

## REVIEW

**François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari: Biographie croisée* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2007), ISBN: 978-2707158727, translated as *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), ISBN: 978-0231145602**

François Dosse's *Intersecting Lives* is a comprehensive and polyvocal biography on the lives and work of Deleuze and Guattari. It is the only one of its kind, and given its depth, it is not likely to be eclipsed anytime soon. But *Intersecting Lives* is not a biography or intellectual history in the classical sense of privileging the figure of the *Grand homme* or aimed at restoring the causality of "seemingly" heterogenous events.<sup>1</sup> In a recent interview (2011) Dosse says he has instead "tried to see how the return of a biographical figure [is] not at all the return of the same," but rather a "microstoria" of all the differences, contingencies, and events, connected to this individual. Rather than the restoration of a linear process of "determinism and simple causality,"<sup>2</sup> Dosse says, "the biography allows us to connect new things, and shed new light on them"<sup>3</sup> but differentially: through a "choral plurality of voices."<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, Dosse marshals for this task the most impressive and diverse arrangement of voices one can imagine in recent French philosophy. The list of those who Dosse personally thanks in the opening pages alone includes almost every major living philosopher connected with Deleuze and Guattari. The collection of original interviews conducted by Dosse with people like Paul Veyne, Fanny Deleuze, Jacques Donzelot, Judith Revel, Eric Alliez, Frédéric Gros, François Regnault, Jean Oury, Jacques Rancière, Richard Pinhas, François Zourabichvili, Elias Sanbar, and many others, offers an absolutely unique contribution to understanding Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy and historical milieu.

In addition to the original interviews cited in every chapter, Dosse also draws on a variety of primary archive materials. Of particular interest are Deleuze's untranscribed/

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<sup>1</sup> François Dosse, "Figures historiques, événements mémorables : entretien avec François Dosse," Non-fiction.fr le portail des livres et des idées, Vol. 9 (2011). [http://www.nonfiction.fr/article-4689-p1-figures\\_historiques\\_evenements\\_memorables\\_entretien\\_avec\\_francois\\_dosse.htm](http://www.nonfiction.fr/article-4689-p1-figures_historiques_evenements_memorables_entretien_avec_francois_dosse.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 13.

untranslated audio lectures at Paris-VIII on Michel Foucault (1985–1986) and other course material from La Bibliothèque Nationale de France sound archives; written correspondences (with Deleuze and others) from Félix Guattari, Toni Negri, Louis Althusser, and François Châtelet; Guattari’s diary entries as well as his handwritten notes in the margins of various books including Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* from l’Institut Mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC)! If you can’t make it to the BNF or the IMEC anytime soon, this is perhaps the next best thing. Dosse must have spent an incredible amount of time reading through the hundreds of archive boxes associated with these authors. Original interviews, archive material, and additional interview material provided from people like Franco Berardi (Bifo)—who just published a biography of Guattari called *Félix Guattari: Thought, Friendship, and Visionary Cartography* (London: Palgrave, 2008)—are the material basis by which Dosse’s massive (500 plus page) microstoria is successfully erected.

*Intersecting Lives* is organized into three chronological and thematic parts: I. “Plis: Biographies Parallèles,” II. “Déplis: Biographies Croisée,” and III. “Surplis: 1980-2007.” Unfortunately, the English translation does not have quite the same ring to it: “Folds: Parallel Biographies,” “Unfolding: Intersecting Lives,” and “Surplises: 1980-2007.” Part one, as the title suggests, is split between Guattari’s early life and Deleuze’s early life. The first half follows Guattari’s childhood and life up to his position at Clinique de La Borde and his first meetings with Deleuze. Highlights of these sections include how Guattari became politicized as a young man as well as the daily workings at La Borde. The archive materials on this are incredible. The second half of this first part is devoted to Deleuze’s youth all the way up to the revolts of May 1968.

