

Deleuze and Guattari Through the Looking Glass

MARGRIT TALPALARU

François Dosse. *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*. Trans. Deborah Glassman. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. 672 pp.

François Dosse's account of the intellectual relationship between Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari starts from the thesis that the two played equal, albeit different, roles in the formulation of their influential works. Dosse constructs a strong argument for recuperating Guattari's significance to their collective theories and works. Indeed, from the structure of the book, which debuts its "Parallel Biographies" section with Guattari's intellectual and political trajectory, Dosse is intent on writing Guattari back into the well-known "Deleuzian" theories. Very early in the Introduction, Dosse explains that "the writing plan for *Anti-Oedipus* was that Guattari sent his texts to Deleuze, who then reworked them for the final version" (7). Dosse characterizes the collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari as one that drew strength from their divergent areas of specialization:

When we read the copious notes that Guattari took, we have some sense of how important his contributions were, particularly with respect to psychoanalysis and militant political activism, the areas where Deleuze wanted Guattari's competence, which was greater than his own (192).

This statement appears at the beginning of the second section of the book, as Dosse prepares to undertake the comprehensive description of the practical and intellectual ins and outs of Deleuze and Guattari's collaboration. These numerous iterations of the thesis serve as a lens through which readers can interpret the contributions both thinkers brought to their collaborative projects.

For this purpose, Dosse rallies a massive amount of information—as evident from the immensity of the book, which is over 650 pages in length—to illustrate the era of the two thinkers' encounter. A certain part of the 1960s in France—the intellectual, revolutionary decade—leaps with great force from the pages of this book. Indeed, the level of detail and documentation seems at times more worthy of a catalogue than a biography. For example, the number of people populating La Borde—the alternative mental health care clinic that Guattari ran together with Jean Oury in the 1950s and

60s—in the first chapters of the book can be overwhelming at times.

However, it is this comprehensiveness and level of detail that make this biography an invaluable resource for a varied audience, from a reader who wants a crash-course in Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis to someone whose understanding of their work can be enriched by a more in-depth knowledge of their contemporaneous political situation. Indeed, it seems as if not many questions remain unanswered in this biography that moves with ease from systematic explanations of major Deleuze-Guattarian concepts, to the political situation around May 1968 and beyond, and even to titillating details about Jacques Lacan's temper tantrums (185-87) or to information about Alain Badiou's student "brigades" (367) meant to disrupt and "prevent Deleuze from finishing his seminar" (366) at Vincennes.

Part 1, "Parallel Biographies," traces the personal, intellectual, and political biographies of the two theorists before their encounter and collaboration. Dosse spares no details. Guattari's formation as a "militant psychoanalyst" (1) at La Borde Clinic emerges from within a detailed description of both the daily activities, the organization, and many of the notable people who passed through the clinic. Dosse is careful to also trace the origins of some of the theoretical pylons of the later Deleuze-Guattarian theory within both Guattari's professional and revolutionary activities and Deleuze's intellectual formation, from Guattari's attempt to "enable another form of subjectivity to emerge from the 'collective arrangement of enunciation'" (87) to Deleuze's quest for what would later be theorized as the rhizome, when he was talking about "the importance of iris roots as a metaphor for networking" (117). This section also provides an excellent introduction to the formative theories and philosophies developed by Deleuze and Guattari, including Lacan's influence on Guattari, and Deleuze's genealogy of a "vitalist philosophy" (129), taking him from Spinoza to Nietzsche and Bergson. This first section ends with a discussion of Guattari's direct involvement in and Deleuze's intellectual support of the movement of May 1968, whose events and happenings enjoy a generous contextualization.

The second section of the biography, "Unfolding: Intersecting Lives," chronicles the actual collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari, detailing the main points and the reception of their co-written books. Alongside the context of the latter's publication, one of the most valuable features of this part of the book is Dosse's tracing of the origins and intellectual genealogies of some of the crucial Deleuze-Guattarian concepts. In reading the two volumes subtitled *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*—arguably Deleuze and Guattari's best-known books—it is clear that the authors are writing in response to a number of theorists and intellectual movements. However, unless one is a specialist in the fields of continental philosophy, psychoanalysis, literature, music,

and the physical sciences, some or many of these interlocutors may remain unidentified. It is here that Dosse contributes the missing pieces, by providing an annotated bibliography of sorts for Deleuze and Guattari's intellectual influences and theoretical antagonists, thus remedying the opaqueness of their work in this respect.

Dosse's attention to detail and his lengthy explanations and contextualizations of the founding Deleuze-Guattarian concepts are sometimes undermined by a translation which, although generally seamless, does not always take into account the already established English terminology for these concepts. The well-known and avowedly "essential" notion of "arrangement" (10 and *passim*) is better known in the English publications as "assemblage"; in the English chronology of social machines, the first one appears as "Primitive" rather than "Savage" (200); the "collective arrangement of utterance" (263) had been previously translated into English as "the collective assemblage of enunciation" (*Plateaus* 79-80s); finally, what in this translation appears as "rules" (203) have become rather consecrated as "axioms" in the English Deleuze-Guattarian lexicon. While these minor slippages do not necessarily derail the reader familiar with Deleuze and Guattari, they might become rather frustrating for the newcomer who would rightly look at Dosse's biography as a companion to his or her introduction to the two theorists.

