
An Interview with Christiane Rochefort

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An Interview with Christiane Rochefort

. . . la seule relation vraie à la littérature est d'en faire et d'en lire, deux façons équivalentes de faire l'amour avec. . .
(Christiane Rochefort, *C'est bizarre l'écriture*, Grasset, 1971, p. 18).

CHRISTIANE ROCHEFORT'S DETERMINATION to demystify the processes of writing puts her critic and interviewer in a paradoxical position. How can a spoken interview be written, when transcription itself requires the imposition of syntax and punctuation? How can we discuss her work without succumbing to the structure of critical discourse? More important, are those structures necessary to convince the academic establishment of the interest and complexity of works which Rochefort has deliberately made accessible to a general audience? Because of their critical descriptions of the modern city and the institutions of bourgeois society, Rochefort's works have crept into the American university by way of French civilization and women's studies courses. Having been used primarily as documents about contemporary French society and as accounts of women's experiences, they now deserve to be read for their satirical analysis of Western culture, their imaginative attempts to transform that culture, and their efforts to reinvent a language heretofore dominated by a white male establishment. Indeed, for Rochefort, to describe society is to deconstruct it, just as she says in her theoretical text, *C'est bizarre l'écriture*: "Ecrire consiste vraiment à désécrire" (*C'est bizarre l'écriture*, p. 134).

Throughout her work, Rochefort's primary approach has been to place characters into either alienating or nurturing environments, and to trace their diminution or growth. In her early novels, she is concerned with socially marginal people and their struggles to survive as individuals in a hostile world. More recently, she has focussed on groups of characters engaged in building alternative societies.

The scandal provoked by the eroticism of *Le Repos du guerrier* (1958), Rochefort's first and best-known work, obscured the serious philosophical conflict between the two main characters and their opposing styles of life—the bourgeois and the bohemian. The same kind of conflict emerges in the efforts of Philippe to domesticate Céline in *Les Stances à Sophie* (1963), Rochefort's attack on the institution of marriage. In *Les Petits Enfants du siècle* (1961), the French system of social planning and the very shape of

the new Parisian suburbs dehumanize the child-narrator Josyane and her entire family.

Une Rose pour Morrison and Printemps au parking are transitional works which trace the process of breaking away from the constraints of family and school. Having discovered his homosexual love for Thomas, Christophe, the adolescent hero of Printemps au parking (1969), returns to his family matured by self-knowledge and strengthened by faith in his own desires and capabilities. Une Rose pour Morrison (1966), written under the dual influence of Bob Dylan and Boris Vian, is Rochefort's futuristic vision of a revolution, staged by a group of hippies, which strangely prefigures the events of 1968.

In her search for a pre-socialized protagonist, Rochefort moves from individual adolescents to a mass movement of school children in Encore heureux qu'on va vers l'été (1973) and finally to a theoretical essay on infants and young children, the most oppressed of social groups, in Les Enfants d'abord (1976).

It is in Archaos (1972), however, that Rochefort's use of art as a criticism of life reaches its most playful and inventive expression. Run by children and women, Rochefort's utopia presents an alternative to patriarchy, with its emphasis on power, war, achievement, competition. It is here that the nostalgia for nature, sensuality and simple logic, which marks Rochefort's entire work, emerges most clearly.

Rochefort shares with many contemporary French feminists an intellectual background and a Marxist perspective, but her playful realism prevents her novels from appearing abstract or didactic. Their humor and popular appeal, in fact, enhance the effectiveness of her works as instruments of social change. Her use of slang and popular speech, as well as her efforts to change the connotations of words, unmask and transform the realities of oppression. It is indeed her sophisticated reinvention of language that opens the way to liberation.

The following conversation with Christiane Rochefort took place during one of her frequent visits to the United States, where she has found a spiritual home. When in America, Rochefort insists on speaking English. However, our conversation flowed from English into French at particularly heated moments. Translation and extensive editing have therefore been necessary.

Question: Could you tell us what being a woman has meant to you as a writer?

Answer: For me, the problem has been both political and personal. Let me begin by telling you about a personal experience. I stopped writing when I was married. I couldn't even talk, really, for weeks. Finally I began to paint, and I painted a portrait of myself in oil. Suddenly I felt like telling the story of this person, who had turned out to be a medieval character. I was able to write again—just to invent, but then I couldn't be married any more—I had no time.

