HISTORIAN'S SELF WRITING: INTERVIEW WITH C. DELACROIX, F. DOSSE AND P. GARCIA

Escrita de si dos historiadores: entrevista com C. Delacroix, F. Dosse e P. Garcia

Escritura de sí de los historiadores: entrevista con C. Delacroix, F. Dosse y P. Garcia

INTERVIEW WITH:
CHRISTIAN DELACROIX[I]*
FRANÇOIS DOSSE[II]**
PATRICK GARCIA[III]***

INTERVIEWERS:
DAIANE MACHADO[IV]****
RAPHAEL GUILHERME DE CARVALHO[V]*****

https://doi.org/10.1590/S2178-149420210311

[I]Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée University and Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent – Paris, France.
*PhD in History (delacroixchristian@gmail.com)

[II]Université de Paris-12 and Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent – Paris, France.
**PhD in History (francois.dosse@gmail.com)

[III]Université de Cergy-Pontoise and Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent – Paris, France.
***PhD in History (patrickgarcia75@me.com)
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5745-4837

[IV]Universidade Estadual Paulista "Júlio de Mesquita Filho" – Franca (SP), Brazil.
****PhD and postdoctoral researcher in History at Universidade Estadual Paulista "Júlio de Mesquita Filho", with a research internship at Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (FAPESP Research Grant, 2018/06413-9) (daiane_vm@yahoo.com.br)
http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6884-4486

[V]Universidade de São Paulo – São Paulo (SP), Brazil.
*****PhD in History from Universidade Federal do Paraná, postdoctoral researcher at Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros da Universidade de São Paulo and Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (FAPESP Research Grant, 2019/03088-2) (raphaelguilherme83@gmail.com)
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8905-5491

Interview granted on November, 2019, Paris, France. Article received on July 15, 2021 and approved for publication on July 20, 2021.

CC BY

The following interview with historians Christian Delacroix, François Dosse and Patrick Garcia, on self writing and historiography, was conducted by Daiane Machado and Raphael Guilherme de Carvalho, in Paris, in November 2019. We both carried out, between 2019 and 2020, postdoctoral internships at Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP), a Mixed Research Unit (linked to the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the University of Paris 8) which hosts the programme *Histinéraires: la fabrique de l'histoire telle qu'elle se raconte*, the subject of the interview.

This programme, funded by Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) and directed by Patrick Garcia, brings together several institutions, such as the Centre Georges Chevrier (Dijon), Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes (LARHRA, Grenoble-Lyon) and Temps, Espaces, Langages, Europe Méridionale-Méditerrané (TELEMME, Aix-Marseille), as well as IHTP. Its aim is to collect and analyze the *Mémoires de synthèse des activités scientifiques* (summaries of scientific activities), produced in the competitive examinations for *Habilitations à diriger des recherches* (authorizations or accreditations to supervise research), in the discipline of history, running since the end of the 1980s, in order to study the contemporary historian community in France. This study values reflexivity within this community and takes as its basis sociology and history of science, while maintaining a dialogue with other disciplines and historiographies practiced in other countries.

Delacroix, Dosse and Garcia, who make up the core of the IHTP in the programme, have conducted for over two decades, in this laboratory, several seminars on historiography, from which some works in common have emerged, such as *Historicités* (Éditions La Découverte, 2009). They have also worked together on the interdisciplinary journal *Espaces Temps*, as they will tell us throughout the interview. In Brazil, they collaborated on the translation of *Correntes históricas na França* (2012), in a partnership between the publisher of Universidade Estadual Paulista "Júlio de Mesquita Filho" (UNESP) and the publisher of Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV).

We invite you, then, to read the entertaining conversation with Delacroix, Dosse and Garcia, which itself goes through the words of these historians in the first person, retelling, in a light-hearted manner, their trajectories, the partnerships established and the common contributions to historiography, as well as the conduct and expectations surrounding the *Histinéraires* programme. Finally, we hope that this conversation will stimulate the interest of the reading public in the study of academic memoirs and other self narratives.

Interviewers: For a start, we would like to try to make a location gesture. Could you describe your academic background to the Brazilian public?

Delacroix: I have a philosophical background, which means that I first studied philosophy at Paris I (we used to call it "the Sorbonne"). I passed my philosophy degree in November 1968: 68 was, let's say, "particular" at the Sorbonne. Afterwards, for personal reasons (militant commitment to the extreme left), I abandoned my studies for four years, worked in various factories and then resumed my studies, bifurcating towards history. So, I did "classical" studies in history: bachelor's degree, master's degree, postgraduate DEA[1]. I passed the recruitment exams, the CAPES[2] in history and geography, and the *agrégation*[3] in history. I then became an associate teacher in secondary education for fifteen years, between 1973 and 1992. It was at that time that I met Patrick Garcia at a secondary school in the Paris suburbs, where I was teaching and where Patrick had been appointed to. We ended up in the same establishment and it was he who got me into the journal *EspacesTemps*, where François also was. I was recruited at that time, in what was called the IUFMs[4], the Teacher Training Institutes, where I stayed for about ten years. After ten years, I was recruited at the University of Marne-la-Vallée, where I taught historiography and was also preparing the competitive examination for history teachers (the CAPES). That's it, in a few words!

