentations of scenes in *InuYasha*. We don't even consider how other possible identities of Lee and Hunter may be read as hybrids or intertexts with identities from the social semiotic of manga. Rather than conceiving of their activity as primarily about creating a means of identification for themselves or providing a reading of identity for others, we work to reassert the sensations and movements of the body in the moment-by-moment unfolding or emergence of activity. Rather than naming preferred outcomes, we follow the emergence of activity, including the relations among texts and bodies in activity and the affective intensities of these relations.

The second shift is in how we understand the temporality of the writing of this analysis. We are not simply describing and analyzing something that happened

previously; rather we position ourselves in the midst of activity in the present, as in our own presently emergent assemblage with the text of our observations. This is not only intellectually honest; it also allows us to experience or productively imagine emergence. It involves us as researchers in a temporality that is committed to a short horizon of vision; we deliberately do not interpret the present in relation to past or future outcomes or texts, but rather limit ourselves to what might be observed as activity unfolds. What we are doing in writing this research is not merely reporting on assemblages that exist outside of us, but actively creating such assemblages. Thus, the ways in which we temporally engage in activity have consequence for our experienced relations to the possibilities of that activity. Although “framing,” “outlining,” “highlighting,” and a range of other writing terms suggest means of “*understanding*” assemblages of texts from positions outside of them in temporally extended ways, we choose instead a form of limited vision that, although not living in the “time” of the activity, returns to the experience of that activity as the unfolding of moment by moment movements and possibilities.

### *The Emergent Body*

How then do we describe the emergent body, the body in relation to but not determined through preexisting subjects positions or texts, but rather as opening out toward the expansive possibilities of each moment, as an assemblage of its constantly changing present? Our own narrative processes get in the way here. For instance, consider the following single sentence from our earlier narrative: “Toward the end of the evening, Lee’s father joined the boys at the dining room table, began reading the first *InuYasha* book, and they had a discussion about the differences between the television show, which Lee’s father regularly watched, and the books.” Such a sentence is largely overdetermined by a narrative thread that ties the ending or outcome of the narrative thread back to its beginning, creating modes of intention, identification, repetition, and pattern over emergence and indeterminacy. What if instead we considered the following imaginative rewriting of the sentence?

It is early evening. Lee’s father is feeling unsettled. He isn’t sure what to do. He wanders from the living room to the kitchen, stares into the refrigerator and sees nothing of interest. He follows Lee and Hunter’s voices into the dining room and sits at the table where they are talking about a battle in a book he hasn’t read. Unable to join in, he feels anxious. Not knowing what else to do, feeling restless, embarrassed and at loose ends, he picks up the book Lee has just put down. Looking at the cover, he feels a sense of relief and excitement as he recognizes the title and character drawings as identical to an anime series he watches and enjoys. Suddenly, he has a connection to the boys’ conversation. He ventures a comparison between manga and its televised form, anime, and the boys turn their attention to him. He likes this kind of interaction with his son and wants to keep it going.

The point of our imaginative rewriting is not to provide a better, more accurate interpretation or to claim to represent what Lee's father was actually feeling in those moments, but to suggest how the narrative structures can close off a reading of emergence in favor of creating cultural freeze frames. Our retelling was meant to highlight the fact of uncertainty and chance as being as determinative of the father's experience in that moment as any preexisting identities or produced as texts.

From an emergence perspective, texts are artifacts of literacy practice but do not describe practice itself. Texts are participants in the world, one piece of our ever-changing assemblage, along with material objects, bodies, and sensations. A nonrepresentational approach describes literacy activity as not determined by past design projected toward some future redesign, but as living its life in the ongoing present, forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways. Such activity is created and fed by an ongoing flow of affective intensities that are different from the rational control of meanings and forms.

