

Lili Reynaud-Dewar – I invited men into my hotel room and asked them very personal questions about their lives

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In this small provincial town, I lived in a big house, a bit of a ruin, with lots of mysterious areas, because the people who lived in this house never or rarely went there, and I loved exploring these places where few people went. So I invented inhabitants for them, and I myself was a slightly new inhabitant in these spaces which had been uninhabited until then. And I loved to dress up. And then I would dress up, and afterwards, once I was dressed up, I would go and visit these people who lived there and we would have conversations, dialogues... And there was a place in this house that I particularly liked which was a big gallery, not heated, with holes in the floor, and I loved running around in this gallery making my dresses fly, as if I were a fairy. I loved that. And so for me, the beginning of my theatre was these great races in this gallery with these pieces of fabric and then these characters that I found in this kind of silence in fact. Great running movements that led to great silences. There's no limit to silence, but I loved it because it gave my little childhood dreams the possibility of imagining lots of things. And then I was a little child who was comfortable, more comfortable in stories than in real life. Although I adored real life, it wasn't... I mean, I adored real life... No, in fact, there were aspects of real life that I didn't like very much, because in this big old house, there were people who were alive and well who were women, who were my great-grandmother, my grandmother and her sister, my mother, of course, but my mother was very, very young, because I was born, my mother was 17 and a half years old, so... My mother was always an eternal young girl, perhaps the real... the fairy, the dancer, the... But she was not someone whose presence was necessarily reassuring. She was a kind of horizon, but a little inaccessible because she was very young, and it was her youth that made her inaccessible. It wasn't that she lacked maternal love, it was her youth. She was so young and so much of a dancer, so much so that for a little boy, such as I was in any case, it was better to reassure oneself by going to see people who were more established in time, who had wrinkles, who knitted, who cooked, who were adorable, who were attentive, who asked „how are you“. My mother rarely asked „how are you“. She was very cheerful but never asked „how are you“. So that was the beginning of the world. I think it's a world that a lot of children practice in fact, I think it's that, children and they create zones, zones to exist, but it's not necessarily... here, it's porous. It was very porous, all these universes in this big building, a bit in ruins. Well, porosity worked very well. I went from one universe to another without any problem because there was also the decor. And that's the charm of old and grand old provincial houses, they are incredible settings, especially at that time. Well, it was the 1950s, there was no central heating, but there were big stoves at the time, some oil-fired, others wood-fired or coal-fired, and so there were also areas where it was... it was cold in these big houses. And the cold, going from a room, well, comfortably heated to big corridors where it's very cold, before finding another room properly heated, well going through these very cold corridors, it was... it was an experience what, it was something very... I loved it. I loved going from hot to cold, and going through the cold to get

back to the hot. I loved it. I never lived in that house with my parents, and thank God for that, because... well, because I didn't really like living with the parental couple. Well, it didn't go very well, even though they had been married for a very short time, my parents always had very conflictual relationships. Well, that's it, being at my parents' house was a disaster, I didn't want to stay there. And as at that time my parents were students and therefore lived in a room, a maid's room, there were already two of us, there was already my brother and me at the time, so in a maid's room, with four of us, it was not easy. So very often my parents left my brother and me in this big house which belonged to... well, which was my grandparents' house. And that's where I was comfortable. Whereas, well, at my parents' house, the less I was there, the better I felt in fact. I didn't like it. In fact I never liked it, even much later because, well, this is the early childhood I'm talking about. I was between zero and ten years old at the time, because I left Poitiers, and so this whole world, at ten, and I arrived in Paris because my father was a lawyer and he had left his practice in Poitiers, he had joined a... as director of legal affairs in a Parisian bank, so he brought us to Paris, his wife and children. And at that time, when we arrived in Paris, there were three of us, because in the meantime my younger brother had been born, so we arrived in Paris with three children, and I hated it. Well, I hated it... it was very hard because it was 1962, and 1962 was the end of the Algerian war. He was studying, he had a family, so he wasn't, how should I say, requisitioned for the army right away, but he had to go to Algeria in 1958, as he was an officer in the contingent, because he had done the military but, well, he had to leave, and he had the rather crazy idea of taking us with him. So we found ourselves in Algeria in the 1950s, my mother, my brother and I, because my little brother was not yet born. Well, I have some memories, but I was small, I was four, five years old, so I have some memories of the Algerian war, we were in Algiers... But on the other hand, when in 1962 we had to leave Poitiers, our native town, to come and live in Paris, my father had been appointed legal director of a Parisian bank... well, whose head office was in Paris, and there was no accommodation... the bank in question had bought flats in the Paris suburbs in a very residential suburb called Meudon-Bellevue, and a housing estate had just been built there, to the great displeasure, moreover, of the local bourgeoisie, who found it completely unpleasant to see a housing estate being built in the middle of these residential areas. And this reaction of the local population was all the more virulent because 80% of the inhabitants of this housing estate were what were called at the time repatriates from Algeria, and therefore Blackfoot. And so I found myself... After, well, this provincial town, very, well, family-oriented, with, well, cousins, this and that, well, we found ourselves completely out of place, I must say, arriving in this place, in this town in the middle of this population which was also in great pain from uprooting. A bit like me too, I was in the pain of uprooting, but it wasn't the same uprooting, mine was quite... well, compared to them, what they had lived through in Algeria in 1962, it was something else. So I found myself in the midst of all these people, for the first time I went to the communal school, because before I went to the Christian Brothers' schools. And I found myself at the communal school, in CM2, and I must say, well, there were other boys in the class with me, because at the time the classes were not mixed, there were only boys, so I was at the boys' school, and there were some boys who, therefore, were pieds-noirs, repatriated from Algeria as we used to say, and we were not well seen by the rest of the class. First of all because these kids had an accent that everyone made fun of, they had a way of behaving that was different from the little French bourgeois of Meudon-Bellevue, and I was part of...