Q. Your book took over your life?

A. I was working a full day, and I couldn't go to bed on time. That's how I stopped going to bed—no more physical relationship. Of course, my husband would ask me, "Aren't you coming to bed, honey?" I was just beginning to work when he went to bed. So I would answer, "Not yet," and then I couldn't write. I would then say, "Yes, I'm coming," and then I couldn't make love. So I was totally split, and he put the choice before me. One day I said, "No, I'm not coming to bed. I prefer to write." You know *A Room of One's Own*? I had this problem.

Q. You've told the end of *Les Stances à Sophie*: Céline extricates herself from her marriage and moves out into her own room. Was this the solution for you?

A. No, it's much more complicated than that. As women, we do not belong to the ruling class. We sit, with their royal permission, at the lower end of the banquet table. We are permitted to take bits of their royalty, we are allowed to praise them and to denigrate ourselves: "Thank you, Sir!"

I was not quite that respectful. I tried to fish out what was good for me, to spit out what was destructive. I didn't succeed completely; I'm half destroyed—you see me. No one can escape altogether. I have been partly trapped. The Western way of thinking may be considered a brain-washing. My own mental structures have been greatly perverted by the dominating discourse. Marx, for instance, appealed to me, for he is so good a weapon. Brecht got to me; the surrealists got to me—they hate women in such a sophisticated way. Lots of writers got me, even Henry Miller. I confess: beauty got me every time. But tell me, what will remain of art if we are so puritanical that we won't accept any poison in it? Next to nothing—and we will starve, for most art offers food and poison in the same spoon.

Q. You say in *C'est bizarre l'écriture* that you have been influenced by Vian, who is very chauvinistic. Can you enjoy writers who are hostile to women?

A. What I like about Vian is the play with words. It's a literary love, not a personal love. I'm split, and I must be split; I think there is no other way. If I like beauty, if I like art, will I reject Vian? There is poison in him, you see, but without him I would be deprived. It's a very difficult choice.

If I find chauvinism and sexism in a text that is not absolutely wonderful food, I cannot take it. But a Henry Miller is something else. To read him, I have to glue together the chauvinistic pages, and leave open only the pages I love, which are about America, about writing, about meeting with God. In a book of Miller's, there is no respect for women at all.

Q. You said, "the surrealists hate women in such a sophisticated way." Could you explain that?

A. I was full of love and admiration for the surrealists, for their political position, for their radicalism: they criticized Western mental structures and rationalism and Cartesianism. But I couldn't approach these people because of so-called "love." I hate the poem by Eluard where he talks about his blue-eyed, long-legged woman. It's a worship of his woman on his own pedestal. She is a golden object, but still an object, and this is what repulsed me.

I had a surrealist friend, and our relationship was broken because of this ideological difference. Once we were with some friends at his home. Do you know the picture by Man Ray which represents a woman—beautiful, with sex-appeal, wonderful face, and with a metal wastepaper basket on her head? This photograph is art, of course. Once we insisted on photographing this friend with his head in a wastepaper basket. He didn't want to. We argued. It was totally illogical to refuse—we had a camera with a flash, he had a metal wastepaper basket. In the end he was forced to agree, but it was a real tragedy with a rupture afterwards.

You know, there were women surrealists. They were so good, you can't imagine. They were writing, painting, sculpting, and they were crushed, erased. One of them, Meret Oppenheim, stopped working for 17 years, and she destroyed all her works. The surrealists exhibited her sculpture, *La Tasse de fourrure*. They were so proud of it that they forgot about Meret Oppenheim: they appropriated her work. I could see clearly that the wonderful energy they had and used for themselves was given to

them by their women. They put them in a wastepaper basket and stole their energy. I suspect them of taking even their genius from them, their imagination. So I was appalled, and now I don't like surrealism any more. You lose big pieces of art when you become conscious.

Q. How can a woman artist avoid the fate of Meret Oppenheim?

A. I myself was able to put all this mess into political terms. That is, if as women we are not biologically inferior, then we belong to an oppressed class. What is called culture should no longer be seen as *the* culture, but as one of many possible ones. In the present case, it is only the culture of the Western white male, a limited one, and very, very intolerant. It leaves us very few options. You can try to be like the oppressor or like the image the oppressor has of you, or finally, you can try to be something else, to find yourself. Perhaps this is what women artists must do.