### *Affective Intensities and Relations*

Affective intensities and movement build relations among previously unconnected elements. The effort to follow this gives rise to questions that create the possibility of more ways of seeing and valuing. What is Lee moving and being moved by as he constantly strokes the toy knives or adjusts his headband even as he reads, apparently absorbed in the text? How about when he leaps up and begins playing or fighting without announcement or apparent provocation? What is attached or being connected, recruited, or brought into being that wasn't activated or engaged before? What body assemblage is being created? Is it a becoming of manga-knife-fantasy-illustration-word-friend-body? Is it a becoming of anime remembered-headband-waving arms-boy power-sound effects-body? Lee digs in his closet, finding the black kimono with the bright red crest he wore as part of a *Naruto* costume for Halloween. He puts it on while reading. Does he feel differently, read differently, experience himself or the narrative differently? Hunter arrives and, after a brief bit of swordplay, argues that the fight is unfair because of Lee's wearing of the costume. How can this be? When Lee can only produce a black T-shirt or an old bathrobe to create a costume for Hunter, Hunter's sense of injustice, anger, and disappointment escalates. Lee understands his point of view, and offers to take turns with the kimono. The advantage to the kimono-sword-fighter in confidence, intensity, and pleasure is self-evident to the boys.

And yet still, in naming such an assemblage, we are capturing only what we can see or what Lee and Hunter can articulate, which is not the same as what they are doing or as the conscious and unconscious affects experienced in the body. What difference is produced toward what end if we take the stance that at least some of the time the boys are not sure of what is happening or of what going to emerge, are not designing toward anything but are simply becoming, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) would say, responding to the energy of the moment, or perhaps, just trying to see what happens? Lee puts



on a headband and finds that he likes the way he feels. What will he feel or be able to do, think, see, or prompt, if he wears the kimono? Will he have new powers? Will it affect his opponent? He produces in his actions and body something new, something that is partly the carried-forward excitement or effects felt when he read the text and partly all the other things the present context allows him to bring into that assemblage. He does not know how his play will change the world he knows. Design implies something that is deliberate—we start with the text and then try to recreate it and then innovate on it. But of course, that is to imagine that the thing that Lee is looking at when he sees the text is the design. It seems as likely that what he is experiencing is potential—energy, excitement, an assemblage of emerging possibility that is founded in movement, affect, and desire, that in turn produces both more of the same along with the inevitability of something new. This speaks to impulse and to longing, to desire produced in the difference between what is and what might be. This kind of difference, producing and produced by movement, is the body's energizing potential. Conversely, we might understand the fantasy that enough research could allow us to definitively know the meaning of Lee's enactments marks a kind of desire for stasis or death.

### *Repetition and Difference*

A key problem for Deleuze was how to conceive of a form of identity that is not "identical" to itself (Patton, 2000, p. 29). In structuralist thought, texts, cultures, and identities can be read as variations in underlying grammars or systems. Difference in such systems is difference within a context, a background or common terrain (Colbrook, 2002, p. 66). Temporally speaking, thinking in this sense is backward-looking recognition work, seeing patterns and changes in patterns. Representational models of difference and repetition take the "same"—identification—as the default position and look for differences across time with respect to the original image/identity. In Deleuze's (1968/1994) ontology, the order of identity and difference is reversed from that of representationalism: Difference is the fundamental principle, and identity produced from it. Active thinking—Deleuze's "eternal return" borrowed from Nietzsche—is not caught up in recognition and identification work, but rather reforms itself, over and over again. Repetition and difference, integrally connected, involve a different conception of temporality that is out of joint and not sequential. What is carried forward is not the preexisting surface features or grammars—the meanings or identities—but rather the force and affect created by a text, an action, an idea: "Maximum repetition is maximum difference. Repeating the past does not mean parroting its effects, but repeating the force and difference of time" (Colbrook, 2002, p. 119).

In this perspective, counter to engrained structural intuitions about repetition, it is not identity, appearance, or forms that makes repetition visible, but the force of difference, apparent as transformations in time. Deleuze's philosophy of difference and repetition challenges a representational model (such as given in design grammars) as a way of reading Lee and Hunter's engagement. Within the narrated episode, consider again the following description:

With no spoken planning, Lee stood up, grabbed a sword, and began swinging it at Hunter. Hunter dropped his book, picked up a sword and for the next several minutes the battle moved between the porch and the front yard, with the porch steps offering a vantage point from which to make leaping lunges at one another.