because all the kids where you live... so I lived at 77 rue Ernest-Renan, so the housing estate. And there too it was a kind of experience of what it's like to arrive in a country which has no desire to see you arrive, and which treats you badly, because we treat badly the people we didn't choose to welcome, who are not your guests, who are simply people who had to leave for various reasons. Well, I realised that it wasn't a very enviable position. Whatever the reason, we had to leave. And there too, the imagination saved me. Because I felt very, very bad in that environment, in that class, in that boys' school... And well, I wasn't really into football, it wasn't really my thing. Well, I was more of a little boy... delicate, as you might say. I had met another friend called Michel Bartaud who was a bit like me, more or less the same profile. And in the playground, we were a bit of a target for mockery. Well, again, there were no girls in the playground, so we were kind of the girls in the playground. But I... with my friend Michel I had invented a story that had nothing to do with my real story. So I told him that in fact I was the son of a Siamese prince, that my mother was a Danish dancer, that my father lived in Siam, that I lived with my mother, but she was rarely there because she was a Danish dancer and she lived a lot in Denmark, and I told him a whole thing about this family... Well, it had to do with fiction, obviously, it had to do with the role, it had to do with the theatre, with the desire to, how shall I put it, to make the... the desire to find a role in reality, when you don't have one. Because we're a little boy who finds himself in situations that he obviously hasn't chosen, who doesn't know exactly where he is, so he has no role, no reference point, no... there he is, that's all. The first observation, which I think applies to all children and to me in particular, is that first of all it's very difficult to get out of a context in which you don't feel well. So, God knows if I adored my early childhood, I didn't like at all what we call adolescence, it was a very difficult period for me. I didn't like the family context which was very chaotic, I didn't like the space in which I evolved, namely this famous housing estate I was talking about earlier, it didn't get any better, the more time passed, the more I hated this place. Well, Meudon-Bellevue was, at the time and still is, more or less, a fairly residential suburb. So there were little gardens, things, walks... The walks alone, in this small suburb, were also a way of escaping. And then, there was also the theatre. And the first role, apart from the roles I invented for myself, but the first real role I played, well, it was in a play by Alfred de Musset called *À quoi rêvent les jeunes filles*, and I played the role of Silvio, a young man in love with a... And I still remember a line, at one point, the character I was playing, Silvio, says to the father of the girl, with whom he has fallen in love, more or less, and says to him: „I am a virgin from head to toe and from heart to soul“. And I was fifteen when I played that. And I said to myself... well, I didn't say it, but I said to myself: „but what does it mean to be a virgin from head to toe and from heart to soul? And I still remember my costume, I had a sort of Louis XV costume, Marivaux... And I remember, in order to make... we didn't have the money to buy wigs, obviously, but in order to make a wig, well, something that resembled a 17th century hairstyle, my mother did my hair with one of her hairpieces, because at the time it was the fashion for Chanel buns, I remember. So it was a kind of... my mother was blond, so it was fine, because I was also blond at the time, and so she put this Chanel hairpiece on me with a big velvet, a big black velvet bow on the back of my neck, and it made a very convincing silhouette to play a little young man of the 17th century. And that was the first experience where I had a real theatre costume, there was a real cardboard set, obviously, a theatre set, but there it was, a real play. And then there was my father, who was a rather rigorous man.