Garcia: I studied history, and some time later, also because of my militant activities, I did a master's degree and then passed the *agrégation* and CAPES in history. I taught for a few years in secondary school, I think three or four and a half years. That's where I met Christian. As part of the preparation for my thesis, which dealt with the bicentenary of the French Revolution, I was put in contact with the journal *EspacesTemps* and, in particular, with François, who, at that time, was preparing an issue on the commemoration of May 1968, which incidentally became the issue "89/68 confrontations". Then, I became an ATER[5] for six months at the IUFM of Versailles, preparing for the new CAPES competitive examination, which is a historiography and epistemology competitive examination. At the end of that year, I became a PRAG[6]. Then I was elected lecturer [*maître de conférence*s], and, finally, at a late stage, I believe in 2011, I defended my HDR[7] and became a University Professor [*professeur des universités*].

Dosse: I'll start at the end, by what unites the three of us. One thing we've had in common for a long time is that all three of us have been preparing for the historiography, epistemology, a little historical and pedagogical at the same time, competitive examination for the CAPES, which has been recruiting history teachers since 1992. It's for students who already have a bachelor's degree and who are preparing for the teaching profession, which is why we have published a certain number of things together, such as the *Les courants historiques en*

France, like the two volumes of *Historiographies*. Then other books less focused on the competitive examination, such as on Ricoeur and Certeau...

Delacroix: And which are related to the seminar we did together.

Dosse: That's it! And which are related to *EspacesTemps*, where we met each other. Then, indeed, we have had an intellectual life together at the Institute of History of the Present Time, the IHTP, since the beginning of the 2000s. In fact, exactly in 1998, around Certeau and with Michel Trebitsch. So, from then on, the work was more integrated within the IHTP. There is one place to which I am grateful, and I say it in every opportunity, which is the University of Vincennes, created in the wake of 68. I owe a great deal to this early spirit of Vincennes, to the multidisciplinarity, to the fact that there were no barriers, no frontiers between disciplines, and so on. It's a university that was made against competitive examinations, but at one point the question had to be asked: "What do we do with the knowledge we've accumulated and our social role?". So, there is indeed political commitment, there is the *milieu* of Vincennes and, after, the competitive examinations. Then I had to do a bit like Christian, it was around the same period since I got the *agrégation* in 1973, so I started in the secondary school [*lycée*] as a teacher in 1973, 1974, and I left in 1993, to be in charge of this historiography and epistemology competitive examination. So, that makes 20 years of high school, the good years of teaching. In the end, I have some excellent memories of it. Then there was the need to do research and then to detach myself a little from teaching to devote myself to research and publications. So I published a number of books.

Garcia: I would like to add that I did my thesis under the direction of Michel Vovelle, in Paris 1, after studying in Toulouse, on the bicentenary of the French Revolution, a subject that was submitted when the commemoration had not taken place. And on the DDG[8], I would also just like to come back for a little word. The meeting at *EspacesTemps* was quite exceptional, then we decided to do things together and, above all, I think we found a rather rare way of working, since we manage to write texts together without any problem. We have a kind of veto right at each other, which we've never used, but it exists!

Interviewers: To what do you attribute this success?

Delacroix: I think [we] all have the same things in common on the intellectual level, a *rapprochement*, an intellectual commitment. I think it's the importance we attach to reflexivity, to the epistemology of the discipline, to the historiographical depth that the history of the discipline gives us. I think that is [what we have in] common, even though we are different, of course, aren't we? We have differences, but I think that's what unites us strongly. I would add that we accept disagreements!

Garcia: I believe that there is a basis of respect...

Dosse: But I believe that the most fundamental thing behind it is that there is a friendly relationship that explains the duration [of our partnership]. So, if there is one area that is not punctual, it is the reflexivity of history, historiography. It's not obvious that, indeed, all three were interested in Certeau. And yet, that was the case. Besides, it was one of the elements of the break with *EspacesTemps*, since Certeau had been proposed, and, apparently, this was not followed by the rest of the team, it only interested the historian part of the journal. Afterwards we were able to work on epistemological figures, so we continued to dig the furrow from one year to the next, then we had research programmes, ran a seminar every year at the IHTP, and had fun doing it. It's true that it's quite exceptional, because there are no institutional issues at stake.

Garcia: We have always been, in fact, very much on the fringes of the institutions.

Dosse: *EspacesTemps* was totally marginal, we only had one room at the École des Hautes Études. In the beginning, the seminar at the IHTP was, I remember, tolerated. We took a place, that is to say, we have been one of the axes of the IHTP for several years. But it's true that, when you look at the university, there are often issues of power, in such a way that this kind of collaborative work bursts out quite quickly.

Delacroix: Then, there was also, I think, a part of our professional experience that was common... That is to say, the preparation for the competitive examinations, the defense of a certain conception of the exams being prepared, and an attachment to the epistemology of history and historiography.