Part two is impressive in its scope. It includes the history of Guattari’s relationship with, and ultimate break from, Lacan. Lacan comes off in these stories as a self-absorbed authoritarian worried constantly about who is “stealing” his ideas (which he accuses Deleuze of doing in *The Logic of Sense!*). Lacan hears that Guattari is writing *Anti-Oedipus* with Deleuze and worries the two of them will criticize Lacanian orthodoxy. So Lacan takes Guattari to a fancy restaurant on the Seine and tries to get Guattari to tell him about the book—he even tries to influence it to be more focused on analysis! Lacan tries to see if Guattari is turning against him with Deleuze. Guattari tries to obscure this fact but when *Anti-Oedipus* is published and Lacan reads it... they never speak again. Beyond Lacan, part two also includes the historical and political background for situating *Anti-Oedipus* (May 1968, structuralism, Althusser, etc.), *Kafka, A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) (Israel-Palestine, the PLO, Elias Sanbar, Groupe d’Information de Prisons (GIP), etc.), as well as an impressive account of Deleuze’s philosophical friendship with Michel Foucault.

Part three (1980–2007) highlights Guattari’s work on ecology, Deleuze’s work on cinema, the impact of Deleuze and Guattari’s work around the world, and finally detailed descriptions of each of their respective deaths, funerals, and all those who mourned their death in different ways—much of it based on primary interviews and archive materials. It

was also fascinating to discover in this section that Deleuze wrote *What is Philosophy?* without Guattari but added his name to the book because of how much Guattari had influenced him.

I would like to focus on Chapter 17 in particular, "Deleuze and Foucault: A Philosophical Friendship." This is a fascinating chapter which manages to highlight and provide the philosophical and historical background for every major connection between Deleuze and Foucault. Dosse covers Deleuze and Foucault's connection to Nietzsche: they co-edited Nietzsche's complete works for Gallimard; they attend major Nietzsche conferences together; and they were both close to Pierre Klossowski who dedicated his book *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (1969) to Deleuze and *The Baphomet* (1965) to Foucault. Dosse covers the history of their mutual involvement in the Prison Information Group (GIP). Judith Revel, in her interview with Dosse, interestingly suggests that "Foucault took experience and practices [from the GIP] as his point of departure and conceptualized from there. Deleuze and Guattari invented war machines then tried them out." (313) Foucault wrote *Discipline and Punish* only after the GIP and Deleuze and Guattari became interested in the decentralized non-representational structure of the GIP only after writing about these themes in *Anti-Oedipus*. In each case, the GIP gave birth to a whole new relation between intellectuals and power for both Deleuze and Foucault. "A theorizing intellectual, for us," they say "is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness." (312) Dosse does not include the following, but it is also worth clarifying that their involvement in the GIP, according to the Deleuze's seminar on Foucault, was not at all an "academic critique of representation," but as a specifically "practical critique of representation,"<sup>5</sup> that supported a "non centralized movement" that both saw as an extension of the events of May 1968.<sup>6</sup>

Dosse also locates six points of discord in their relationship that led to many years of silence between them. (1) Foucault and Deleuze both demonstrated against the deportation of the Baader-Meinhof group's attorney Klaus Croissant from France, but Foucault refused to sign the petition because he wanted to more carefully define his support for Croissant. (2) Foucault and Deleuze held "diametrically opposed positions regarding the nouveaux philosophes: Foucault supported them, but they were violently challenged by Deleuze" (315). (3) Deleuze wrote a long article glorifying Yasser Arafat, but Foucault attacked totalitarianism in Syria and the Soviet Union and spared Israeli politics. (4) Deleuze was won over by Mitterrand's Socialist presidency, but Foucault thought it was best to criticize them, just as one would criticize any other party in power. (315) (5) In an interview with Dosse, Jacques Donzelot says that "Foucault didn't like *Anti-Oedipus* and told me so quite often." (316) Donzelot wrote a critique of *Anti-Oedipus* that he says Foucault gave to an American journal to feel justified in not having to write anything on it. (6) In the *History of Sexuality* Foucault argued against the Freudian conception of desire as lack. Deleuze then wrote a