Well, the theatre, I had done a bit of dancing with my mother, well, he thought that all this practice, this stuff about catogans, Louis XV costumes and What Young Girls Dream of, well, he only half liked it. So I had to play football or handball or even tennis, I hated all that stuff. So I stopped acting at that time because my father didn't want me to do it anymore, and I was about fifteen years old, so it was a bit difficult. I read a lot. And there was a text which was very important for me, I was fifteen, I don't think that... well, it was with a reading of a little fifteen year old man, eh, in this rather difficult period, and so I read The Princess of Cleves. And it's a book I fell in love with but... I couldn't put it down. I loved The Princess of Cleves. And then came the baccalaureate, well, because I passed my baccalaureate in 1970 or something like that, yes 1970, so there had been 1968. And there, my father, who was rather a man, well, brought up in the Jesuits, rather austere, well, but left-wing, so 68 was a kind of revelation for him. And as he said: „I'm making my cultural revolution“. Well, what he meant was: „from now on I won't hide anymore to go on weekends with my mistresses. That's what his cultural revolution was all about. Anyway, there was a kind of wind of freedom that started to blow in this house which was rather stuck in very tense relationships, the father let go a bit, the mother also decided to work, so she became... she worked as a bookseller, so there was a kind of more flexible atmosphere, but well, that didn't lead to any particular practice as far as I was concerned, for theatre. Well, I continued my studies, I passed my baccalaureate, rather well, as I was a good student and it was my father's wish, I entered a preparatory school. But I didn't really want to go to a preparatory school, so I waited until the last minute, so I had to go to Henri IV and as I had waited too long I didn't go to Henri IV, I went to Fénelon, which was originally a girls' school, in Saint-Germain. Well, I entered the preparatory school, it was 70, a funny period for the... we were all revolutionaries, well very... I was very hippy, well very flower power, well, I stole bracelets from my mother which I put around my wrists, Indian scarves which I took off, obviously, when I went home because my father wouldn't have stood for it, arguments about the length of my hair every day, well, all the scenarios of that time. And then one day, well, I decided to make a detour and go past the Coupole. Well, it was spring, there were already terraces, and well, then something rather annoying happened to me, well, I had a very, very violent crisis and I started, while passing in front of the Coupole, to overturn the tables, to throw the glasses on the tables on people, well, while shouting, well, a sort of difficult crisis anyway. Well, obviously the cops arrived, I was put in a salad basket, well, then there were psychiatrists, well, it was difficult. And, well, three weeks, a month after this event, my father said to me: „Listen, I don't know what to do with you, well, I thought that studying literature and all that would suit you, well, it obviously doesn't suit you, I don't know what you want to do with your life, I don't have the codes to deal with all that, so I advise you to leave Paris and go back to your grandparents' house in the provinces. Well, that's what I did. In Paris, before, after this crisis, leaving Paris, well, I had had a sexual relationship, a homosexual one, which was quite violent. But quite... at the time I was still in high school, so I must have been sixteen, seventeen. I had a gay friend in high school who was much more emancipated than me and who said to me: „Oh, well...“. And I only dreamed of one thing, obviously, it was to meet a guy. Well, until now, well, I hadn't met anyone. And he said to me: „well, I have an older friend“, who lived, I remember, on rue Tiquetonne, at the metro station Étienne Marcel, at the time there was still Les Halles, well it was quite an atmosphere, there you go: „well it would be cool to go and

visit him“, well, OK, fine. I went there hoping that something would happen and indeed something did happen. My friend left after half an hour and I was left alone with this young man, let's say, not a young man, a young man. And then, well, he jumps on me... well, he jumps on me... I was willing, but it was the first time and it was... well, I fell in love with this man I had seen for, well, the time it took for our affair to be done, and what, it lasted half an hour maximum. But then I go home and there I am, I had fallen in love with this guy. Of course, the guy opposite was thinking: „What's this seventeen year old kid who's starting to... send me love letters“, and well, he didn't follow up and that put me off a bit. And so I didn't try to have any other adventures, of this nature in any case, for a certain period of time. And then I found myself in Poitiers, and in Poitiers it was much more joyful on that side. Because in Poitiers there was a place that I loved, which was called Les Coloniaux. It was a garden on the slope going down towards the station, and now, well, it's become a very frequented place because there's the TAP of Poitiers, the national stage of Poitiers has settled next to it, but forty years ago, it was a small square with a pissoir behind three cypresses, which was frequented at night by all that this good city of Poitiers could count of nocturnal walkers looking for adventures, and I loved that. I loved cruising in this place. It was a bit dangerous too, because you could sometimes meet people who weren't always very nice, but anyway, in Poitiers, I must say that... well, I had a