

EXISTENCES OF FERNAND DELIGNY

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Abstract: We know researcher PhD. Noelle Coelho Resende as one of the Brazilian experts who contributed to the collective work of building the archive of Fernand Deligny's (1913-1996) work for the consolidation of the Fernand Deligny Fund at *L'Institut Mémoire de l'Édition Contemporaine* (IMEC) in France. Noelle was cited by the French publisher Arachnéen (Deligny, 2007) as a Brazilian who "took care" of the space and material of the network for coexistence with autistic children in *Cévennes*, and of other productions by Deligny. We invited Noelle, in January 2024, to talk about her thesis: (*Do asilo ao asilo, as existências de Fernand Deligny. Trajetos de esquivas à Instituição, à Lei e ao Sujeito*, 2016), her experience with international researchers from the Deligny network, the expansion of his thought in Brazil, the importance of the act of writing, the style of writing in his work, and his contributions to the field of education and care.

Keywords: Archive; Asylum; Education; Writing; Deligny Network.

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EXISTÊNCIAS DE FERNAND DELIGNY

Resumo: Conhecemos a pesquisadora Dra. Noelle Coelho Resende como uma das referências brasileiras que contribuiu para o trabalho coletivo de construção do arquivo da obra de Fernand Deligny (1913-1996) para a consolidação do Fundo Fernand Deligny, no *L'Institut Mémoire de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC)* na França. Noelle foi citada pela editora francesa Arachnéen ((Deligny, 2007) como uma brasileira que “cuidou” do espaço e do material da rede de convivência com crianças autistas, em *Cévennes*, e de outras produções de Deligny. Convidamos Noelle, em janeiro de 2024, para conversar sobre sua tese: Do asilo ao asilo, as existências de Fernand Deligny. Trajetos de esquiwa à Instituição, à Lei e ao Sujeito (2016), sua experiência junto a pesquisadores internacionais da rede Deligny, sobre a expansão do pensamento dele no Brasil, a importância do ato de escrever, do estilo da escrita em seu trabalho e em suas contribuições para o campo da educação e do cuidado.

Palavras-chave: Arquivo; Asilo; Educação; Escrita; Rede Deligny.

Camille

We would like to first hear from you about the experience of your thesis. How did you arrive at the author Fernand Deligny?

Noelle

I'm going to try to retrace a little bit my journey, because it's been almost twelve and a half years since I met Deligny's work, which is actually the work of a lot of people. So, I had just started my doctorate in Law, at PUC-Rio. But I think it's important to talk about my career in Law. I did my undergraduate, master and doctorate degrees in Law, but I never practiced law or practiced in the “restricted” field of law. I have always worked with human rights, with protection in the field of State violence, thinking about the discussion of public policies related to a guarantee of rights.

In 2012, I got in my doctorate and worked in a civil society organization here in Rio de Janeiro. I didn't know Deligny when I wrote my thesis project and I had written a project to make a discussion in the field of institutional analysis, based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

Right after starting my doctorate, in August 2012, I went to the Art Biennial in São Paulo, together with Eduardo Passos, a psychology teacher at UFF. It was there that we came into contact with Deligny's work.

It was an exhibition that had a little of each type of material from his work, especially from the period in *Cévennes*. It had maps, several film extracts and texts. And I think that the enchantment took place there, without much rationality, a little through the ideas, the maps, the writings... With a teacher and friend who was in France at that time, we got a copy of the book *Oeuvres* (Deligny, 2007) which is not translated into Portuguese. From that moment on, we started holding a weekly reading meeting in Rio de Janeiro. Me, Eduardo and a doctoral student of teacher

Eduardo Passos, Iacá Machado Macerata. We read together, making a precarious translation of Deligny's text, as it was possible. And done! I think that, from that moment on, it made a lot of sense for me to think about an institutional discussion based on Deligny's work.

There is all the work in *Cévennes*, perhaps the best known today, which I think brings up a great and important discussion in the field of care and space. But there is also all his previous work in institutions, which, at that time, was quite important for me, to think about what strategies he developed to combat normalizing and violent institutional processes. So I think that's where I ended up at Deligny, after he gained other paths in my life, other meanings of work for me, after all there were a lot of changes in those twelve years.