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<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Paris-VIII Foucault Seminar," *BNF audio archives*, (Jan 7, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

letter to Foucault through François Ewald defending his usage of desire and arguing that the notion of pleasure interrupted the “immanent process of desire.” (316) In his book *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (1993) James Miller says, “soon thereafter, Foucault suddenly decided never to see Deleuze again.” (317) Dosse does not attempt to get to the bottom of these issues in any directly causal way but instead allows the tensions and unresolved questions to linger around the issue. There is yet plenty of work to be done for those who want to follow up on these issues further but Dosse has laid the groundwork for any such future inquiry.

There were however, two aspects that I found a bit lacking. First, *Intersecting Lives* is massive in its scope, but even in its 500 pages a good amount of depth must be sacrificed in order to touch upon all the intersecting lives of the book (not just Deleuze and Guattari’s). Thus, the chapters where Dosse engages in summaries of the main themes of *Logic of Sense*, *Anti-Oedipus*, and *A Thousand Plateaus* are at times so cursory that they may only be illuminating for those who have not read these works. Often they only raise more questions than they illuminate. Perhaps this is part of Dosse’s method? For those unfamiliar to Deleuze and Guattari this may be helpful but for more seasoned scholars some parts of the book may seem too introductory. However, this is most certainly made up for with the incredible historical background offered elsewhere and supported by archival research and original interviews.

Second, Deborah Glassman’s translation, while good overall, also leaves some things to be desired. She translated Dosse’s *History of Structuralism*, (1998) but her background is not in contemporary French philosophy. According to the publisher’s website (she is currently working for the African Development Bank in Tunis). However, her translation of *agencement* as “arrangement” (and not as “assemblage,” as is more common) I think does capture the more creative or active sense of *agencement* and *agencer* at work in the French. The word “assemblage” in English tends to sound more like a random collection of things and less constructivist than an active arrangement or *agencement*. I do not know if this was a conscious intervention on her part, but the effect is a good one.

In other places one wonders if her liberties are as desirable. For example, she translates, “De cette relation Foucault-Deleuze, on peut extraire bien davantage qu’un socle commun: un devenir du foucauldisme porté par Deleuze” (Biographie Croisée 392) as “We can see in this relationship between Foucault and Deleuze more than shared foundations; Deleuze allowed Foucauldian thinking to develop.” (329) This more literal translation seems to miss the philosophical usage importantly highlighted by Dosse throughout chapter 17. Dosse hyphenates “Foucault-Deleuze” just as Deleuze and Guattari so regularly use hyphens to indicate not merely the relation between two different things (as is implied in Glassman’s English translation) but a mutual transformation of both terms by the other such that the two become inseparable from each other. In the context of this passage what is at stake is whether Deleuze is merely “extending” (329) Foucault’s concept of biopower

in his essay "Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle," (1990) or whether Deleuze enters into a becoming with Foucauldianism [*un devenir du foucauldisme*] such that his concept of control and Foucault's concept of biopower both change and become indistinguishable. This is a point directly raised by Dosse on the previous page when he asks, "Beyond their differences and disputes, after the death of both men, can we reasonably speak about a "Foucault-Deleuzianism [*foucaldo-deleuzisme*]?" (391/328) This is an absolutely central question that remains largely unexplored in the literature on Deleuze and Foucault. Again, Dosse does an excellent job of providing the basic coordinates of the problem while allowing the answers and causal links to remain open.

One could hardly ask for a more expansive and methodologically copacetic biography on Deleuze and Guattari than *Intersecting Lives*. It manages to offer an incredible contribution accessible to new readers of "the Deleuze and Guattari network" (including Foucault, Althusser, François Châtelet, Toni Negri, Paul Virilio, and dozens more), as well as an indispensable resource for more seasoned scholars. Very impressive.

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