du cinéaste. Bien que la lettre soit un motif récurrent dans l'œuvre desplechienne, elle reste malheureusement à l'arrière-plan dans le texte d'Asibong qui se veut plutôt une étude psychologique et psychanalytique de l'entité familiale telle que représentée dans *Rois et reine*. Les projets artistiques de Sophie Calle prennent naissance dans sa correspondance personnelle. *Douleur exquise* relate les moments d'une rupture amoureuse en reproduisant des lettres de l'ancien amoureux et *L'homme au carnet* recompose le portrait d'un inconnu à partir d'un carnet d'adresses «trouvé» par l'artiste. Lorsqu'elles accèdent à l'œuvre artistique, les lettres occupent la «position d'objets esthétiques» (p. 211) soulevant du coup des questions éthiques liées à l'auctorialité: sans être destinataire de ses lettres, Calle en devient l'auteur du fait de leur exposition. Dans les deux cas, les deux hommes (l'amoureux et l'homme au carnet) dénoncent les procédés artistiques de Calle par le moyen de l'écriture et du documentaire.

Le dernier chapitre s'intéresse à la pratique épistolaire chez les écrivains contemporains à partir du livre d'Annie Ernaux, *L'autre fille*, publié dans la collection «Les Affranchis». Répondant à l'invitation de l'éditrice de la collection (écrire la lettre qu'on porte en soi, mais qu'on n'a jamais écrite), Ernaux transgresse la règle du silence imposée par sa famille et trouble sa tranquillité en rédigeant la lettre à sa sœur décédée qu'elle n'a jamais connue. Affronter les dangers et les risques éveille le désir de l'écriture chez l'auteur.

Si l'éclectisme est souvent un reproche adressé aux ouvrages collectifs dont la problématique se voit parfois diluée par des études de cas présentant peu de liens entre elles, le collectif dirigé par De Viveiros, Irvine et Schwerdtner fait la démonstration que la diversité sert tout à fait son propos et alimente une problématique riche et originale qui nous permet de traverser plus d'un siècle d'épistolarité.

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Frank Furedi. *Power of Reading: from Socrates to Twitter*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. 262 pp.; \$42.95 (cloth) ISBN 9781472914774

As someone who has spent a career in librarianship celebrating, extolling, and promoting reading and literacy as self-evident goods – ends in themselves – I found this book both affirming and bracing. It affirms my belief in books and reading, but it also reminds me of the

strong forces throughout history, including our own time, questioning and criticizing their value. Most significantly, Furedi has alerted me to important distinctions between reading and literacy!

This richly textured and highly readable study defines literacy as “a skill oriented towards the decoding of written text, and in a modern society that relies so much on communication this is an essential skill to possess” (ix). By comparison, reading is “much more than literacy... [it] involves interpretation and imagination; it is a cultural accomplishment through which meaning is gained.”

Furedi holds that we live in an age that extolls literacy and is ambivalent about how it is affected by technology, on the one hand fearing that the internet is reducing our ‘capacity to read,’ and on the other hand rejoicing that it permits us “to find meaning through the resources provided by an ever-changing, instantaneous media-rich environment.”

Proponents of reading in our age, however, when expressing concern about its decline “are often rebuffed as cultural dinosaurs.” Furedi contends that technology plays a minor role in the fate of reading. Instead his concern is with the meaning of reading and its cultural assumptions. In writing this book, therefore, he embarked “on a historical reading of reading, to explain how its meaning for people and its impact upon them have been perceived throughout history” (x).

A British Sociologist and Emeritus Professor from the University of Kent, Furedi has published extensively on education, authority, and intellectuals. In true scholarly fashion, he has assembled an impressive collection of primary and secondary sources to construct a major synthesis. Eight densely footnoted chapters – plus preface, introduction, and conclusion – survey reading from the ancient Greeks to the present. The ‘Socratic Paradox’ as outlined by Plato, sets the tone for the entire book. On the one hand, Socrates and an educated elite sharing the same values discussed ideas transmitted through orality and memory. On the other hand, a new technology was emerging as a contender for the transmission of ideas: writing and its partner reading. Socrates feared that reading and writing would provide the masses – a mass audience – with access to ideas they little understood, thereby threatening the social order. The debate continued through the ancient and medieval worlds. Judaeo-Christian cultures sacrilized religious texts and thereby their reading. The underlying question remained the same: does reading liberate people, permitting them to form their own opinions and direct their

own lives, or is it a pathological activity – a medicalized condition – turning people into powerless victims, manipulated by ideologues and elites? As, however, the great majority of people were illiterate, the debate was largely academic with few practical ramifications.

Following the appearance of Gutenberg's printing press in the fifteenth century, the democratization and proliferation of reading occurred – followed in turn by the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, extensive reading, and the love of reading. John Milton's *Areopagitia* stands as a powerful statement in support of readers' independence of mind and ability to reason on their own. The great social and political revolutions of the late eighteenth century led, however, to a conservative backlash, arguing that the mass of people are easily manipulated by subversive publications. Furedi discusses effectively the perceived threats to the social order from reading, beginning with Goethe's 1774 novel, the *Sorrows of Young Werther*, which was reputed to have launched a fashion for suicide among young people. Indiscriminate reading of bad or mediocre books, or simply reading too many books on any topic, was judged in some quarters to lead inevitably to physical and moral decline. Ensuring that people read the right books in moderate quantities became a widespread notion.

In the twentieth century, Marshall McLuhan and other book and media scholars began idealizing pre-literate oral societies, and questioning the value to society and individuals of reading and literacy. Studies of dyslexia and related disorders spoke of reading as an unnatural activity. Infantilization and medicalization of readers and those preoccupied with any medium of communication became a recurring theme from some commentators. Literacy movements emphasized the instrumentality and economic benefits of reading, but ignored the humanistic dimension – reading for pleasure and to determine content as part of decision-making.

This stimulating and provocative book will be read with interest by anyone concerned with book and media studies and the future of society. The interpretive framework will present a valuable counterpoint to standard histories of literacy and reading. There are no tables, illustrations, or graphs, but there is an excellent bibliography, and a good index.

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