As a way to understand this seeming fight repetition from text to embodied activity in the relations between the fight scenes the boys are reading in *InuYasha* and the fight scenes they later enact, consider this process of difference and repetition as the movement of actualizing a virtual fight, a fight that has been stewing in the shared consciousness of Lee and Hunter, and will become enacted, in these moments, in a particular way. In this case, Lee and Hunter repeat the force and affects of the fights in the text, and the virtual fights they have construed. To produce those forces—to actualize them—they must solve the creative problem of this particular fight, at this time, on this porch. The transformation of Lee and Hunter between an “original” text and their bodies—this “multimodal” or “multiliteracy” transformation—is not the display of design credentials but rather the enactment of difference. Moreover, as it unfolds in time, this actualization of the fight scene transforms the *InuYasha* text for Lee and Hunter—the embodied fight is temporally out of joint, making the original different. What moves forward, then, with ongoing capacities for transformation, is a virtual fight scene with accompanying forces, and not an abstracted capacity or expanded grammar of design.

Now we might see Lee and Hunter as chiefly concerned not with the repetition of deep structures but with the ongoing surface creation of affect and effect (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000, p. 415) an expression of an assemblage that includes preexisting texts, toys, experiences, and landscapes that are used not as repetition but as resources in emergent potential. Our analysis, then, shifts from concerns about the particular meanings “coded” within activities or even the meanings given by them, post hoc, to explain their activity, toward an emergent mapping of affective intensities and their effects produced across texts, bodies, and interaction. Rationally, and when removed from the differences and dynamics of its own unfolding, much of Lee and Hunter’s activity makes no sense. One moment does not necessarily build on the next, and it is not fixed in purpose. In school parlance, Lee and Hunter are continuously “off-task.” Yet if we resist the urge to understand their activity out of time—to literally stand under it (or above it) as an abstraction, and rather experience it as having potential for difference—for the unexpected—then our interpretation is quite different. Lee and Hunter read *InuYasha* and then stop reading *InuYasha*. Now any number of things might follow, more or less rational, more or less driven by desire or by the excitement of possibility. They pick up toy swords and knives and pretend to fight. Some of their movements are choreographed to an internal sense of the rhythms of the many scripted fights they have seen on television and in text or by the music or dialogue they imagine or speak. Some of their movement is determined by the patterns and pleasures of internal rhythms (Lefebvre, Moore, & Elden, 2004; Scollon, 2005), of feeling and seeing their bodies and imagining their bodies being seen. They add and rearrange costume pieces. Why? What will be next? Where does each element, each change, take them? How little or how much of this was a conscious plan? How often are they surprised by

what emerges that was not premeditated? Lee and Hunter's movements from reading to play to drawing to conversation, from the moving body to more seemingly passive activities, show the emergent unfolding of experience, moving not linearly or rationally, but through the production of affect and effect. This is the rhizome, in which elements point not toward deep structures (grammars or subject positions) but toward one another in unexpected movements.

## Research and Pedagogy as Emergence

The image of the rhizome offers a critique of representationalism or text-centrism that is pivotal for a reconsideration of literacies in use. Language, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987), acts to move, combine, and accelerate bodies, just as the elements of language itself are in motion:

The expressions or expressed are inserted into or intervene in contents, not to represent them but to anticipate them or move them back, slow them down or speed them up, separate or combine them, delimit them in a different way. The warp of the instantaneous transformations is always inserted into the woof of the continuous modifications. (p. 86)

This warp and woof is one means of describing how forms of expression and bodies (content) are more or less in constant movement between stasis and change. This shift from a problem of *representation* to a problem of *space-time and movement* (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000, p. 418) has been suggested at several points in the previous critique, for instance, in the idea that text-centrism sets beginning and end points of temporally analyzing practice. Unlike the modernist logics of mediation, reproduction, or dialectics, a philosophy of emergence in Deleuze and Guattari (1987) is about reality constantly producing itself, creating new becomings (Grossberg, 2003, p. 2). For Deleuze and Guattari, there are no end points, only centers.