Garcia: I would add one last element, which is that all three of us have had different militant backgrounds, and we have retained a capacity for argumentation, dialogue and benevolent vehemence. So how did we arrive at the *Histinéraires* project? We made a book together on all the historical trends since the 19th century, and I realized that, in the end, we didn't have a lot of data on the historians of that time (when we had any). So I was a bit unsatisfied when I had to write my HDR. In fact, the first thing I wrote was the dissertation, partly to ask myself what I was doing there, to make sense of it. The HDR, an accreditation to supervise research in order to become a professor, is composed of three elements: an unpublished manuscript that is close to the thesis, a collection of articles, and, then, a research project, therefore called a synthesis dissertation of the scientific activity, which has evolved a lot since it was instituted by the 1988 decree. At the beginning, it was supposed to be just a slightly detailed CV (curriculum vitae), and, gradually, it took the form of a narrative (at least for some) of the career path. When I wrote mine (there is a footnote that attests to this), I said: it would be good to study them, because, after all, it will be a means of gaining access to

the plurality or diversity of the career paths, whereas historiography is most often studied on the basis of declaratory, programmatic texts, instead of the great authors. So, I had this idea, and, obviously, I took it to my friends. As there are these so-called "open" calls for projects, i.e. non-specific, where there is no precise title within the framework of the ANR[9], we brought together all our networks of old friends and others, and built this project, which was accepted, somewhat surprisingly, immediately. This proves that our idea of thinking about forms of reflexivity always at work was fully received.

Delacroix: I think that the previous work that has been done on the importance of the writing of history, the importance of the historical subject, has contributed to the sensitiveness to the exploitation of this source. Ego-history played an important role, as well.

Dosse: As for me, I had been asked by Pierre Nora to express my opinion in the debate on these *Essais d'ego-histoire*, and I had been one of the rare ones to defend the validity of it, because the points of view were rather critical. Not all of them, but most of them. I published *L'histoire en miettes* in 1987, so I was already reflecting on historiography. I could see how to capture the spirit of an era, how the personal involvement of the historian was quite relevant and I defended it as such. I was able to see, later on (when I did my biography of Nora, I was able to access all the files of the *Essais d'ego-histoire*), how much resistance there had been, how Nora found no one [willing to accept] most of the proposals he made to those close to him. They were almost forced to say "yes"; they said "no". Because it wasn't done yet (we are in the first publications of *Essais d'ego-histoire*; it was 1982).

The first project was called "self-history" [*auto-histoire*] (by the way, it was not called "ego-history"), and should be published in Nora's collection called *Témoins*, which is not highly epistemological. It was only later, in the 1980s, that Nora realized that it was more than the testimonies he was collecting, it was a reflexivity that had to be thought about with a new historical age, a new age of historical writing. The hypothesis that I am making, finally, what I am saying in Nora's biography, is that there are twin books, since *Realms of Memory* [*Les lieux de mémoire*] are there, generating both memories (since volume I appeared, in 1984). Nora realizes, indeed, that one cannot make a social history of memory without taking partial history into account (this is, even the book he theorized with the *Bibliothèque des histoires*). From this point on, the historian as subject is involved in his object. What is totally indispensable, and particularly so in Nora's speciality, is a history of the present time. Nora's chair was History of the Present [*Histoire du présent*]. So there is a concomitance here, which means that, yes, we couldn't help but be interested in this aspect, and we have seen it historically, including in the definition of what *Mémoires de Synthèse des Activités Scientifiques* (Summaries of Scientific Activities) (MSAS) is. By those who set it up at the time of the end of the doctoral thesis [*these*

d'État], it was not at all conceived as essays of ego-history, but simply as a kind of synthesis of the works, plural and not monolithic like the doctoral thesis [*these d'État*], but simply as a much improved CV, a rather classical bio-bibliography. However, as time goes by, we can see that more and more care was taken in the elaboration of this MSAS, which appears as a genre and even as a collection, etc.

Delacroix: Yes, I think we must remember a conjuncture where there was the conjunction of two resistances. I'm talking about the failure of ego-histories, since, at the time, they were rather badly received. This was due to the resistance to speak about oneself for the historian, to commit oneself, to get involved. There is a very old disciplinary tradition (in history), a somewhat objectivist one, which distances the self. The second resistance, in my opinion, is against all that was also called epistemology, a derogatory term for many historians. This is also part of the disciplinary tradition, i.e. mistrust of anything labelled as "theoretical". I believe that these two resistances are gradually crumbling, something that ego-history already heralded. But it was a little early at that time, and we wanted to stand a bit in opposition to these two resistances, but I believe that these are still things that are not totally stabilized. On the other hand, there are many signs that all these themes are to be found in the debates and discussions on the writing of history, I mean, the involvement of the self and the epistemological concern for reflexivity. This is becoming a theme that is, nevertheless, increasingly shared, especially among young historians. So, we are also part of a conjuncture, a tradition of debate within the historical discipline.

Interviewers: As a project, there were steps to be developed. Could you, therefore, talk about the stage dedicated to the collection of sources and explain the method of constitution of this corpus?