In 2014, I applied for a one-year sandwich doctorate scholarship (PDSE/CAPES) for the Department of Philosophy at Paris X (University Paris Nanterre). At the same time, Marlon Miguel was carrying out an exchange period in Brazil for his doctorate in Paris 8 (University of Paris 8 - Vincennes-Saint-Denis). He spent six months here before my sandwich period in France, and we had the opportunity to exchange a lot about our readings of Deligny.

We had met in 2013, through a mutual friend who introduced us precisely because we were both working with Deligny, which at that time was quite unusual. In 2014, Marlon had been invited by Sandra Avarez de Toledo, owner of publishing company *Arachnéen*, to continue the work of organizing the collection of Deligny's texts in *Cévennes* for the constitution of the Deligny Fund at IMEC. Sandra had started, for the organization of the book *Oeuvres* (Deligny, 2007), a great effort in *Cévennes* to organize this collection. A joint effort with Jacques Lin e Gisèle Durand, that are the two close presences who, after Deligny's death, remained in the care of autistic people and in the construction of this attempt.

In 2014, then, with a PDSE scholarship, I went to Paris for a year and, at Marlon's invitation, I met Sandra and joined in the collective effort to organize Deligny's unpublished texts that remained in *Cévennes* - manuscripts and tapuscripts, in the house where he lived and where he developed his writing practice.

From then on, between 2014 and 2015, we started a routine of going to *Cévennes* every month, and we got to know Gisèle and Jacques better, their work, the role of the close presences in the network, we better understood the dynamics of how the cartographies were developed and of Deligny's writing work.

In general, we sought to better understand how was the arrangement of the network in *Cévennes*. Of course, this experience was essential to my thesis, both the contact with materials that were not published, – essentially – the coexistence with Jacques and Gisele, and the memory of this network and of all the work built.

This stage of the work was completed and resulted in a material that was sent to IMEC, around July 2015. There were around three thousand pages of cataloged texts, for which we thought about an archiving methodology and finished

this organization there at Institute. Marlon, together with Marina Vidal Naquet e Matin Molina, continued this work.

I met Deligny, then, a little by chance. From that invitation to the Biennial, the meeting with Deligny was very much in tune with what motivated and moved me at that moment. Building an institutional discussion in the field of human rights, thinking about what we were debating when we were discussing institutional creation, micropolitics, protection of rights, collectives and social movements. I think that Deligny was very in tune for me based on the strategies he developed in the institutions in which he worked, to not let it become a model, to prevent the attempts from crystallizing into a harsh institutionality. My thesis work was, then, directed towards mapping Deligny's attempts in the field of institutional debate. Then it unfolded in many ways. Yet during the last year of my doctorate, I worked on building memories of State violence, committed after 1988. In addition to documentary research, I was responsible for listening to testimonies of violence. Driven by this listening, I did a training in psychoanalysis and a training in schizoanalysis. I started working more on the relationship between protection and mental health. Over time, this relationship takes different paths...

Camille

Based on his studies, can we make an approximation between institutionality, especially from Fernand Deligny's first attempt, and school to think about education today? Can you talk a little bit about that?

Noelle

Well, I think so. We can think from your previous question, which was how to study and think about Deligny, taking into account the criticism of a certain modeling or institutionalization of his work. I think this can be linked to any field of activity. This was an issue very present when we organized the files, thinking about the creation of a Deligny Fund itself as something somewhat contradictory. Sometimes, we joked around asking if he would like what we were doing. This issue of non-model is always present. I think it's not exactly about not building instituting processes, but taking Deligny as an ethical guideline for a form of action. How can we always question the practices that are being built? If we are constantly in institutionalization processes, if this is part of our own creative practice, how can we break the institutionality having a critical and careful perspective on the types of practices that we are institutionalizing? How can we always put them in question?