The critique offered by design out of time, and interpretation outside of time, seems especially significant for new literacies, as they change our experiences of space and time (Leander & Lovvorn, 2006). Massey (2005) argues that in the analysis of social space, which studies of social practice always are, we are given to seeing space as a dimension, as a slice through time. This kind of cutting away of time from social space is associated, in Massey, with the drive toward representationalism (also see Soja, 1989). Socially and politically, this move leads to stasis and discrete (rather than dynamic) multiplicity. When social space is reimagined as activity or process rather than as dimension (the "event" in literacy research), freedom, dislocation, and surprise characterize our sense of the social (Massey, 2005, p. 29). In that move, we can reevaluate how the death and reproduction of social life are very much a part of our own forms of representational killing and copying, of producing static identities as a secondary effect. Rather than slicing up time, or undoing the temporal unfolding of social

space, Massey (2005) argues for a redefinition of space as “simultaneity of stories-so-far” or “the duration of a multiplicity of durations” (p. 24).

Within “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,” a resource model—texts, identities, technology, experiences, and difference as available resources for design and redesign—is key. These resources are also cut away from time; they sit still and await inspection, analysis. The resource model of design sounds reasonable, but the familiar becomes strange when we think about it as an account of practice. Staying with design, we highlight this strangeness by shifting the metaphor from writing to painting. Imagine we asked a painter about her art and she replied,

Painting is all about color. Color is the most important resource. So, in oil painting, for instance, there are primary colors but also complementary colors and many gradations of gray and. . . . But what’s really remarkable about painting is that when colors are juxtaposed—say, reds and yellows—you get new color possibilities for painting. That is, painters are always coming up with unique combinations, even as they use familiar resources. What’s more, these new combinations of color themselves become “standards” or “conventions” in the palette. So, that’s how painting works.

What would sound fishy to us about this description? What’s missing? Clearly, this is not a believable description of *practice*. Rather, it’s a description of one material used in one kind painting. So, how does one leap from the problem of tradition and novelty in materials to a description of practice? How do we continue to make that leap in literacy theory?

Artist, art teacher, and psychoanalyst Marion Milner (1950) described what was essential to her experience of painting by contrasting the difference between a technical approach to painting and her painting practice, which she characterized as painting from uncertainty. Milner described the uncertainty she felt when painting as akin to the confusion and panic of night terrors, but this was the painting she embraced. She did this not to flee from uncertainty but to summon it. What she portrayed was a journey through her fear, of understanding herself in relation to something infinitely out of her control. Milner suggested that grasping after the language and promise of mastery, technical proficiency, and rationality are what prevented her from being able to paint.

Milner’s description highlights that beginning with texts and resources misses what seems to be the centrality of practices as affective events. Milner describes indeterminacy, the body that does not coincide with itself but rather, as Massumi (2002) writes, with its own transition, its own variation. It is the body’s registration of the difference between what is and what could be, the potential for emergence, connecting moment to moment, movement to movement. As Deleuze argues (as cited in Massumi, 2002, p. 4), a body in motion is in an immediate, unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary. There is a relationship between the body and its indeterminacy, its openness to becoming that in the next moment is a different becoming yet again. Each

movement, Massumi (2002) tells us, is not the same old thing; it is adding something new to the world (p. 12).

Research tends to be, to the contrary, a subtractive process. Literacy researchers may express an urgency to control or contain what is understood as the field (see, e.g., Street, 2003). Like many of our colleagues, we have found the frame of literacy offered by “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” to be useful. Our goal is not to replace the insights and moves that emerge from any particular framing of research or pedagogy. Rather, we propose a problematic, a perspective to lay alongside what is already present, to see what new ideas might emerge. Our problematic is to look at the framing itself, and to demonstrate that as much as the framing—literacy—magnifies, it also obscures and disciplines. A Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblage is different from a frame or a container; it is the opposite of the analytic move. It is about the infinite movement of productivity.