One of the most compelling qualities of this biography resides precisely in its far-reaching contextualizations. In this respect, Dosse not only explains Deleuze-Guattarian concepts, but he also illustrates their practice in two ways: by describing their adoption and application by the theorists' contemporaries, and by enacting them himself. The latter is probably the most subtle of Dosse's feats, but becomes visible on analysis of the structure of this book, which, even though arranged seemingly chronologically, constantly seeks the points of rhizomatic connection between theory, politics, and his subjects' lives. The detailed section on Guattari's work at the clinic La Borde can be viewed as immanence-in-action: Dosse vividly describes the daily life there and the non-hierarchical arrangements in which doctors, nurses, and patients worked side-by-side, displaying "the idea of a communist utopia whereby each staff member would alternate between manual labor and intellectual work" (44). Dosse credits this type of organization with attracting intellectuals with varied interests and specializations to LaBorde, something which, in turn, allowed for the already progressive psychiatry practiced there to be enriched with multi-disciplinary perspectives. As the author asserts at the end of chapter titled "The 'Molecular Revolution,'"

For Guattari, the CINEL represented the possibility of demonstrating the efficiency of a micropolitics endowed with minimal organizational means and simply linked to action, thereby breaking with traditional schemas. It would have been the political branch of the CERFI, whose activity dealt with the humanities (305).

In this manner, Dosse argues for a symbiotic relationship between Guattari's professional (LaBorde, FGERI, CERFI) and political (May '68, Italy '77, CINEL) practice and his theoretical contributions to the collaboration with Deleuze: "Guattari's ideas were inscribed within a whole series of social practices linked to Marxism, institutional psychotherapy, and a series of research groups like the CERFI, which were experimental sites for the concepts he had worked out with Deleuze" (313).

Dosse's constant return to some issues, e.g., the many concepts of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, further emphasizes the book's rhizomatic structure. Whenever he introduces a new subject, as, for instance, the importance of music or literature to Deleuze's philosophy, Dosse returns to a discussion of its appearance, use, and significance to the collaborative work of the two theorists. As much as this feature might frustrate a reader looking for a straightforward and self-contained discussion of *A Thousand Plateaus*, for example, it underlines Dosse's enactment of schizoanalysis at the same time as he is describing it. Moreover, this spiral movement, just as it functions in Deleuze and Guattari's work, serves to move the narrative ahead, rather than plaguing it with redundancies.

The final section of the biography, "Surplices: 1980-2007," completes the cycle: from individual biographies in the beginning, through the intersection of the two thinkers, and back to individual lives. This concluding section, like any description of a finale, stands rather in opposition to the vivacity and exuberance of the previous two. Dosse seems keenly aware of this melancholy tone, so he changes the structure from the first section. Instead of examining each individual biography separately, as he did in the first part, he alternately weaves the strands, allowing time to progress simultaneously for both Deleuze and Guattari's lives toward the inevitable ending, their deaths. If the structure of this section differs from that of the previous sections, the main feature of comprehensiveness endures, as we learn about the thinkers' publications post collaboration, their failing health, and their personal and intellectual relationships and struggles. Guattari's turn to ecology and Deleuze's turn to film theory are chronicled with the same minuteness as their work on *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Moreover, many of the final pages are dedicated to investigating the reception, followers, and influence of Deleuze and Guattari's collective works around the world. Finally, the very last arc closing the circle appears in the Conclusion, where Dosse reiterates his thesis: "Our study may help correct few [sic] blind spots that have led to minimizing and even eliminating Guattari's role, leaving only Deleuze's name" (519).

Dosse characterizes the two authors as dissimilar, yet complementary collaborators: Guattari is constructed as the dynamic political activist, always on the lookout for experimentation (433), and ready to birth a new, progressive, and more humane world, while Deleuze is the intellectual, physically subdued by his lifelong pulmonary

problems, anchored in and forever returning to transform philosophy into a science of triumphant life. In the “improbable marriage of the orchid and the wasp” (519), which author was the wasp? Whatever the precise answers to this question might be, Dosse has amassed an enormous amount of evidence in this “intersected” biography to prove both the complexity of Deleuze and Guattari as humans, public intellectuals, activists, as well as their manifold and enduring influences on philosophy, psychiatry, politics, and aesthetics.

Works Cited

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987. Print.

Margrit Talpalaru is an instructor in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Canada. Her recently defended dissertation relies on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in its examination of the nature of corporate capitalism through the lens of corporate culture, literature, and non-fiction. Her current research investigates the collusion of the increasingly popular phenomenon of charitable giving with corporate capitalism.