JS: But you seem to be saying that this logic produces unequal effects when it comes to the reception of literary texts.

AFG: Everything indeed happens as if, at least in the French landscape, no field of force could be constituted around women: no lineage and no cross currents. Each instance of a gay French woman's text is a lonely instance: an author in exile, literal or figurative, preempting the actualization of a category and therefore of a signifying context. At best you may find instances of cloning, replication of formulas, but no posterity [and no ascendancy]. Think of the ultimate irony: Yourcenar's foremother is Gide and what has Wittig's project been but the deconstruction of the great male texts, whether the epic tradition, Virgil, or whatever?

JS: But does this suffice to explain the present void? Shouldn't we also take into account the present revival of conservative values?

AFG: Certainly. Reading as well as writing entails a certain exposure of the self and the climate is not very conducive to this self-exposure. Look at what you had to endure on the occasion of Jean-Edern Hallier's all-out assault. Had you been in a more precarious situation, how would you have fared?

JS: It is very possible that, had I been in the employ of a newspaper owned by some corporation or big media conglomerate, I would have encountered quite a few difficulties.

AFG: Silence, exile, and cunning may after all make quite a bit of sense in literary terms . . .

JS: Speaking of cunning, do you know this sentence of Lacan's: "One is heterosexual when one loves women, whatever one's gender"?

AFG: Ha! What a relief . . .

—Fall 1994
From my point of view, lesbians and gay men form international groups that cross over class and national barriers.

Q. Has your living in the United States at any point felt to you like an exile?
A. Rather than answering personal questions, I'd prefer to talk about my work which is for me the most important thing.

Q. Then, what has been the effect for you and your writing of living in the United States? Has it transformed your understanding of political issues?
A. Here in the States it has been possible for me to write the essays that are collected in *The Straight Mind*. It's been possible for me to conceptualize heterosexualism as a political regime.

Q. What have you done since your move?
A. I wrote my last novel, *Virgile, non* (*Across the Acheron*). I also wrote a play, *Le voyage sans fin* (*The Constant Journey*), which was produced in Paris and had a United States tour. I translated Djuna Barnes's *Spillway* (*La passion*) into French and published several stories including "Paris-la-politique."

Q. Do you have any unpublished material?
A. I have a book called "Le chantier littéraire," a screenplay about Joan of Arc, and a novella, called "The Girl," which is my first fiction written in English. It is being adapted into a screenplay by Sande Zeig with my participation.

Q. Who were the writers who were important in your coming to write?
A. As an adolescent, I read Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Lautréamont, Gide, Proust, Genet, etc. As for form, all the *nouveau roman* writers taught me something, and filmmakers like Godard and Straub influenced my writing. But they are not the only ones. Stein, Wolfe, and Joyce have also been important to me. And now, since I "live" in English, I have reread classical English literature with great pleasure: Marlowe, Shakespeare, Sterne, Fielding, Austen, the Brontës, Eliot, Dickens, Trollope, James, and Compton-Burnett.

Q. How do you view the relationship between literature and culture? Between the quest for literary forms and the inscriptions of lesbian identities or ways of being?
A. I will not talk in terms of identities but, again, only in terms of work. I could say that a great part of the work, which is the same for all writing, is the necessity of going from the particular to the general.

And then, there are themes, some as dangerous as volcanic fault lines. Among them one can work and create a kind of destabilization. Culturally, or rather politically, the lesbian point of view is a historical and very important one. It allows us to go beyond the categories of sex in our mind and our work.

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II. JOCELYNE FRANÇOIS

I shall begin with the beginnings. I always wanted to write. I never doubted that I would write. I also thought about medicine with the hope of being able to reconcile both callings. Philosophy, however, won me over and I entered the university to devote myself to this passion first. It ended up exerting a tremendous influence on me, an influence that has led me to pursue my desire to write rather than to teach.

My life between the ages of 19 and 30 had been so difficult, so complicated, that I did not write my first novel, *Les bonheurs*, until 1966-68. In writing it, I measured the import of writing in my life and in the lives of those close to me. Then I wrote *Les amantes*, a novel tying together my own love life and my friendship with René Char. My passion for truth, my enthusiasm for life as it is lived and for the weight of meaning it carries led me to undertake what I called "un roman de mémoire" [a novel of memory], *Joue-nous España*, which I wrote while still in a state of shock from a wrenching experience. That book won me the Femina Prize; at the time I was living in a small village in the Vaucluse. As a result of the prize, I gained a wide readership in France and abroad. The fascinating part for me was that I came to understand better and better why I was writing and how I was in perfect harmony with myself. Before I ever wrote a novel I wrote poetry; I kept writing more poems, publishing them with another publishing house.

In the course of those years, I agreed to contribute to *Masques*, a cultural magazine devoted to homosexualities. I agreed because this magazine was open to both men and women. I did a column for them. They asked me for a few interviews. This is when I clearly perceived the pressure that groups attempt to apply. When the magazine changed format and became a monthly, I chose rather to contribute a piece each month on a contemporary painting: I feel an affinity for painting and it was urgent that I regain my freedom.

In writing *Histoire de Volubilis*, I wanted to cauterize a wound suffered over a long period of loving, and this felt like an absolutely