lot of passing adventures, with people who were passing by, very nice, well, I liked it, well, I was happy. And not only happy because there was this little square in Poitiers, the Colonials, but at the weekend, when I went to my grandparents' in Smarves which was eight kilometres from Poitiers, so to go to Smarves, there's a road, and then at the end of a slope before arriving at the plain, there's a wood which adjoins, moreover, the territory where there is a convent of Benedictine nuns, or Carmelites, I don't know exactly which order they belong to, but there is a convent, therefore of women, and next to this convent there is a small wood. And this little wood, well, at the time, was the place to... as there was a sort of little path which made it easy to park cars in this little path, this little wood was a cruising spot. So when I was at my grandparents', I used to take my bike and go to the little wood next to the... to the Carmel. And I have to say that it was quite nice. Good times. So Poitiers was a liberation for me, it was a small provincial town at the time, still full of, well, devotion, whatever you want, but in the small student milieu I was in... I had gay friends, there weren't fifty of them, there were two on the campus, well two confirmed ones, Gérard and Christophe, well, Gérard died of AIDS, Christophe has always remained... he lives in Paris, we still see each other, and he's still my oldest friend, my oldest boyfriend anyway, so we were three queens, because we were really queens. And it was a bit of a claim at the time, so things that now would seem... But Gérard was a pioneer in this field, and he used to go to classes at the university, and it was a university where they taught Old French, classical literature, so there was Old French, Latin and so on, and it took place at the Hôtel Fumé, which was in the city center, the temple of medieval studies, of academic memory in this famous Hôtel Fumé, which is very beautiful, by the way, a very old building from the 16th century I think, and so Gérard would show up there with his nails painted red, at the time it was revolutionary, red rubber boots, a big scarf to take classes on Tristan and Isolde and Marguerite de Navarre, well, it was rather fun. And there you go, we lived in this atmosphere and then at the weekend we went to my grandparents' who were great because they accepted a lot of people, they had no problem with that, so I spent... Poitiers was, for me, a place of great freedom. So my period in Poitiers came to an end, I finished, at the time, it

was called a master's degree, well I started a master's degree, on the XVIIth century, on Madame de Sévigné, and then I came back to Paris because I was a bit fed up, I wanted to do theatre, so in Potiers it wasn't possible, so I went back to Paris and then I was completely free, I had left the family home. There, it was 1974, 1975, there was a whole community in Paris, there were many people who had fled Greece, which was under the dictatorship of the colonels, there was the Communist Party, and it was at that time that I also joined the Communist Party, because I had a family that I loved very much who was in the CP and that was also a way for me to meet people, well. I finished my dissertation on the correspondence of Madame de Sévigné, despite the reticence of my, inverted commas, dissertation director, who thought that it wasn't a very academic subject, Madame de Sévigné, who said to me: „Do something on the rewriting of La Bruyère“, I said: „But the rewriting of La Bruyère doesn't interest me very much! He would say to me: „but Madame de Sévigné, is she really a writer? Well, we had this kind of question in 1972! Is Mme de Sevigne a writer worthy of occupying a little student who wants to do a little thesis on her correspondence! It wasn't so obvious, I was the first at the Sorbonne to do a thesis on Madame de Sevigné. Well, finally, there you go. And so there was this whole atmosphere of speed, mime, dance, and the university campus. So I found a small job as a waiter at the Société de comptabilité de France, on Boulevard Haussmann, where I filled the chocolate dispensers, I put the toilet paper in the toilets, well, that sort of thing, it made me live anyway. I lived in a tiny room, as big as a cupboard, on the rue du Marché-Saint-Honoré, you had to get in on all fours to get into this cupboard, there was enough room for a bed, well a bed, a mattress, and a chair, that's all. So given the small size of the place, it was out of the question for several people to be there, so I was alone, but I wasn't there much because at that time in Paris we were outside a lot. In the provinces I had lived with several people in the same space, but in Paris, well, there were still what were called maid's rooms, so it was very, very, very... there was no heating, in general there were toilets on the landing, but not always, sometimes it was two landings down or two landings up. I had to climb three flights of stairs to go to the toilet in the corridor of the maids' rooms, which was much higher than my cupboard, and the same for the washbasins. So we used to go to the public baths a lot at the time, well, we used to take showers, I remember, at the time there was one, and Beaubourg was under construction, there was one where Ircam is now. Well, there was a shower bath there, and we used to take showers there, not every day of course, but well, we used to wash in this kind of place. So we weren't there much, and it was true for all the people I knew, they lived in shacks... but in Paris! We weren't exiled miles away from Paris either, we lived in Paris, but in little shacks, so we were outside all the time. We went back to our rooms to sleep when we wanted to sleep, but the rest of the time we were living outside. So there was a different life because the notion of home, my home, my interior, it didn't exist like that. There was no such notion, we didn't go and get things from Ikea, the notion of the interior didn't exist, at least in the environment I was in. So we were outside a lot and as it was a very, very festive time, well, very dynamic in terms of meeting people, in terms of festivities, informal, it wasn't complicated. But to come back to the FHAR¹, well, the FHAR meetings took place at the Beaux-Arts, but we didn't go there as if we were going to the high mass. We went to the FHAR meetings, in the amphitheatre, to have fun! To flirt, to have fun, to... So, there was indeed, I remember, at the bottom of the amphitheatre bleachers, a table where there