Garcia: First of all, I believe that this project also corresponds to our way of working, i.e. that we have, from the outset, bet on something collective. A space where we listen to each other, where we are on equal terms and without any difference in status. I believe that this is something important; that's why we are always in alphabetical order. So, that's a first element. Now, on the subject of collection, I believe that the difficulty of this was largely underestimated, for objective reasons and reasons that are up to the authors. The objective reasons being that the HDR, the authorization to supervise research, was created by the 1988 decree, but, in fact, the universities took it into account to a relatively small extent. Therefore, while there is a concern to keep all the documents relating to theses, this is not the case for HDRs. In particular, when libraries keep something, they keep the unpublished ones. So, we found ourselves with a problem, namely: there was no inventory of HDRs, the level of the National

CC BY

Committee of Universities [*Comité National des Universités*], which evaluates them, included. In a country like France, this is very surprising, and it points out to the somewhat ambiguous status of this stage of the degree course. This is the first point about the objective reasons. As a result, there is a whole series of manuscripts that have been lost, mislaid by their authors or have remained in formats, such as floppy disks, that are now unreadable. The second point is the subjectivity of the authors. We have had various reactions, almost enthusiastic reactions, such as: "At last, this manuscript is going to be useful for something, I'm sending it to you!". But we also had very negative reactions from people for whom it was either uninteresting, because they had just made a developed CV and didn't want to send it off, "he explained it in two days", or they said some rather surprising things, namely: that it would be an almost intimate document; that it should not be divulged or read by people other than the members of the jury. All this is quite emblematic, quite revealing of the differentiated investment and the very different way in which this exercise was conceived by a range of historians. We could also add that some HDR tutors said: "Do not, under any circumstances, talk about you", and that others exempted the candidates from the exercise, and that, in the end, it took a long time to bring it up to standard. It was a bit based on customary law, i.e., we saw legislation appearing from the so-called "norms" [*des normes*] universities, including important norms, for example, Paris I, Paris IV — now it's a hundred-page manuscript. This is not at all specified in the dossier, i.e., it is not at all in the spirit of the Serge Berstein dossier, who came to the seminar talking about it. But I shall let him speak.

Dosse: That is absolutely right, there is this ambiguity of the exercise and of the document itself. Well, I think that here there are reasons why this *Histinéraires* project was immediately selected. Which was, indeed — Patrick said it — very rare in general, because you have to present yourself at least two or three times. They understood all the same that there was an interest in gathering all this together and making an archive. So, there is a dimension, I would say, a little bit of heritage that, in my opinion, must have (it's a hypothesis, but...) counted a lot on the interest of the people who supported this ANR research project. One of the achievements that have been made, despite the resistance that Patrick has underlined, is to group around 300 MSAS.

Garcia: Out of 25% of the total corpus...

Dosse: But, at the same time, and given the ambiguity of the status of these texts, this is not without causing problems beforehand in terms of access — I won't come back to this, Patrick said it —, and, then, afterwards, in terms of the use of these texts, because this is where the problem of publicity arises. We have made a commitment to the "donors" to maintain confidentiality within the research team. If we want to use and publish — there is indeed

a project for a book and articles —, we have to ask the question: can we quote them? You wait for the law and then you come up against a problem that you will try to solve in practice, but which will make the work more cumbersome? Is it going to be necessary to ask nominally for the authors' permission and to submit them, since they are quoted, for their authorization? It's an enormous task, because we have a large mass to manage and publications that have to be done in a limited time. So, this gives a good idea of this work, which is a little *avant-garde*, but, at the same time, fragile and legally not very stable for the moment.

Delacroix: What strikes me is that we had worked all the same on the principle that the corpus was there and that it had to be exploited. Well, we soon realised that this was not at all the case and that we had to ask the question — and perhaps we haven't yet reached the end of this questioning — about the archiving and constitution, the production and invention of the corpus. So, this raised a lot of questions, which Patrick and François talked about, that is to say: how do we collect them, even if they are only very material forms? However, we realised that this was not the case. But the corpus was there, you just had to look for it! So that, too, is a rather interesting dimension of the project, this story of archiving, on which our reflection is not yet completely over.

Garcia: This also refers to a brief problem, which is the status of research archives. It is clear that we have more information on 19th century historians through their diaries and erased manuscripts than we have today. That is to say, at a time when we have the feeling that everything makes memory, in fact, the research archives are scarcely collected, poorly archived and infinitely more perishable than they were, since it is clear that a floppy disk from 1991 is today unreadable. So, there is a kind of paradox at this time of increasing archive power. On the one hand, there is the loss and, on the other hand, it has not at all entered into the historian's habitus of showing his or her archives, his or her way of working; we are not yet accustomed to considering ourselves as objects *of history*. Object is other people.

Delacroix: There are some who have taken the trouble to build up their archive. I'm thinking of Duby, for example. François surely has things to say about this.

Dosse: It is true that there is this awkward but interesting dimension of archive making. That is to say, to use one of Ricoeur's great words in *Memory, History, Forgetting* [*La mémoire, l'histoire,l'oubli*], "archival research" [*archivation*]. The archive which is not there, but is part of a process. We have lived through this process, sometimes with material difficulty, psychological resistance, etc.