I think that, in this sense, Deligny has resonance in different fields of knowledge, for example, nowadays we are starting to think about Deligny in the field of mental health. How can Deligny help to think about clinical practice? What does he trigger to think about in terms of care practices, respect for singularities, and the space of care based on cartographies? I think that, in the field of education, Deligny brings some of this same inspiration, not as a model, but as an ethical

direction of action. However, I find it difficult to say “Deligny”. From his more institutional work to the attempt in *Cévennes*, he was always surrounded by many others. The practices were always collective, he helped to manage it, supported this management, systematized it, organized it conceptually, wrote, etc.

How do these directions of action help us to think about the institutional field? I think it makes perfect sense to think about this in schools too. I think this has great resonance for work as an ethical direction. Thinking about the attention to the singularity, to the paths, to the trajectories of what is being formed in institutions.

Camille

Can you tell us a little about the experience of working on the creation of Fernand Deligny’s archives, being with the close presences in *Cévennes*, the autistic people, already adults, who were still in *Cévennes*, all this subjective burden of work that requires the exercise of archiving.

Sônia

I would like to complement the question, could you also talk about how it was creating the assembly of Deligny’s material at IMEC.

Noelle

So, I think the work in the archives, Camille, was really something that changed the course of my life. It changed the thesis process, my perspective on Deligny, on all this collective work. I think getting there (in *Cévennes*) was enchanting, meeting Jacques, Gisèle, learning more about their story, their contribution and participation in the work, getting in touch with all this material, it’s a privilege. It was very exciting to have contact with all the texts - unpublished and the different versions -, to understand a little more about the dynamics of Deligny’s writing. Understanding this with all the details that circulated there in the environment, being in real emotional contact with that place. Meeting the autistic people who still lived there. Being able to participate, in day to day, being able to do other things than just the archive, but to feel a little about what that process was like. It was all very impactful.

In terms of the material, getting in touch with the texts was extremely important. Not just because the content, but to understand the dynamics of Deligny’s writing, which was very unique. He wrote the same thing several times, he made small deviations in his writing, he went back to the stories, he changed the stories, he changed details, it was almost as if there was no truth in that writing. I think all this is linked to the institutional work he develops, which is a little bit about questioning this idea that there is a right thing, or a truth, or a history. He does this with his entire life, this also appears in the explanation of all the paths he takes. Getting in touch with this was fundamental for us to be able to do this

work, being immersed there, together with Marlon (Miguel), discussing the issues and thinking about a methodology for archiving the texts in a way that made sense for Deligny's work and for the close presences. Understanding the place of close presences, understanding the dynamics of building this network was fundamental to reorganize and create new directions for the work itself we were doing at that moment, which I was doing in the thesis, as well as in life. It was, subjectively, effectively, a very powerful and important experience. This continues to this day, in the cultivation of lifelong relationships with Gisèle, Jacques and Sandra.

In terms of how we thought about the assembly of the archive, it was a matter of thinking about the meanings of archiving Deligny's works. I think this point remains an issue. But I think that the construction of memories is a bet and that applies to other fields as well, such as the work of building the memory of State violence in Rio (de Janeiro - BR), in which I participated. It is a bet on the construction of an archive as a living process, that may be continuously modulated. Avoiding to think about the archive as something that stores a static memory in the way it was there at some point.

I don't know exactly how IMEC is working now to go there and visit. But the idea was that building this archive could be something that kept Deligny's work alive and changing, and not frozen in time. So, the idea was that it could be visited, produce other ideas, help to produce other paths of study, research, and life. There were books that came later, such as *Camérer: A propos d'images* (Deligny, 2021), a collection of texts by Deligny that brings a discussion in the field of image and cinema and which was built after this effort of organization, continued by Marina (Vidal-Naquet) and Marlon. We bet that the archive could be a living work, contrary to various perspectives on archive. I think there are several challenges to this, like actually keeping it in activity. How is it possible to enhance an archive so that it can be accessed, so that it can be raw material for collective discussions, so that other things can be done based on this work of organization, so that it does not end up there as mere archiving?