¹ Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire. Homosexual Revolutionary Action Front

were, well, personalities, I remember, among others, Françoise d'Eaubonne, Hocquenghem, well, who made speeches, but it wasn't at all in the mode of, how shall I put it: „Shut up, I'm going to talk. These people spoke in a total hubbub, some listened to them, others didn't, they did something else, there was no protocol at all for speaking, how shall I put it, a bit fixed in the authority of the message, it was very flexible, it was very noisy, very flexible, and you stayed as long as you wanted to stay! it went in, it went out, it went to flirt left and right, it came back, it was fun. So it was funny because I was also in the Communist Party at the same time, and I must say that at the time the Communist Party was... at least, the first cell I was in, so in Saint-Germain, well, I had just arrived in this milieu, the ideas which were debated interested me, there was a great atmosphere because the cell meetings were great, we talked about everything, literature, music, politics obviously, but well, it was very, very free, it was, once again, very flexible, well. And then, after a while, they told me: „Well, listen, you don't live in the fifth arrondissement, you live in the first arrondissement“, because my room was on the rue du Marché-Saint-Honoré, „so you can't remain affiliated to the cell in the fifth arrondissement, you have to get closer to the cell in the first arrondissement. Well, that's what I did. So the cell in the first arrondissement was on rue de l'Arbre-Sec, so it's now very close to the Bourse du Commerce, it's a small street, and so, well, that was the cell to which my address corresponded. And there, the atmosphere was very, very different. It was much more rigid, and there was a cell secretary... well. And what led to my being kicked out of the PC was a... it wasn't said explicitly, but there was still a latent homophobia. And as far as I was concerned and compared to the other comrades, the fact that I was, well, an actor, a circus performer, a mime, a dancer, a student, I didn't have a very, very precise professional status, I lived a lot at night because that was my life... Well, I really didn't correspond much to what they wanted to welcome in this cell, well. And so after a year, it stopped and I was told that, well, the Communist Party didn't necessarily need people like me and that I didn't necessarily need a party like the Communist Party. In which... I absolutely did not agree with them. Because maybe they didn't need me, but I needed the idea, maybe not of the party, but of the communist idea, and besides, I'm still a communist, I still claim to be a communist but that's another matter. So there you have it, I left the Party and at the same time I was going to the FHAR meetings. It's funny compared to everything that's happening now, in 2022, but I realize that, compared to that period, it was the beginning of many things. At that time, we were also going to the Collège de France to listen to Foucault, but he was there, present, and he was producing his theoretical reflection on different subjects, there was Deleuze, there was Vincennes ! We went to Vincennes, but Vincennes was exactly like the FHAR meetings! It wasn't at all... we didn't go there for the high mass. We didn't go there to listen to the voice of the master or some other academic authority, we went there to discuss, to have fun once again! Well, to have fun, to be in a kind of dynamic. And we had... it was the moment when these theories, whether by Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, but they were... it was still a work in progress, they were still being developed. Even if these were people who, obviously, had done much more thinking than us little young people, young girls of twenty, but there was no... I would say that we didn't feel militant. We felt alive, participants, that's it, we felt we were there but... We didn't have a label, we didn't have a... I remember these fêtes de l'Huma, the PSU fêtes, but everyone was... those who went to the fête de l'Huma went to the PSU fête, well, those who were like me, well, there were lots of them, we went to the FHAR meetings, we went to Vincennes, there was a circulation,