Garcia: From this point of view, the role of a fourth member, Bertrand Müller, should be underlined. He has brought us his knowledge of archiving and digital technology.

Dosse: We still have a file that you need to develop digitally.

Delacroix: These are the adventures of research.

Garcia: The digital and us, to say it very clearly, we started with a very naive idea: we built a questionnaire, then we found a company that created a tool that we needed. It was a disaster... The tool was never ready. We had a lot of versions, but with many delays, worries about data collection, and so on. In the end — and it was Bertrand Müller who suggested this to us —, we very belatedly switched to a proprietary software, MAXQDA, in which we can enter documents of any format and work together. Thanks to the technical support — a professional software —, and to the support of the public institution, we were able to overcome the technical problems that at one point threatened the programme with death.

The idea was, fundamentally, that there was a need for collective reading, since there was something that could be used in common. The set of differences that made up each MSAS was not something irreducible, but, on the contrary, they could be put in series and, from there, a number of common issues could be found. So that's why it's interesting to have a common tool, because we are readers after all. We could say: "Well, I put three hundred on one side of my table without knowing what's happening on the other side", but we wanted to do it differently. I think it's an interesting option because it allows for exchanges and enlightenment.

Delacroix: As far as the computer company is concerned, it was a failure, which was essentially due to an incompatibility of language, i.e.: we didn't understand each other. Well, in any case, we didn't believe each other. I believe that this is also a lesson to be learnt, since the technical tool is not purely technical; it is always invested by many other things that are not just technical tools, nor invested by a language that is at least common. So it was absolutely not working.

Garcia: The same words do not mean the same thing. In any case, working with computer scientists is possible, provided that you work with researchers, as there is a translation work involved. Of course, if we are not on the same level of interest, we don't say the same things with the same words. It was an experience that I found extremely unsettling, which led me to write in a different way, i.e. to send drawings rather than messages. I took up pages with errors and annotated them with drawings, arrows, circles and sentences limited to four words. It's really learning to communicate, because you can have the naive idea that you just have to disembark, and, suddenly, the instruments are there. But no, the instruments are not there, unless they have been designed by researchers.

Delacroix: And if technology is neutral, if it can be applied to anything; which it is not at all the case.

Interviewers: It is not only you and the IHTP, there are other centres involved. Your team is heterogeneous and even oscillating at times. Could you describe the divisions of tasks within the groups and tell us which research centres are attached to the project and how the interaction between them works?

Garcia: An ANR project is always developed by several laboratories, it is a rule. So, at the beginning, I had contacted Philippe Poirier at the Georges Chevrier Centre in Dijon. I have known him for a long time (in fact, his laboratory was not involved). I had contacted Marilyne Crivello, who was, at the time, head of Telème, therefore Aix-Marseille University (who was very much involved). I had also contacted, by agreement, Anne-Marie Granet-Abisset, researcher at LARHRA (*Laboratoire de recherche historique Rhône-Alpes*) in Grenoble. So, several units, a certain number of researchers, but the group that made a good mix is not necessarily the one that took shape, and it is not directly linked to the laboratories. It is, rather, done through individual synergies of centres of interest. But let's say that this is the difficulty: we start from the institutional level, since, in the official project, there is the institution, but, obviously, in this type of group (which is a voluntary grouping of people, who, unfortunately, does not offer any remuneration), things are going to happen through inter-individual relations, and also through a desire to work together. From this point of view, there was no division of labor, we never wanted that.

Dosse: Now, we must add to what Patrick says, and to pay tribute to him, that there has been a very fundamental contribution. Patrick has become part of a centre for doctoral studies, many doctoral students have been integrated into the project and they have a driving role. It can be said that they are the driving forces behind the undertaking in the distribution of the small groups that have been set up. So, deep gratitude towards Patrick, because he is the one who brought them to this project anyway.

Delacroix: This has continued, I believe, as a form of sociability that has developed. We had meetings, but we also had technical sessions, micro-stays, finally, which were very effective. I think that this contributed a lot to the work's productivity and attractiveness.

Garcia: We have federated doctoral students who are interested in questions of historiography and epistemology, and who, in addition, are in the process of setting up their own network of young researchers. But, actually, there is no division of labor. Extreme care will be taken to ensure that everyone is included in the publications, and not just in the acknowledgements at the bottom of the page. We shall proceed as we have always done.

Interviewers: You work in groups. For instance, François Dosse is in charge of self writing, Patrick Garcia of sociography and Christian Delacroix of historiography. So, how do you work together within these groups? How is the dynamic between the teams?

Delacroix: It's a division of the themes we work on, it's a bit different. When we decided on three main axes, we set up working groups, but thematic working groups. Self writing — it's true that François was more involved in this group. Patrick, he is a little more on historiography, perhaps, but he is a little bit everywhere, because of his rather special status. Me, [I'm mostly] on historiography and epistemology. We work on the same corpus, in the same way, and we meet regularly to share the results. We have to put some order, obviously, to the treatment of the corpus.