Sônia

With you describing all this, now a scene came up to me from this place, IMEC. When I was there I requested authorization to access the files. By the way in which the material was made available in the IMEC search system, you can see that there is a way in which you, Marlon Miguel and you, did the assembly of the thinking of Fernand Deligny's work. From this on, I would like to bring two questions for us to discuss. The title of your thesis itself moved me to look for the files there. When I went there, in January 2023, I was very aware of your thesis and ended up selecting some materials very close to those you used, about asylum. There is an article, a sequence of folders with texts written in handwriting and typed by Deligny; the texts have the theme of asylum. What called my attention, and which I located in a folder in the archive, was one of the handwritten texts: *Tant d'asiles en cinquante ans, et ce mémoire inéluctable* (6 pages). I located the

written idea of *lirecrire* (read-write), the two words written together “read” and “write”, as if it constituted a single meaning for the act of writing. Can you talk a little about this issue of writing, about these investigative clues that I saw directly in one of the archive folders?

Noelle

It's great to hear you talk. After the thesis, I had a very intense moment around Deligny and then a lot of work here in Rio (de Janeiro) around the Subcommission of Truth in Democracy (ALERJ), which caused a certain distance. From a few years to now I have been resuming the study and work with Deligny and I am in this long attempt to organize a book based on my thesis. So that we can also have production our own about Deligny's work. Thinking again about the thesis is always also thinking about Deligny's writing. And the title of the thesis is something that I have been thinking about, this idea of asylum is an idea dear to me, because, obviously, in the field of mental health, we work from the perspective of psychiatric reform, the anti-asylum fight, how to think about an open and not imprisoning care of madness.

And I think that the way Deligny approaches the issue of asylum, despite the word seeming a bit contradictory, is very powerful for us to think about care as something singular and open. What does it mean actually to asylum? To offer asylum, refuge. That's the idea in Deligny that's very dear to me, like a keyword. This reading of Deligny's asylum can be powerful for us to think about care, to think about this care, in fact, unique, which is much closer to the asylum as a refuge.

And the writing procedure is something that was always present, for us, in the organization of materials in the archive. How could an organization of Deligny's material respect this procedure, which we understood to be a form created by him to not properly establish an authorship, despite the fact that ultimately there is someone who writes the text. Permanently contradicting himself through the rewriting of texts, Deligny also seemed to be able to contradict a certain idea of authorship. Obviously, I don't know what he was thinking while he was writing. But I think there is something interesting in this procedure he uses and that, for me, has become important: which is how, in fact, making the writing a collective writing.

Deligny didn't go to the living areas, the close presences came to him to bring news and discuss issues. The network was then woven by the collective work of the close presences. The reflections about what was happening in the living areas came from the cartographies that, for the most part, were produced by Gisèle, who circulated in different living areas, and the others were drawn up by the close presences. But, in general, the way to get knowing this work is through Deligny's writings. We have contact with this work through the texts. It is curious to think that the writings carry the name of a person when the work was so fundamentally collective.

So, I keep thinking about how this procedure of writing incessantly was, on the one hand, like “making space”. And that is lucubration lucubrating... The incessant writing was perhaps something that allowed Deligny himself to elaborate the processes of his life and work. Returning to the texts, being able to review, move something that would be permanent in that place, question, call into question what is being written. This return to almost the same content, but making small detours, making small parts or some words disappear, or writing in other ways, or creating words, seems like a way of always being able to call into question what is being done. But I also think that it ends up being, although I don’t know if that was the intention, a way of bringing so many others into this writing. Making writing less personal and more mistaken, and because it is mistaken, more collective too. Destroying a little the place of this name that signs the authorship... I think there are writing strategies, speaking now for our own life practice, that could be interesting to try, in order to question our own name. I don’t know if it was intentional, but it turns out that Deligny’s writing puts these questions to us. And this is powerful for thinking about this collective writing and about a equivocation of experiences.

Camille

Still on the subject of writing, we have an unique writing in Deligny’s work. The access to his works, as they aren’t translated in Brazil, or rather, not much translated, restricts us to know his work (Matos; Miguel, 2020; Miguel, 2016). How do you perceive the power of studying Deligny?

