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François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, translation by Deborah Glassman. New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2010. ix + 651 pp. Illustrations and index. \$37.50 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-231-14560-2; \$25.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-231-14561-9.

Review by Michael Scott Christofferson, Adelphi University.

Reading Dosse's biography of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, I was reminded of "La Nuit de la Philosophie" at the École normale supérieure of 4-5 June 2010. From 8pm until dawn, the works of great philosophers from Plato to Foucault were read continuously in the courtyard while, in the classrooms, contemporary philosophers gave talks to enraptured audiences that jockeyed for position on windowsills and floors and craned their necks from hallways to catch a few words. The stifling heat of the packed room and inevitable message of André Glucksmann's talk, "Candide, héros des temps qui viennent," gave me the feeling of being transported back to the heated philosophical and political debates of 1977—an illusion that was quickly punctured by a glance at the program, which announced an hour-long discussion of *Les Soprano*, subtitled "L'inconscient comme problème moral : sommes-nous tous des gangsters?" Here philosophy was not only alive; it was celebrated and promised, in a night of communion with philosophers past and present, something as close to secular salvation as one can find in twenty-first-century Paris.

Dosse's book recalls this moment for two reasons. First, because it reconstructs a time in which the French enthrallment with philosophy was not limited to an occasional evening at the École normale supérieure, but rather a remarkable everyday feature of the French intellectual and cultural scene. Second, in its extremely detailed recounting of the lives and work of Deleuze and Guattari, it participates in this celebration of the French philosophical tradition. For the most part, this is a strength of the book, but it is also the source of a significant blind spot.

Deleuze and Guattari are, of course, the co-authors of *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* as well as *What is Philosophy?* and a book on Kafka. The decision to write a biography of the two of them together was motivated by Dosse's assessment that Guattari's contribution to their co-authored books has been unjustly overlooked. What makes this "intersection lives" approach so interesting are the enormous differences between the two men who had little in common beyond their interest in philosophy, left-wing attachments, and the curious fact that both of their fathers had supported the extreme right-wing Croix de Feu in the 1930s. Guattari was an energetic left-wing militant and disciple of Lacan who dove into the practical details of creating a social utopia in his work at La Borde clinic where he was one of the leading figures in this important experiment in institutional psychology. Deleuze, by contrast, was a philosophy professor devoted to his research and teaching who suffered from respiratory problems that deprived him of the boundless energy enjoyed by Guattari. Deleuze preferred the world of ideas to the hands-on work of Guattari and, unlike Guattari who worked with schizophrenics, "couldn't bear the sight of crazy people" (p. 8). Despite their closeness, their relationship remained primarily intellectual, and they never stopped using the formal "vous" with each other. Their collaboration was one that mobilized without lessening the differences between them.

Dosse's discussion of Deleuze consists primarily of a conventional analysis of his work, its origins, and its impact with some mention of his inspired teaching, left-wing politics, and relationship with other intellectuals such as Foucault. Deleuze's work is ably and comprehensively summarized and evaluated, from his early books on the history of philosophy to his more personal publications beginning with *Difference and Repetition* and continuing through his collaboration with Guattari and beyond. Not only is Deleuze's well-known contribution to the revival of Nietzsche in France discussed, but so is his perhaps lesser-known work on Kant and Bergson, as well as his enduring interest in literature and cinema, fields about which he wrote some important books and essays. Although Dosse's primary interest is in the collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari, his pages on Deleuze's work stand on their own. If there is one shortcoming to Dosse's account it would be in his failure to explain the origins of Deleuze's long war on totalizing philosophies that is intimately connected to his development of the concept of difference. Although the book's conclusion argues that the trauma of World War Two had a decisive influence on both Deleuze and Guattari, this insight is not otherwise developed. To be sure, Dosse mentions how Deleuze was profoundly impacted by his impression that he could never measure up in his parents' eyes to his older brother who died as a martyr in the Resistance, but he fails to make much of this or otherwise draw connections between Deleuze's biography and his oeuvre.

While Dosse's portrait of Deleuze is solid and interesting, that of Guattari is surely the more original and revealing of the two. This is partly a result of the source base. Dosse was able to fully exploit Guattari's personal papers, but lacked similar sources on Deleuze, who destroyed his archives before his death so that posterity would judge him solely on the basis of his published works (p. 368). To some degree, Dosse makes up for the lack of source materials on Deleuze with interviews. He conducted 140 interviews himself and used another 49 done by Virginie Linhart for her own work on Guattari. While these interviews help fill in the picture of Deleuze, they are particularly important for understanding Guattari. One hopes that they, unlike Deleuze's papers, are eventually deposited in an archive for use by other scholars.