Dosse: It is also important to remember that, from this corpus, we have subdivided, say, three axes of analysis, i.e., we expect answers and hypotheses in three areas. The intimate self writing, in which we are personally involved, gives rise to a first working group. The second theme is, indeed, the lessons that can be drawn from the historiographical-epistemological point of view. In the third place is sociographic teaching, and, therefore, networks. This enables us to reconstitute networks of power or influence within French universities. There is really a distribution of fields among us.

Garcia: I would add that, for doctoral students — precisely because we are not in a hierarchical structure —, I believe that, if they have invested so much and in the long term, and continue to want to invest themselves, it is also because there has been this ability to exchange. From the outset, they were interested in historiography and epistemology, but, at the same time, there was the possibility of an extremely constructed dialogue, including the marking of differences. I'm talking about real dialogues, not courses with researchers, who, incidentally, had spent a certain amount of time or even years working on these issues. I think that, when they thought about it — but it will be up to them to say it, and I think they are already saying it in a certain way by constituting a network —, it was something very formative for them, an incentive to produce.

Dosse: To produce and carry out a very pleasant working sociability, i.e., they do not find hierarchical relationships; they are sometimes even surprised at the fact that they are completely equal, with, as they sometimes say, slightly more experienced days.

Garcia: We have also reproduced, in a way, the working method we experimented with in the journal *EspacesTemps*, from the point of view of the ideal *EspacesTemps*. *EspacesTemps*, it's there...

Dosse: *EspacesTemps* of our... *of our fantasies*.

Interviewers: With regard to the development of the project, in 2019, there was a study day in Grenoble and an International Symposium in Paris I. So, could you give us an overview of the project's achievements or the hypotheses that has already been more or less established at these two events?

Garcia: Grenoble was the possibility to have both the analyses and the actors at the same time. There were people who had poured their texts into us, and [we saw] the effects of the discourse on oneself. For the moment, let's be clear, we collected interviews that were not analysed, except to highlight something we knew *a priori* (but it's obviously interesting to specify it): it's that we don't say the same thing orally, during an interview of an hour, an hour and a half, as we do in writing, within the framework of an academic exercise. Which, by the way, refers to the fact that, from the moment you tell the story, it changes what you are saying. Depending on where you speak, you will be led to a certain logic, so this difference is interesting. This allowed us to see a certain number of people who said: "I didn't talk about it because it's extremely important"; "I didn't talk about it simply because it had institutional issues". Or: "The period that counts for the HDR is the period between the thesis and the HDR, so I started, I wanted to establish my thesis". The denial of the career path, therefore, clarified things a little, or the instructions given by the tutors. This will be explored, I hope, in the publication we are preparing.

Now, as far as the development of the project is concerned, it was definitely a project that took a long time, but, in fact, it has begun quickly, since we started using MAXQDA collectively in January 2018. So, from that point of view, we are a bit in the middle of the analysis. I believe that there are things that we have seen, we have seen the evolution of a genre. We notice in what we put in the volume, both stylistically and formally, that there is something quite obvious, there is an exercise that has been constituted. This, by the way, poses a problem, because it also determines how far we can set the bar for an authorization to supervise research (HDR). We have had this debate, we shall perhaps come back to it later.

Dosse: Let us recall that Grenoble — Patrick said it just now — is not at all the same thing as the symposium that took place in June in Paris, because the object of Grenoble was orality. We attended people who had responded to the oral interviews of the team, who worked on orality and who are not totally integrated into us because they carry out the work of their own oral archive in Marseille. The idea of those who are directing this work, in short, was to get people they had interviewed a year or two years before to re-interview them, and to publicly share how they had perceived the interview and the reflection that it indicated: the unsaid, the said, their remorse about what had not been said. This is one aspect of the analysis, the orality. For the moment, they are mainly collecting recorded speech, then their own

CC BY

speech about their speech, as an analytical work, which is not going to be simple. Work on this oral corpus requires a lot of time.

The June symposium is rather about the part orchestrated by Patrick[10], that is, the MSAS part itself. So, it was about what could be drawn from the sociographic, historiographic, epistemological, self writing groups, from the software, on the written corpus. But there, as Patrick says, we see the appearance, and this is already an event in itself, of a genre. That is, we can attest that this exercise has given an amplification to what was initially a first stammering by Nora with his *Essais d'ego-histoire* in the 1980s, but which has now become a genre, to the point that not only it is more written, more fleshed out, but, also, we see fewer and fewer candidates who treat the question as "I have a nest egg to prepare, and I prepare it as quickly as possible (it's the unpublished piece that counts)". More and more, it's something quite central. This gives rise to a collection directed by Patrick Boucheron, who has, in addition, published Patrick Garcia's work, in a collection at the Presses de la Sorbonne, which publishes the synthesis memoirs as a book. Some people are already anticipating the idea that they will be published, so, it's a different relationship to writing than writing for six people on the jury.

Garcia: Besides, it is clear that, in the collection's footnotes, the name *Histinéraires* regularly appears, i.e., the idea that it would be studied. As François said, we come out of the dialogue with the jury, there is the edition, but there is also a research work, so we know that it is conducted.