Q. In *Les Stances à Sophie*, for example, Céline tries to conform to the image of the perfect wife. In *Printemps au Parking*, on the other hand, Christophe rejects all the values of his family. Does your choice of a male adolescent hero for this novel suggest that you see parallels among various oppressed groups?

A. All exploitations are bad, including the exploitation of women, children, races, cows. These are just examples of oppressed classes. The question is, when does the exploitation begin? It begins when it is for profit. It doesn't begin when somebody works, but when that work gives profit to another person. I don't see a hierarchy of oppressed groups. We are lucky if one of these classes rebels and if this class in rebellion finds solidarity among the other oppressed. This has not been the case: there have been competition and attempts by one class struggle to appropriate all the others. I hope that the relationship among these struggles will become horizontal instead of pyramidal.

I think it's absolutely necessary that each oppressed person try to study his or her own oppression. Take parents, for instance. They are the oppressors of their children by definition, as a class, as a human group. If they met together to try to understand their position, they would probably see that they, in turn, are exploited by society as parents. One step is to separate the role from the person. When somebody exploits somebody else, there is a totally false relationship between the two.

Q. What is the specific role of the writer in these class struggles?

A. The dominating class has appropriated the language, has given words their connotations according to its own purposes. Language is not

simply a way to express oneself, as is commonly believed: it is a weapon in the hands of the ruling class. Oppressed people—the poor, women, people of other civilizations—have no language of their own. Who are “colored people”? You see the semantic trick? Colored for different, colored for oppressed, colored for slave.

Q. If indeed language belongs to the oppressor, how can women use it? Is a female discourse possible?

A. I think that an oppressed person who dares to write, using the material shaped by her or his oppressor, has to be tremendously careful. Each element must be seen as a battlefield. When we dare to touch this material in literature, we cannot allow ourselves to be innocent. For example, women are said to be “biologically inferior”: “biology” is used instead of “oppression,” instead of “put in the role of a slave.” For “protection” you must read “control,” and if they say “help,” you must read “exploitation.” These are words you can’t use without being careful. For example, when writing a novel, you can put them into the mouth of an enemy character. Take the word “love,” the most miserable of all, formerly so beautiful, now almost impossible to write without washing one’s hands afterwards. I never used it in earnest; only once did I put it at the end of a utopia, after 400 pages to pave the way.

In *Les Petits Enfants du siècle* the little girl who is the narrator (and myself at the same time) would always say, “said the father”; “eat your soup, said the father,” not “daddy,” never “daddy.” After a lot of “the father” we resent him as the establishment. When I say “Sir” to somebody, it’s an insult—“madame” too.

Personally, I try to give another meaning to words. Sometimes I take their word and twist it and throw it back in their faces, if possible. I cultivate misunderstandings, because I know they work on the subconscious. I think it would be good if we oppressed were to study the subject all together, instead of trying to write well, because good writing is the writing of the master. For example, as I began to read the proofs of my first book, *Le Repos du guerrier*, I said to myself, “Oh, I’m not ready to be published. This is very, very bad.” Then I had doubts. I looked at my own manuscript, and I saw that the editors had added a lot of commas and exclamation points. It is significant that these commas had been imposed on the text of the nonconformist character. I myself had used

them in the discourse of the conformist character. I suddenly understood that punctuation is the Order.

Grammar and syntax are instruments of power, so we have to change them. We have to change discourse. We have to rediscover another way of thinking, the way that is pejoratively called—that same semantic trick—intuition, as if it were prophecy to be read in cards. Rationalism is one form of intelligence; intuition is another. There are many forms of intelligence.

Q. Intuition seems entirely alien to the contemporary reliance on science and technology.

A. I believe that “science” is often a bluff. People claim to be scientific, but most of the time it’s just prejudices and psychology, not science at all. I was on a TV program once with an expert on child development. When he started talking about I.Q., I said, “You can’t measure a complex element with a simple scale,”—which is a legitimate scientific argument. You can’t use a single number to describe something having many levels, and you certainly can’t measure something which you can’t even define. Each person is different from the others, so you can’t measure intelligence at all by test. I discussed this in *Les Enfants d’abord*.

Q. Can the woman writer go beyond the mere deconstruction of the dominant mental structures to create new forms of meaning?