Guattari emerges from Dosse's pages as a major figure on the extreme left with considerable influence in the run-up to and the aftermath of the events of May-June 1968. First a member of the French Communist Party and then a Trotskyist militant after World War Two, he played a key role the post-1956 efforts to reinvent communism, notably as one of the founders of *Tribune de discussion* and then as a central figure in *La Voie communiste* for which he assured funding that came from the La Borde clinic. Guattari's work at La Borde was absolutely central to his life and—Dosse's account suggests without directly saying it—important to the pre-68 extreme Left in France. La Borde was an innovator in institutional psychology that emphasized the importance of the insertion of the mentally ill into meaningful social networks. Thus, La Borde sought to involve the patients in the life of the clinic, creating at its heart a social club in which patients and staff mixed on equal terms and patients participated in its management. Beyond this, the rotation of tasks and sharing of salaries at the clinic put it at the forefront of the egalitarian critique of the division of labor that became so important in 1968. Its influence was felt in the many young student militants who were brought to the clinic by Guattari and by Guattari's political activism in the years before 1968. Discontented with the Maoist direction taken by *La Voie communiste* after the Algerian War, Guattari founded the Fédération des groupes d'étude et de recherches institutionnelles (FGERI) in 1965. It, its journal *Recherches*, and its political wing, the Opposition de gauche, might all be seen as efforts by Guattari to apply the La Borde model and his concept of transversality that emerged from his practice there more broadly.

Guattari, who saw in the Movement of 22 March that catalyzed the upheaval of 1968 the type of movement he had sought to create in the Opposition de gauche, participated in the events and would later seek to rekindle what Guattari called the "revolutionary machine" of 1968. Ironically, his revolutionary politics may have contributed more to reformism as the Centre d'études, de recherches et de formation institutionnelles (CERFI), the research end of the FGERI, became an important voice in institutional reform in 1971-1973 when it was awarded significant government contracts under the

Chaban-Delmas government, which sought social scientific advice to address the post-68 crisis. In later years, Guattari played an important role in the 1970s Western European terrorism crisis. His Centre d'Initiatives pour de Nouveaux Espaces Libres (CINEL) defended beleaguered activists pursued by European states for their association with terrorism. Among them were Alternative groups in Berlin, and Klaus Croissant, the lawyer of German Red Army Faction (RAF) leader Ulrike Meinhof. It was especially active in Italy where Guattari was a hero of the extreme Left, even a sort of "Italian Cohn-Bendit" (p. 489). Guattari's refusal to condemn either German RAF or Italian Red Brigade terrorism was controversial, but, according to Dosse, he "played a major role" behind the scenes dissuading people from taking the terrorist path (p. 295). Although this may be true, it is worth noting that Dosse's claim is based on testimony from interviews, which seem rather unreliable on these sorts of questions. Guattari, like Deleuze in a more low-key manner, was one of what seems to be relatively few intellectuals who remained true to the radical thrust of 1968 throughout the 1980s. The widening gap between his politics and the direction taken by France in the mid-1980s were a source of great disappointment for him that contributed to his sinking into depression in the last years of his life.

The collaborative works of Deleuze and Guattari are as carefully examined as their work apart. In discussing *Anti-Oedipus*, Dosse insists on the importance of Guattari's contribution, which he believes has been insufficiently recognized. Although Dosse argues that it is impossible to determine specifically who is responsible for this or that idea, he notes that Guattari wrote the first draft of the book and made vital contributions to their critique of psychoanalysis and their idea of militant action. The biological metaphors of "machines" and, later in *A Thousand Plateaus*, of rhizomes are, Dosse suggests, largely Guattari's inspiration.

*Anti-Oedipus* and the broader collaboration of Deleuze and Guattari are presented as a product of 1968, but the relationship between their work and the broader context is insufficiently explicated by Dosse. When Dosse discusses the influences on their work and its reception, he focuses mainly on other intellectuals. Fragments of a broader history of their work can be glimpsed in Dosse's book, but it is insufficiently pursued. *Anti-Oedipus* is notoriously difficult, yet it received widespread public attention. It sold out in three days and, after its publication, Guattari "was overwhelmed by the requests for individual schizoanalysis" (p. 270). Dosse recounts multiple cases of people who eagerly attended Deleuze's lectures despite not understanding a word of what he said. Deleuze feared that people were misreading his book by seeing schizophrenia as intrinsically liberating and felt it necessary to make a public statement to disavow this and other interpretations. What explains this broad enthusiasm for difficult works that, as Dosse notes, even trained philosophers had difficulty comprehending? What was the broader cultural significance of *Anti-Oedipus*? Dosse does not address these sorts of questions to any significant extent. Yet, for someone like me who, at the Nuit de la philosophie, felt like a cultural anthropologist studying a tribal ritual, these are precisely the questions that need to be asked in order to understand Deleuze and Guattari, the conditions of possibility of their oeuvre, and especially its historical significance. [1]

In sum, because of the depth of its research and the care with which it is written, Dosse's book is an essential contribution to our understanding of Deleuze and Guattari. But, on the other hand, its failure to adequately address one of the most fundamental questions about them makes it somewhat less than definitive or fully satisfying.