Delacroix: Now, a personal writing... It can be assumed that this evolution reflects, or, in any case, resonates with developments in historiography, epistemology and the discipline itself. The interest in the literary, written dimension, also the new interest in the historian self, for reflexivity. Another hypothesis, more sociographic, is a problem, perhaps, of generation. This affects the more recent HDRs a great deal, this tendency to take care of writing, presentation, and then to think about publication. So we obviously link these developments to a wider conjuncture.

Garcia: The place of literary quotation...

Delacroix: Yes, the place of literary quotations, for example. So, all this also feeds our reflection on the current historiographical conjuncture, in, let's say, an average period of time.

Dosse: We have also noticed, but these are only first hypotheses, that, in the group Self Writing, one can almost have a gendered reading of things. That is to say, female candidates on self writing express themselves differently from male candidates, and, therefore, we can also ask ourselves why, about a greater or lesser visibility of oneself in the exercise.

Garcia: And of the private, since men are men without women, without children, without family and all that...

Dosse: Even though women and men are without money, that's the unsaid...

Interviewers: You have already anticipated the next questions, but I am going to ask them all the same, in order to deepen them. In the June symposium, there was a dialogue with other disciplines on first-person writing, such as geography, sociology, even psychoanalysis was mentioned. What, then, would be the specificity of historians' self writing and how could it relate to these other fields? You have already spoken a little about Pierre Nora, but what theoretical status would apply to this historian "I"? How could the "I", the "ego" and the "self" be treated?

Dosse: I would say (maybe I said it in June) that historians, in taking themselves into account, are lagging behind other disciplines. In relation to literature, of course, to psychoanalysis, that's obvious (I'm thinking of the work of Jean-François Chiantaretto), but also in relation to a sister discipline, sociology. We saw this with a man who became a friend, Jean-Philippe Bouilloud. In *Devenir sociologue*, he invited people to his seminar about their career paths without any institutional stakes. In this case, the framework was very different, but they were talking about themselves. They made a book where they grouped all these itineraries together, saying how involved they were or not. The sociologists are more involved, they are more in a self-analysis.

Anthropologists too, with their field diary work. They are in a self-analysis on themselves, therefore, a reflexivity. This can go as far as what was forbidden, a limit to Pierre Nora (when he defined the *Essais d'ego-histoire*): "wild psychoanalysis". So there are many reflections on childhood, on the relationship with the father, which we have very little in our corpus, but there are some, I think of Fabrice Virgili, for instance, who talks a lot about his grandmother. There are other cases, but they are few. In this respect, sociologists are well ahead in the reflexivity of themselves and their relationship to the object, and so on. Whereas we have lived a lot with the unthought. For historians, it was the real that counted, through their writing, it was the real that was given. So it was, above all, forbidden to speak about oneself, either in any paratexts or interviews outside their work as historians. I think we're seeing this now. Undoubtedly, we are catching up on this level and we can also see it in some abortive attempts. I'm thinking of Duby, who, in his first *Essais d'ego-histoire*, tried to speak about himself in the third person, like Caesar, and, then, he gave up. We also had the testimony of Michelle Perrot. When she gave her text to Pierre Nora, she said: "No, I have talked too much about myself, so I am giving it to you, but it must not be published". So, there is all this reticence.

Delacroix: I think we found some who told us the same thing.

Dosse: That's right! We found exactly this in the refusal to give the synthesis paper to the group because it says too much about them. I do expect a lot from someone who is involved in

the collective work on self writing, like Isabelle Lacoue-Labarthe, who is preparing the HDR. She, who has been working for some time before the collective project, by the way, on the writing of historians, asking herself these questions: "Is there" (which is the right question), "is there a specificity in talking about oneself when one is a historian?" (in relation to other modes of self writing, to any autobiography, because this obviously raises the problem of autobiography); "Is there this singularity in relation to this field channelled by Philippe Lejeune, by creating the APA, the Association for Autobiography and Autobiographical Heritage [*Association du Patrimoine de l'Autobiographie*]?"; "Do historians have a singularity there?". These are questions that will obviously have to be answered, and answered with a double comparative approach, with other disciplines and then on an international level. After that: "Is there a singularity of the French historian compared to the Brazilian, German, Italian, Mexican... historian?".

Delacroix: We must not forget, however, that this is an academic exercise, and that, whether we like it or not (although I think this weight is certainly less important for the more recent generation), a disciplinary tradition weighs, which those who write take it into account. They know very well that there are things they can't say, they mustn't go too far, and so on. We must never forget that we are in a relatively constrained framework of an academic exercise, even if we are seeing more and more freedom, and a tendency, as we said earlier, to talk more about oneself, to put the self less at a distance, and so on. But we must never forget this characteristic of this writing. We must not over-interpret it, of course.

Garcia: This is a characteristic that has, incidentally, become part of students' education and which leads them, quite naturally, to say "we". When they say "we", they are reproducing the idea of "we" or "I" from a community, and, in this way, they are speaking on behalf of this community, which was established in the moment of the professionalization of history around the 1880s. We move from "I" to "we", and now we are saying: "We rediscover the 'I' under the 'we'".