A. One of the ways to recreate a culture is to change the symbols. This is what I tried to do in *Archaos*, for example: I changed the symbols of male and female sexuality. The poor penis has been taken as a symbol of power, but for me this is a perversion of the symbolism of the penis. In *Archaos* all the sexual symbols are reversed. No, not really reversed, because the female is not aggressive either; neither one is aggressive. The phallic aggressiveness is actively destroyed in the first part of the book and then, in the utopian parts, there is no longer any link at all between the phallus and aggressiveness. Instead, the penis becomes symbolic of waiting, almost of passivity, of invitation. You can find these meanings in a lot of natural symbols like obelisks, steeples, trees, which are phallic symbols, granted, but which stand waiting to attract people, to gather them together. In other words, one symbolic meaning has been unduly emphasized, which is a great shame. It is out of a spirit of conquest that this has happened. Imperialism, one of the dominating mental structures,

has chosen the phallus as its symbol and has monopolized it, whereas for me, there is no inherent link between the phallus and imperialism. So I suggest that at first we try to find other symbols for the phallus and for women's sexuality, which in the book is active in breaking the patriarchal symbolism. Then we'll see . . . active, passive, it's all the same.

Q. So you believe that writing is part of the process of consciousness-raising? Is that why you are a utopist? Tell us how you came to write *Archaos*.

A. I wrote the first version of *Archaos* in a certain state of inspiration. I didn't know what I had planned, and I was totally mistaken about my message, in case I had a message. Then I began to see through my invention: I was trying to write a utopia. But by the end of the second version I found myself frustrated. I felt I had failed to create a utopia. It was as if the center were empty: maybe because there was too much dream and too gratuitous a dream. I had to have some links with reality. One day, I knew that I could do it, that I could control such a long book. I think I finally succeeded in building a utopia because there were seeds outside at that moment—the communes and new ideologies of how to live together. I think it gave me the food I needed. Now I can find in *Archaos*—even I can find in *Archaos*—what my conceptions really are. I think it is the most positive of my books. The other ones criticize; this one is a suggestion of a world. People used to say, “You criticize, you are against, but what do you suggest we do?”

Q. What kind of world does *Archaos* suggest?

A. There is in *Archaos* an oneiric country, a dream land with sorcerers, songs, music and an enchanted forest. This is the country of the irrational and the other way of thinking and feeling. The character who really makes things to happen in the first part of the novel is Analogue, who pushes constantly toward a destruction of patriarchy. He is a provoker, he provokes through the queen.

Q. But he's hopelessly in love with the queen.

A. Not hopelessly. His way of living is non-coital—he doesn't make love.

Q. *Un amour inaccompli*?

A. No, it's not “inaccompli.” It is against the finality of intercourse—there is no intercourse, but he says that he is fulfilled. There are caresses,

touching, massage; there is contemplation. These ways of relating break the pattern of being in love, courting, finally sleeping together and that's it. These characters criticize and challenge that pattern; they try to define another kind of relationship. They frequently make love at a distance. The book is about how to desire without power. The women and children take the power but don't exert it. It's a truly utopian and futuristic message, you see.

If I'm not mistaken, there is no couple in *Archaos*. No, no traditional couple. If a man wants to have one of the young women, the only way is to be loved by her. So there is love in the book, but people don't live together as couples. I just became aware of it here now. There is no couple in *Archaos*.

It's a big fantasy, this book. The country I describe is not our countries. There are no factories, no cars, no freeways, no houses made of concrete. This world doesn't exist now or even tomorrow. If you ask me about my ideal social structure, I would say it's *no* structure, except that a little child has to be with his/her mother or another person who loves him or her. *Archaos* is a work about groups.

Q. Encore heureux qu'on va vers l'été, your most recent novel, is also a utopian vision, but here you use the commune as your primary social unit.

A. I presented a reality as I think it is. I wouldn't say the commune is an ideal social structure, but it is an alternative at this time. Maybe we can find something better.

The passage set in the commune is not well made, I must say. It's a little bit too direct, too militant. This is true of the whole book, which is militant more than literary. Originally, I had a basic structure in mind, which was a dialogue between two little girls. It was a kind of game in my head. I often envision just such a skeleton—not an overall plan, but a dialogue, for instance. I began writing it enthusiastically and became aware of the fact that a mass movement of children was emerging. Suddenly I couldn't go on—no more inspiration. Why did I stop? I was in the country. Finally I realized that I had gone to a farm to buy milk; on the TV there I had seen Allende's fall and Pinochet coming to the palace. I had sat down and listened, stunned, petrified in a way, with a very negative feeling of something heavy in the world. I could do nothing at

that moment. I had a nightmare that night, and that was the day I stopped writing. Although there was no relationship between Chile and my subject, two little girls, I stopped for two years.