Social practice theories of literacy (e.g., Gee, 1991; Street, 1984) have significantly shaped the ways in which literacy is understood as defined and carried out in social and ideological practices rather than in isolated, individual cognitive skills and abilities. Such theories have also asserted that literacy must be understood as associated with a range of social functions and meanings. Our goal is not to rewrite or expand a practice theory of literacy. We are not just adding a rhizomal structure to literacy but rather are claiming that literacy exists in rhizomal relations. Literacy *is* unbounded. Unless as researchers we begin traveling in the unbounded circles that literacy travels in, we will miss literacy’s ability to participate in unruly ways because we only see its proprieties. We can hold literacy at the center of the world only as long as we keep it in place at the center of our world. What might we make of the invitation to consider literacy in “and . . . and . . . and” relations?

Yet researchers subtract. We view a scene, with an infinite number of movements, interactions, possible rhizomatic lines, and we subtract from the scene all that makes the telling of a coherent post hoc narrative difficult. Working from the New London perspective, we interpret backward from texts to practices. We subtract those things that are not so clearly about texts, making texts central to any instance of practice, perhaps because they are central to us. In so doing, we risk developing contorted views of what people are up to. Text-centrism predefines Lee and Hunter’s activity and presses it into the service of texts that evolve out of it. The “event” is given meaning by the “literacy” within it, rather than by its own moment-by-moment unfoldings.

We analyze “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” to think more expansively about research. We recognize what could look problematic or disingenuous about addressing a piece that names itself as pedagogic through a critique of the document that focuses on research concerns. However, what our analysis makes clear is that the research stance of the authors in fact saturates the pedagogic document. In this document, research and pedagogy coarticulate and naturalize one another. This is not the point of our critique. We recognize that research and pedagogy have always bled into one another, have always traveled in these unbounded ways. Precisely because of this, it makes sense that we conclude this article by turning back to the starting place, to

pedagogy, to invite the same kinds of questions and stances about pedagogy that we have undertaken relative to research.

In this article, we have worked to place ourselves as researchers within our data and to invite our readers to do the same. Our goal was never to summarize or even analyze our data in any traditional sense, but instead to ask ourselves, “What is emergent in our data? Where do we stand in our data?” It is an invitation to the data and our place in it, to call out and develop intensities. If we now see ourselves as *inside pedagogy*, as we have argued for the need to see ourselves inside research, what might emerge that would be different from “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies”? Could what emerges, perhaps, do something we very much care about as educators, that is, place us with Lee back in the classroom?

Lee was seen as a failing reader in school and yet he was an enthusiastic reader at home. To see what was going on from a perspective of emergence helps us to attend to the significance of the fact that from his own perspective, Lee did not read manga to be a reader. His love of manga had little to do with reading or school. Lee was not climbing through a social practice to be captured by an emergent text. Rather, Lee’s engagement with manga had to do in part with friendship, love and identity, but of importance, it also seemed to have a great deal to do with the mystery and pleasure of affectively charged, physically felt potential. Lee’s play can be perhaps most truthfully described as body, movement, the production of sensation, the unfolding of possibility. This is in essence what Lee said about the play when asked: He did it because it was fun and because the world in the story was so exciting, that he wanted to be in it. He and Hunter played at generating the kind of excitement they felt when they read and that they imputed to the story world.

Lee expressed much of his love of *InuYasha* through physical actions. He was visibly excited, signaling that he felt a strong build up of energy and possibility in and through his body. He tried to understand and explain what he was feeling, but as he said, “I don’t know why I love this so much.” Words failed to capture his response to *InuYasha*. Lee both expressed and generated intensities through his frequent actions—sword play, martial arts poses, moving restlessly around the house going from one brief action to another, bouncing and wiggling as he went. In the year following the observation of Lee, his embodied expressions of enjoyment of manga increased. For one period, he preferred to wear only T-shirts with kanji on them. For a short time he “tattooed” himself by drawing kanji-like symbols all over himself. We wonder if he was exploring what might happen if he played with the cultural insistence that there is a difference between his Japanese American body and that of his White peers. We also think he was fueling his passion, like tattooing his lover’s name on his body. But if we think of it in terms of affect or potential, we have to remember that these things are not about getting or achieving the object, but about the vividness of being and experiencing being. Whatever other labels we might give the episode as a form of practice, it seems highly likely that the activity does not culminate or terminate in textual interpretation or production. That Lee both draws from and produces texts along the way does not mean that reading or producing text is the goal. In fact, parts of the activity could proceed nicely without any evident texts at all.