Dosse: It sounds nice...

Interviewers: It's good that you talked about the issue of international comparison, because we can ask one last question. Has the project been able to move forward with this intention of comparing historiographies? At the Paris symposium, we saw guests, references to German, Israeli, Quebecois historiography... What are your expectations on this subject?

Garcia: We are currently writing another project, which should end with a symposium about "Being a historian today". Being a historian today means, first of all, making a sociography of historians with as many countries as possible. In other words, how does one become a historian? What are the curricula? What are the conditions of practice? What

are the difficulties? It is not the same thing to be a historian in Brazil, France, Venezuela, Portugal or Spain. So, how do these historians situate themselves in the public realm? That would be a first element.

The second element, which would be interesting, is to see how it circulates. In other words, how do concepts and notions circulate at any given moment? It is clear that there are things that appear, gender studies, memory studies... But how do they circulate? How is the dialogue with the social sciences situated in each national configuration? That is, if we are going to rely on them, then what is the place of philosophy, literature, etc.?

The third element is how the "I" is taken into account in these configurations. The idea is to work with Dumoulin's beautiful formula, by speaking of "national styles of historiography", by highlighting the fact that it is true (history books are enough) that history is not written in the same way in Germany, England, France or elsewhere, and also to see where we stand. Do we have forms of mixing and acculturation? What kind of relationships? So I expect a lot from this, in order to try to get a general overview of the questions that arise. After all, I think there are a certain number of questions that are common, the relationship to the public realm, the relationship to writing and so on. There is, I think, a rather interesting work in progress, if we want to try to think: "What is the profession of historian at the time of globalization?". That is, at a time when the national frameworks in which historiographies were instituted are becoming more fragile. It should not be forgotten that the matrix of historiographies is the same everywhere, it is a state-national matrix.

Dosse: Actually, it is necessary to say a few words about the new project, because we can make comparisons, even though it is difficult, because our system in France is not the same as in the other countries. So, we must straight away take into account the fact that, if there is self writing in Brazil, there are not exactly the MSAS, it is not under the same conditions, it is in another national configuration. The project, which is currently being elaborated, is in continuity with *Histinéraires*, and will focus more on questioning the work of the past in the present: "How does the present also work on the vision of the past?". This "coming and going", finally, between the past and the present. I think that the question of the historiographical operation ("What does it mean to be a historian?" with markers and shifters, which can be the shifters of the present of each historian, in different national configurations) will be able to develop more easily by means of comparatism, because there will no longer be this quite singular device which is that of the French HDR.

Translated by Guilherme Soares dos Santos
guilherme.sds@yahoo.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3497-6138

Conflicts of interest: nothing to declare.
Funding: The São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP, 2016/22187-3).
Authors' contributions: MACHADO, D.: Writing – First Writing, Writing – Proofreading and Editing, Obtaining financing. CARVALHO, R.G.: Writing – First Writing, Writing – Proofreading and Editing.

Notes

1 French acronym for *Diplôme d'Études Approfondies* (post-graduate diploma taken before completing a PhD).

2 French acronym for *Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat de l'Enseignement du Second degrée* (secondary school teacher's diploma).

3 National competitive examination for teacher recruitment in France.

4 French acronym for *Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres*.

5 French acronym for *Attaché Temporaire d'Enseignement et de Recherche* (temporary research and teaching assistant).

6 French abbreviation for *professeur agrégé* (associate professor).

7 French acronym for *Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches* (authorization or accreditation to supervise research). HDR is an academic qualification which authorizes one to apply for a position as a "University professor", to direct and be a thesis evaluator. The interviewees explain on the following pages how this examination works.

8 Acronym for *Delacroix, Dosse et Garcia*, by which the interviewees refer to their collaborative work.

9 French acronym for *Agence Nationale de la Recherche* (National Agency for Research).

10The program of this symposium can be consulted at: https://www.ihtp.cnrs.fr/content/colloque-international-13-14-juin-2019. Access in: July 20, 2021.

References

DELACROIX, C.; DOSSE, F.; GARCIA, P. *Les courantshistoriques en France*: XIXe-XXe siècle. Paris: Gallimard, 2007. (Collection Folio-histoire).

DELACROIX, C.; DOSSE, F.; GARCIA, P. (dir.). *Historicités*. Paris : Éditions La Découverte, 2009.

DELACROIX, C.; DOSSE, F.; GARCIA, P. *Correntes históricas na França*: séculos XIX e XX. Rio de Janeiro: São Paulo: Editora FGV; Editora UNESP, 2012.

DELACROIX, C.; DOSSE, F.; GARCIA, P.; OFFENSTADT, N. (dir.). *Historiographies*: concepts et débats. 2 vol. Paris: Gallimard, 2010. (Collection Folio-histoire).

DOSSE, F. *L'histoire en miettes*: des Annales à la "nouvelle histoire". Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1987.

NORA, P. (dir.). *Essais d'ego-histoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1987. (CollectionBibliothèquedesHistoires).

NORA, P. (dir.). *Les lieux de mémoire* – I. La République. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.

RICŒUR, P. *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000.