Q. When did you start writing again?

A. I don't know. You want me to say that it was because of Portugal, because it was around the time of Portugal. It couldn't have been so direct, but it was clear in a way. There was a feeling of general release, and there may have been some movements of kids. I think I'm always sensitive to the environment: I am a sponge plunged in a liquid. I got this feeling of haste, as if you have to go out to take a swim in the sea just between two rain showers, quickly. So I didn't take time to do it well. I apologize. Although the book had started as a structural game two years before, it became a story fed by the potential of children. It was no longer a game, but a message, and the message dominated the form. There has to be a balance, but, as I hurried too much, the message took over. I don't know exactly why the original plan of the two children speaking together disappeared. It might not have been the right vehicle for this climate. The dialogue was replaced by another structure, a network. I can draw it on a piece of paper. I think the idea of a network covering the whole country is more relevant than a dialogue.

Q. You talk a lot about political climate in *C'est bizarre l'écriture*—you say that writing changed after '68.

A. I wrote two different versions of *Printemps au parking*—one before and one after '68, so to find the semantic changes we would have to look at the two versions. The connotations of the words had changed. Let's take "revolution." Nobody would pronounce this word in 1966—it was just a romantic notion—but now, if somebody pronounces it. . . It came, it sparkled, and it disappeared under a cloud of disgust. Now it belongs to the enemy. I use this example because it has a real history. Now "revolution" is synonymous with authoritarianism, mental terrorism. The myth doesn't exist any more in its old form. It changed, and we are careful even with the word "change," because it may have the same destiny. So we are shy; we use no word at all, if possible.

Q. *Printemps au parking* is nevertheless set in 1966. How would it have been different, had you set it after '68?

A. The main character, Christophe, would not be so nonverbal. He would know more about politics. He would know about words: "student

movement,” “committee,” “MLF.” In 1966 nothing, blank. He would not be so innocent; he would be more articulate, more conscious. For instance, the characters wouldn’t have the same innocence about homosexuality. They would know that there is a movement. Fabrice and his sister are old-style homosexuals; now they would know they belong to a group. I think it’s the same for women. Such a feeling of belonging is a change, I think. The individual is not so exceptional, not so neurotic or abnormal.

Q. Is that what the women’s movement has done for you, made you feel as though you belong?

A. In some ways, yes, of course. It has, however, become a form of censorship for my writing. I must begin to say this now because it’s not good for anybody to hide such things. I have friends for whom it has also been a censorship. You can have a censorship coming from truth. The right to be a delinquent is very difficult to hold on to, and the writer must be ready to be a delinquent. You don’t know what you are going to write, you don’t know what will issue out of you. I want the right to be a delinquent. Even if the movement were totally right, wonderful, the absolute truth and nothing else, it would still be a censorship.

Q. So you see yourself as a delinquent, but do you also see yourself as part of a tradition of women writers?

A. I found my roots in America, not in France, because French feminists have not been looking at history. Some of my friends are being encouraged by American women to do so now. Three or four years ago I went to a poetry session in New York—Anglo-American poetry by women from the 15th century on—and it was a real revelation for me. I discovered a continuity, a line like the male one. Things were not as I was educated to believe: Madame de La Fayette, Colette, a shooting star from time to time. No, there was a totally continuous history. That’s the first time I was conscious of roots.

Q. Why has the women’s tradition in France been so discontinuous?

A. Because they just kill women in France. The repression against women has always been terrible. You know that during the French Revolution they chopped off the heads of many feminists. Each time there was a movement, the women would fight alongside the men, like American women in the civil rights movement. Very often they became even more radical than the men. And then they were killed for it, totally

erased. The French are extremely sexist. They are feudal and well organized for oppression. So when I say that hatred is one of my motors, I have reasons.

Q. When you began to write, had you read a lot of women writers?

A. Oh, a little Virginia Woolf, but you know there are not many translations in French. All my favorite writers except the modern ones (Marguerite Duras, Virginia Woolf, Natalie Sarraute) are American male writers, like Faulkner. Faulkner was a kind of master, a teacher. I was fascinated by his constructions, not by the style, however. Joyce, Kafka, and now Heller, Saul Bellow, and Salinger, these are my people, and they are all male. And in France, Boris Vian, Queneau, Diderot and Laclos. I like the 18th century and the 20th. I hate the 19th—it bores me.