because all these places for speaking out were not yet... had not yet found fixed spaces of resonance, it was moving all the time, it was moving all the time. And we were in this kind of dynamic which meant that... And it's also true that we really didn't have any money. But it's also true that everyday life was much easier, because the rent cost nothing to live in these shacks, but it didn't cost anything, we found odd jobs, like salesman, I was a floor boy in an accountant's office, well, odd jobs that kept us busy for three hours a day, we earned a bit of money with that, that allowed us to rent our room, and then once we had rented the room, the rest of the expenses were what? It was... we had university cards to go to the university restaurant, there was still life in the Latin Quarter where there were lots of little bars, which no longer exist, but it didn't cost anything! We'd go and eat a cornet de frites and a côtelette, it cost three francs six cents. We could stay there because economically we could stay there. If now, when I go back, the other day I went back to the Latin Quarter to see a film at the Champollion, well, God knows if the Champollion, when I was twenty years old, it was a cinema, we went there a lot, the cinema was not expensive either. When I went back through the bloody Latin Quarter, when I found myself in the Place de la Sorbonne, we used to go there a lot, but now it's all clothes shops, and one out of two of them is closed, the bookshops have disappeared, and there isn't a coffee, when you take it, which doesn't cost at least three euros fifty, if not four euros fifty, which is already a small sum for a coffee, well, I mean... And on top of that, the students don't live there anymore! The students are exiled to the very, very distant suburbs, so there you go, they take their courses and they go home and then they have two hours of transport. At the time we were in this sort of little microcosm of the Latin Quarter, because we rarely crossed the bridges. Now I live in the 18th arrondissement, but when I was twenty we never went to Montmartre, we never went to Belleville or Ménilmontant, because at the time there were also... Well, I have to say that in our little world, whether in the FHAR or even in the Communist Party, in the cell of the fifth arrondissement, there were very few workers, and in the FHAR I didn't see any workers. It remained a practice... And besides, to talk about my friend Gérard, he, God knows if in Poitiers he had been... his attitude was very militant in some ways, but he hated the FHAR, saying: „That's a thing for petty bourgeois fags. You're very happy to find yourselves together at the Beaux-Arts, go and wander around the provinces, in Charente, where I was born, and you'll see how it is“ and he wasn't wrong, and it's true that we were still... and that was perhaps also the... how shall I put it, the border, the margin, if not the border, of this movement, is that it didn't open up to... because, afterwards, later on, I knew guys who were gay, so there... and of my generation! They had never heard of FHAR. And they were guys who were workers, truckers, they worked in printing works as employees, well, I mean, a whole... to use a rather old term, if not anachronistic, the proletariat, the FHAR didn't know what it was. And that's also true for the MLF, but well, the MLF was a bit like that too. Yeah, it was great, we saw them in the Latin Quarter, there was always the women's bookshop, we were always very well received, but it all remained in this small intellectual student world of the Latin Quarter and it didn't go beyond that. The Marais didn't exist yet, so... and then we hated all the stuff, what was it called at the time, Arcadie, David and Jonathan, well all that discreet fag stuff was unbearable for us. Having said that, I think that these people were addressing a much wider population than we were doing in the Latin Quarter among ourselves. Because there was no risk there, we didn't risk... first of all, at the FHAR, 90% of the people were either students, or professionals, well, they weren't directly confronted with structural homophobia as it could

happen, or cultural homophobia, as it could happen in other professional social spaces. We thought it was ridiculous, their Arcadia meetings, we laughed at them, they were tea dances, well, things that seemed to us to be completely baroque. But the big break with all this joyous adventure was AIDS. And there, in the circles, in the very gay circles... Well, there was... it had started... After that, after the Latin Quarter, well, little stories, there were a few saunas opposite, well, on the right bank, on the Rue Sainte-Anne, yes, well, a few saunas, but we didn't go there much, at least not for me, later on, yes, but not at that time. First of all, a sauna was expensive, you had to pay for it, we couldn't afford it, and it wasn't our thing. We used to flirt in the Tuileries a lot. The Tuileries was the... we had a good laugh in the Tuileries, well, at night, during the day, well... the parks were places to pick up girls, the pissoirs obviously, we were outside a lot. And then came... then there was the Marais which was starting, with all this aesthetic which was not at all the aesthetic of FHAR. It started a bit at FHAR because there were some influences, well, American influences, we sometimes saw guys arriving with leather jackets, at the beginning of FHAR. Well, it wasn't the dress code, the dress code was more like jeans... We were still a bit... it was still going on, in the years 73, 74, in terms of, how shall I say, the exercise of representation, rather Indian shirts, silk scarves, curls, henna, well we were more into that. And then it was the Marais that established an aesthetic code of leather, well, moustache, motorbike, leather, the Central, that was when it started. And some people liked it, but not all. Well, my boyfriend, well now my husband, at the time, he was discovering, because he was from the provinces, well, he arrived, he didn't live through the FHAR and all that, but he arrived in Paris at the time of the creation, inverted commas, of the meeting place in the Marais. And he was a square guy, a polytechnician, so he had been to military school, so the leather stuff, the motorbikes, the affirmation of a triumphant virility, it suited him