Translation rarely receives much comment in reviews of scholarly books, no doubt because most journals have strict word limits that make anything more than a passing comment on it impractical. Fortunately, the flexible length of H-France reviews allows us the luxury of examining this aspect of scholarship that is of central importance to our profession and deserves more attention. The following paragraphs comment on Deborah Glassman's translation of Dosse's book. I hope that they might encourage other H-France reviewers to examine more closely translations that they are reviewing.

Unfortunately, Dosse's important book has been done a disservice by a translation that is flawed on several levels. One of the stranger aspects of the English language text is its translation of the titles of publications. Not only are the titles of books that are already well-known in English, like Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, given in translation—which is normal—but so are the names of most periodicals. Thus *Clarté* becomes *Clarity* (p. 80) and the *Revue française de psychanalyse* becomes the *French Psychoanalytic Review* (p. 211). Although I found this confusing, it might be acceptable but for the fact that the method is not followed consistently. Thus, we read, for example, that Sylvère Lotringer “created his own literary review at the Sorbonne, *L'Entrave*. As of 1959, he began writing regularly in *French Letters*” (p. 465). Why translate *Les Lettres françaises* while leaving *L'Entrave* untranslated? Some readers might assume that he switched from writing in French to writing in English. Sometimes, the mixture of translated and untranslated terms renders passages downright confusing. One paragraph tells us that “The FCP [presumably the French Communist Party, although there the reader is never told this, and no table of abbreviations is provided] and the General Workers' Union [presumably the Confédération générale du travail] had kept students and workers separated,” only to state shortly thereafter that a specific “factory... was closed off by the FCP and the CGT [another unidentified abbreviation, which should be the GWU if the translator were consistent with her decision to use the abbreviation FCP], just as it had been in 1936” (p. 173).

There are also many instances of imprecise rendering of the names of institutions and titles. Thus, where Dosse speaks of “L'Institut d'études politiques de Paris” [2], the translation reads “the Paris Institute for Political Sciences Studies (the *Institut des études de sciences politiques*, or ‘Sciences Po’)” (p. 82). (I am comparing the translation with the original French version, Dosse's *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari: Biographie croisée*.) Likewise the translation renders the “Opposition de gauche,” a leftist organization in which Guattari was active, as “*Opposition gauche*” (p. 79). At one point, the translator turns Deleuze into a history professor, writing that he “became an assistant professor of history at the Sorbonne” (p. 116), although Dosse makes it clear that Deleuze was an “assistant d'histoire de la philosophie” [3], which is, of course, rather different. Even more troubling is the statement that Guattari and his associates were involved in “the occupation of the ENS on the rue d'Ulm Street” (p. 172). Besides the redundancy of “rue” and “Street,” the French version clearly states that it was a matter of “l'occupation rue d'Ulm de l'Institut pédagogique national.” [4] The rue d'Ulm may be short, but it is big enough for more than one educational institution.

Even worse than these specific misidentifications of institutions and titles is the confusion that is introduced by botched translations that entirely transform the meaning of sentences. In the following, Plato's attack on the sophist is turned into the sophists' attack on Plato: “Ironie du sort, suprême paradoxe, le sophiste que pourfend Platon comme incarnation du faux, du simulacre, satyre ou centaure, n'est-il pas en définitive le vrai philosophe?” [5] versus “The irony of destiny and the supreme paradox is that the sophist, whether he takes the form of a satyr or a centaur, attacking Plato for embodying the untrue and the simulacrum, may have ultimately been the true philosopher” (p. 151). And in the following, Dosse's depiction of the Italian Communist and Christian Democratic Parties is transformed beyond recognition: “Ils [les communistes italiens] sont alors l'aile marchante et envinée de l'eurocommunisme. En même temps, leur alignement derrière les autorités italiennes, la recherche d'une alliance avec un parti aussi compromis que la Démocratie chrétienne ont pour effet dramatique...” [6] versus “Italian communists had at that time...formed a promarket wing favoring a kind of ‘Euro-Communism.’ At the same time, their alignment with Italian authorities and the search for an alliance with a party as jeopardized as the Christian Democrats had dramatic effects” (p. 285). One wonders how the activist and envied wing of Eurocommunism became a pro-market one. And would not “compromised”—presumably by corruption—make more sense than “jeopardized” to describe the Christian Democrats in this context?

I cannot say without spending far more time on this matter, how prevalent these translation errors are. I have not checked the entire book and only have noted these errors because the English-language text

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seemed suspect. They could be the visible tip of an iceberg of errors, but more likely the translation is broadly correct. Still, they point to the need for more vigilance both by translators and by presses. Anyone reading this English-language version of Dosse's book would be wise to check the French-language original before using it to make specific claims about Deleuze and Guattari.

## NOTES

[1] The beginning of an answer to my questions can be found in Julian Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007), which is much more attentive to the broader context.

[2] François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari: Biographie croisée* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007), p. 104.

[3] Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari*, p. 144.

[4] Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari*, p. 210.

[5] Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari*, p. 186.

[6] Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari*, p. 340.

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