Noelle

This question is interesting. Why is it powerful for us to study Deligny? This was a question that permeated me for a long time after the thesis, crossed by other questions, and I think it is an open question. I keep asking myself why it is important for us to study Deligny and be in contact with this work. I had a moment of cooling down in Deligny studies, very motivated by questions such as: what is powerful to think about our institutional creation and our discussion in the field of public policies? Why looking for an experience that is located in a time, in a place, that is still Eurocentric, that is still a very specific experience? Thinking about what we are looking for as a reference for these institutional discussions in South America, in Brazil. What is it that, looking for European authors, we replicate as processes of domination? And what other references can we bring to this discussion? These are all questions that permeate me, too. These are open questions and they need to be open. But I think that Deligny’s work has a power, even though it is a French, European reference, it is a minority reference, as it was a minority experience in that context. The field is majority, but the experience developed by Deligny and by the close presences in *Cévennes* is minority. So, I think this carries a power to us to think about our processes, there are things to think about, to be appropriated and changed in the way we want.

It is important that we appropriate these texts to be able to produce a digestion, a re-elaboration, a bit like Deligny did with the references he used. It is important even to be inspired by Deligny's way of reading and writing, which is to "betray" the content in whatever way is powerful for each person's work, for each person's development. And then, in that sense, I think it's important to get in touch with his production, because that's the only way we can put things together, make turns in understandings, create our own things. Being able to read him, being able to read who is reading him, who is working, is powerful in this sense of creating our meanings.

And I think so, there are few publications in Portuguese, but there are movements, there are people Reading. On February 8th, I will participate in a psychology's committee, which is a work to think about the field of care based on Deligny, there are movements. In October last year, there was an international meeting in Buenos Aires (Argentina). The first two international meetings took place in Rio (de Janeiro - BR) and now in Buenos Aires (Argentina), and the majority of people participating are from South America. I found it very interesting because they focused on Deligny, not only in a theoretical way, but also appropriating a lot of Deligny for action and intervention work. There was a strong participation of pedagogy with works in schools, prisons, I think it was very powerful. I think it gives meaning to Deligny's reading. How can it still be important to discover these texts? I think it has power for conceptual discussion and I think it has power for work, mixing references, being able to give other faces to this work.

Camille

I believe it also goes a little in line with Deligny's ethics, his writing not as a model, but as a trigger point of resistance. In your thesis, you describe him as a writer and poet. In some readings I did, he also presents a tendency to be described as a writer, poet and ethologist. Personally, I see his work very close to anthropology. Furthermore, he has productions that pass through different areas, such as cinema, philosophy and psychoanalysis. Although he didn't like definitions, because the possibility of delimiting him. Still, I'm interested in hearing from you about Deligny as an educator (Rampon, 2024).

Noelle

Thinking about Deligny as a writer makes sense to me as a way of trying to handle his transdisciplinarity. From the fact that he doesn't have any university education, to the opening of different fields of knowledge that appear in his texts, this idea of Deligny as a writer has a bit of this aspect of trying to translate the trans characteristics of his work and life. It could also be a way of showing and naming what, in fact, seemed to be his constant practice. Deligny had a daily practice of sitting and writing for hours and hours and we see this translated into this immense material he produced. Regardless of the area of knowledge, he was a guy who wrote; he was a writer.

I don't know exactly how you would define an educator to be able to answer your question. I think that Deligny, to some extent, is an educator. He worked for a long time in institutions related to the field of education, directly or indirectly: in schools, with young people considered offenders... I think there is a dimension of a Deligny educator there. But I would need to understand what you are calling being an educator. Because if it's a more closed idea in itself, I don't think so, but if it's a practice of understanding learning as something that takes place in an open experience, in attentive listening to the singularities of the people who are involved in those actions... For example, I think that all the experience of *La Grande Cordée* is about that.

Education is understood as a process of learning in the world, based on the singularities of each person and the opening of possibilities of relating to this world, of learning in some way to relate to this world, in experience. Not to reach the place of what is right, a learning in the sense of the hierarchization of knowledge and experiences, but rather, a possibility of learning how to live, in this more ethical sense. There is a strong dimension of a Deligny educator. But in that sense! If it is in the sense of a closed idea, of discipline, then no.

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