absolutely, so there you go, he had big motorbikes, leather things. And in the bars of the Marais it was like that. A guy like me, who was more of what was called at the time a crazy woman, whereas at FHAR the idea of a crazy woman, and this is also something I liked a lot at FHAR, there was not this depreciation that there was afterwards in the Marais, on crazy women. At the FHAR there were a lot of queens. And this generated a space of carefree creativity too. And then, in the Marais, the bars in the Marais, the queens couldn't go in, there was an ostracism! When you arrived in a bar in the Marais at Central with too many scarves, too many bracelets, when you didn't fit the pattern, the T-shirt, the tank top, the leather jacket and the tight jeans and then the moustache, you didn't fit! And I never really liked that, I never went to the Marais, I must say. The Marais in the ,75s and ,80s, the leather bars, Café Moustache, all the cafés there were, the backrooms, there was a kind of overkill of the masculine stigma that I didn't like very much. Because in addition, these guys who dressed up as Easy Rider characters, many of them, like Philippe, were guys who were civil servants, senior civil servants, lawyers... And besides, my friend, one day, he was... we went to the theatre at the Cartoucherie de Vincennes, and then he arrived, motorbike, leather jacket, and then he bumped into one of his colleagues, from work. The guy was just leaving work, he hadn't had time to change his wardrobe, and he wasn't gay, so he was wearing his civil servant's suit, which was normal for a civil servant. And he saw Philippe show up in this outfit, and he said to him: „Are you going to a costume party? That's it! So there was this thing, I never really liked it. And detestation of queens, which, in the gay milieu, queens never... because it's a terribly conventional milieu in some ways, first of all it's a petit bourgeois milieu because the only ones whose social milieu, at the time

at least, could accept this, inverted commas, deviance, were the bourgeois milieus. So there were a lot of things I didn't like. But there you have it, so the FHAR was a moment of freedom, and then there was this newspaper, Gai Pied, which was good. So it was a piece of paper, it was printed on very, very mediocre quality paper, and then there was Têtu, which for me was bullshit! But then, I hated Têtu because it was a glossy paper, like Paris Match, which had completely lost the, how should I say, the poetic and vehemence of what had been Gai Pied, it had become a kind of fashion paper with, well, an iconography, for me, of shit, so beautiful guys in the nude or in thongs, well, and then all the guys in fashion who had... well. For me, Têtu was a... we were becoming people, we were becoming... we had lost the poetics of the fringe and we were becoming... It's not at all that I think the fringe is an enviable situation, or even necessary to be creative, I'm not into this delusion: you have to be in the fringe to be interesting, that's not at all what I mean. I simply mean that there was a free enthusiasm there, a freedom in relation to capitalism, to money, which was more present afterwards at Têtu. Afterwards, with Têtu, it was Saint-Laurent, Bergé, patati patata, and it became something worldly. Worldly homosexuality, homosexuality... it wasn't the worldly homosexuality of Proust's time, of course, but it's true that the FHAR, the first years of Gai Pied, the MLF, and all that supported by theoretical reflections, whether it was Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, well, we kept deconstructing, but it was exciting. And I think that afterwards it became... And then there was AIDS. Then it was hell. That was hell. Because it was appalling. First of all we were dying like flies, I had a lot of... Gérard, he... it was terrible, we all had... And then it created a kind of anguish, we didn't dare to have any love relationship, everything became hell! Really hellish. And then, at the time, like at the origin of all the pandemics, it happened with Covid, well, we almost didn't dare to shake hands, to hold, to kiss our friends... So God knows if we liked these contacts, well we liked, we were friends, so we liked to hold each other's arms, to kiss, well, what all friends do together, whether they are gay or not. It had become forbidden, everything had become... brushing your teeth with the... we used to wash the... when we were sharing drinks with other friends, each one took bleach to wash the glass that had been used by his best friend, it created... And then the terrifying spectacle of this disease, because at the time there was nothing. You had to see, then it's not... God knows if the hospital environment, the best friends of the friends I saw hospitalized, in the hospitals, in Paris, we had put a little... even some people said „the AIDS patients“, relegated to the wings of the hospitals far enough from the bodies, well from the central buildings, it was a little like the plague. I've never heard that the nursing staff was discriminating. On the other hand, what was discriminating was society as a whole, certainly not the nursing staff, but society as a whole, and that was very discriminating, because if you were a fag, that meant that you were a plague victim. People looked at us as being the rats, the rats of the plague. So, after the wardrobe, so rue du Marché-Saint-Honoré, I lived on rue des Écouffes, in a room, again, quite miserable, above a small synagogue. And I lived there, in the Marais, in this old district where the Jewish presence, especially Ashkenazi, was very daily, and I really liked it, I must say, to find myself in this environment of Yiddish tradition, I really liked it. And also, as I was working in the theatre, in a fictional universe that obviously had some connection with what I was experiencing in my most ordinary daily life, well, it fed me all that. And I really liked this period in this... So it was very, very, very unhealthy almost, this room. Well, after that room I went a bit further because I left it, I went... So there, for the time being, I