In contrast to these experiences, Lee's experiences as a literacy student were deeply troubling to him. Lee was identified throughout his years of school as a struggling reader and writer and was subjected to frequent and usually unwelcome interventions and expressions of deep concern. Lee experienced little positive potential from, and therefore was highly resistant to, using reading and writing in school. This is one reason that his deep engagement with manga stood out so dramatically to us.

Clearly the New London Group was concerned about students' disillusionment with the formal academic content that characterized much school-based literacy curriculum. Student interests are brought into the curriculum. However, their interests are taken as a point of departure with no ontological reality, no body of their own. What comes to the fore does not so much involve taking seriously the passionate engagement of the Lee-manga-swords-leaping-sound effects emergence. There is a failure to acknowledge that Lee-manga becoming was always already a revolutionary redesign that made Lee alive to the world in a way that few school literacy practices did. Rather, in "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," heavy emphasis is placed on the texts that emerge as a result of the pedagogic intervention and design, often shepherded by the teacher's deliberate intervention. This approach and mindset does little to address the reality that children like Lee may well be resistant to such teaching, no matter how well intentioned, how thoroughly it is argued that it is for his own future good. Even if manga had been one of the resources used in school, it is likely that he would have been, at best, disappointed by its inclusion. It would have not been the raucous, playful excessive manga he loved. It is unlikely that he would have liked much of the design work because in that domestication of manga, something key is lost. Design leaves out movement and surprise.

Working from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), we can conceptualize Lee as improvisationally making use of existing meanings, identities, and texts. Sometimes he does this for the sake of reproducing or redesigning existing meanings, and this may be what is primarily required of students in school. For Lee, who is resistant to literacy pedagogy, it is primarily in his play that he is able to use texts with intensity and joy. This is what, following Deleuze (1986), we call playing with major resources—the familiar, the known, the expected and dependable—in minor ways—unexpected, emergent combinations that take flight into something new.

Clearly these observations do not constitute a pedagogy, yet we pose them as an opening to consider other students like Lee. If Lee's engagement cannot be understood as a feature of particular resources, as contained in textual outputs, as captured in specified "interests," or as formulated through processes of "design," then how do we understand such students and pedagogic possibilities? The curriculum and the teacher's pedagogical stance enter into an assemblage with the materials, time, space, experiences, movement, play, emotion, and desires that the classroom participants bring with them. New assemblages emerge, are in constant flux, in constant movement. There is a rhythm of continuity and discontinuity, with some possibilities moving toward closure even as others catch fire. The issue is not only what resources are in use in classrooms. Rather, to be within the pedagogical moment in that classroom, a teacher would need to consider whether he or she and the children are able to bring the

materials into a “composition of desire” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 399). Can the teacher make space for fluidity and indeterminacy as the nature of things? Can he or she recognize difference, surprise, and unfolding that follow along paths that are not rational or linear or obviously critical or political?

Our observations of Lee and Hunter, our rereadings of space, time, and the emergence of the present have caused us to question limits on understanding human practices as an object of knowledge or a commodity in the system of research and education. From this perspective, there will always be the clamor of the incongruous and our inability to master ambiguity or design the future through appeals to expertise and authority. There is, at the same time, the powerful potential of constantly changing assemblages and of thinking of the ways that both research and pedagogy can build from its own major elements to emerge into improvisational flight.

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### Notes

1. Boldt’s observation of Lee was coincidental to her reasons for being present. His engagement in manga intrigued her, and she began to take notes almost immediately, while also going about her other business.
2. This is by no means an exhaustive description of the day, but it captures the range of their movements and activities.

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