Q. You say you like the 18th century. One name that comes to mind in relation to your vision of childhood is Rousseau.

A. I hate Rousseau, I hate his egotism. For example, in one of the *Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire* he criticizes people who pick plants for medicinal use. At the same time he picks a plant to put in his *herbier*, the most narcissistic use of a plant. He kills this plant for nothing, just for himself, to look at it, to *have* it. I think the people he condemns know plants and their virtues, and, in my opinion, they love plants as a gift. So at the same time they love plants and the people they want to heal. Rousseau just doesn't understand this because of his "moi-je, moi-je." And the main point is that he is not conscious of his egotism.

Q. Isn't his vision of childhood similar to yours, however?

A. Mine is not the same position as Rousseau's. I don't state that all human beings are good when they are born, as he does. I always put hope in children, but it's not the same hope as Rousseau's. Children are full of potentialities—we are all full of potentialities when we are born—but then we are, to varying degrees, reduced by societal norms and standards. So the human material is not inherently "good," as Rousseau said, but it's not inherently "bad" either. It is rich with many possibilities. The reduction that we suffer is what touches me.

Q. Isn't this the process that you portray in *Les Petits Enfants du siècle*? Would you talk about the development of your thought about children?

A. Let me begin by expressing compassion for Josyane, the little girl who had all the potentialities and hope of the mind, of the soul, of the brain. But she is crushed by society, or, I should say more specifically, by

a certain way of life created by the form of the house, the way of feeding people, the way of living inside the house, the economic links with the world. There are no other links but commercial for these people. Josyane was a person, she was somebody, but she was trapped by love. I think everybody has potentialities like hers, except the physically ill or brain damaged. *Les Petits Enfants du siècle* is the story of a reduction. Josyane is exploited just because she is there. She is the oldest child, so the mother uses her and the father uses her. They don't choose her brother for the same purpose. They don't even look at her school records or at her homework. Although they think they love their children, they are totally alienated from them. But the fault lies not just with the family or the school, but with the environment which dominates her whole life—so big, so inhuman, so heavy, so authoritarian, so constraining.

Q. There is also a communist family in *Les Petits Enfants du siècle*. Does it provide an alternative?

A. It was not an ideal; I was critical of this family. Believe me, the Communists saw my sarcasm very clearly. They hated the book and with good reason. I presented in the communist family a kind of reformist position; it was a beginning. They were not sexist, for example—the boys and girls shared the housework. But even though they were of good will and not intolerant, I wouldn't recommend this type of family. The little girl was very puritanically raised, so she is rigid. They are pretty heavy on children, this communist family.

Q. Do you feel that sexual liberation is a very important aspect of your work? For example, Geneviève in *Le Repos du guerrier* is freed through an intense sexual experience.

A. Not many saw this point. It was a kind of mystic initiation for Geneviève—a quest through sexuality, not through love.

Q. Do you see Renaud as a positive character?

A. He's a symbol of the political despair of the fifties. He's a dropout, which is positive for me. He is the advanced one, and she is the *petite bourgeoise*. She has in her head schemes of eternal love and eventually of marriage. Maybe she destroys Renaud by wanting to integrate him: "you must do something in life, you must conform." She sends him to the clinic for detoxification, and it is like a murder. She understands that she has killed him as a poet, as a dropout, as a free person. But I know that she doesn't really kill him because, of course, he will leave the clinic and drink again. It's not a question of a good character and an evil one. Renaud is

not such a bad person. Of course, he's an alcoholic. You can't live with such a man—he's an oppressor. He does break her bourgeois mental structures, but he breaks them with the oppressor's style. There is a kind of mystical fight, in my opinion.

Q. You published *Le Repos du guerrier* in 1958; this was very early to recognize the need to change mental structures.

A. I began to look and to feel and to reflect. I think a writer is a kind of mirror and a vehicle which may provoke a more widespread movement. So we have to be receptive, open and very well informed. The first step is to look and to see. We are full of prejudices and morality, and we don't see. It's very difficult to see. I am still at the first step, but not everyone is even at this first step, as you can see around you, perhaps. We must first recognize that things are as they are. After acknowledging the situation, we can try to work on the problem in groups. For instance, we can gather individual personal experiences and try to find solutions together. I don't think a person can do it alone.

Interview for *L'Esprit Créateur* by

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