shared a flat with a friend in rue Pache next to the place... in the 11th arrondissement, what's the name of that place, I've forgotten the name, at the end of rue de la Roquette. Well, we shared a flat there, it was nice. And then one day, my mother who had a destiny, hers, a bit diagonal compared to, let's say, the normal destiny of a mother, well, she had chosen side roads, and one day, I saw her arrive at my place, with her suitcase, saying to me: „Well, listen, is it possible, for a little while, that you take me in? My flatmate, who had a flatmate who lived at the end of the street, spent his time at his boyfriend's place, said to my mother: „Well, listen, if you want to settle there, you settle there, I'm not there very often, so it won't bother me. I'm not there very often, so it won't bother me.“ So my mother settled there and then, after a while, the flatmate in question decided to go and live with his friend, so he said to me: „Well, listen, I'm leaving. Well, I couldn't afford to pay the rent for this flat, so we had to find a solution. So I said to my mother: „Listen, we have to leave because it's too expensive for us, we have to find another flat. So we found another one near Saint-Ambroise. And so I lived with my mother for a while in this flat, and then one day she said to me: she was going to leave. She left, and so I started looking for accommodation again, I found another one, it was rue de Rennes, not rue de Rennes, rue de Sèvres, at another friend's place, and then I stayed there for a while, a year and a half, and during this period I met someone with whom I got on well, and it was the election of François Mitterrand, in '81. And as this person, who had become a very dear friend, a lover, well, who was very well with the government, as things weren't going too well with the flat-sharing, well, there you go, he passed me off as a parliamentary attaché, and found me a small studio in the 13th arrondissement at Olympiades, in the Asian part of Paris, in these towers. And there I was, I arrived, and I was really happy because I had been moving from one flat to another for fifteen years, well, it was really nice, that's not the problem, I didn't feel unhappy in any way, at least not as far as housing was concerned. And so there, well, studio, bathroom, not bad. And well, I stayed in this place for 19 years. And then, well, I lived there, I obviously continued with the theatre, but I had left the Yiddish repertoire, the company in which I worked had become interested in Brecht's plays, but the young Brecht, Drums in the Night, In the Jungle of the Cities, so there you have it, so I played in these plays, and then people saw me perform in these plays and hired me for other projects in the theatre, and all that happened at the Cartoucherie de Vincennes because, like the Yiddish and Brecht plays, they were performed at the Théâtre du Chaudron and one at the Épée de Bois, during... uh at the Épée de Bois... what was the name of that... at the Aquarium in Vincennes, and then the director, the director of the Théâtre de l'Épée de Bois, Antonio Díaz-Florián, saw me perform in these Brecht plays and hired me to perform an adaptation he had made of Diderot's Paradoxe sur le comédien, So I played that, then with him I played a Brecht play again, Puntila and Matti, and then, after that, I came back, afterwards, with the old company, and there, these people, therefore, passionate about... well, passionate, so who had lived a lot in the United States, but who were originally from Oujda, a town in Morocco, who had left Morocco, at the time they had to leave Morocco, wanted to make a film by adapting The Stranger by Albert Camus. Because it's the universe of... It wasn't at all the Camus, well, philosopher, well, if you want philosopher, well, it was rather the Algerian Camus, more than Algerian, Algerian, the Camus who had well, nevertheless, narrated the life of these pieds-noirs communities, urban... So they wanted to make this film, and the friend of... they were very inspired by the films of Cassavetes, well, they were a bit in that aesthetic movement, and they wanted to make this film. Well, they

hired me to make this film, to play the role of Meursault, the foreigner. And then, because of production problems, they didn't manage to get the budget to make the film. They had done all the cutting, for the cinema and not at all for the theatre, of the novel and they said to themselves: „well, we're not going to make the film, but we're going to keep exactly the same adaptation that was planned for the cinema, well, without changing anything, we're going to make it for the theatre. With cuts, scenes of one minute and fifty seconds, we'll do it as if it were a shooting. And we go to Avignon with this project and it works incredibly well. At the time, we played in the off, but at the time there were prizes, we gave off prizes and we got the off prize, and with this adaptation of *The Stranger*, it was a jackpot because we played in the four corners of the world, in Africa, in Asia, in America, in fact on all the continents for four, five years. So it was a very good period in my life. That said, during this period I had a very serious car accident, coming out of a rehearsal, and it was a bit difficult, because I was hit by a car, driven by a police officer, on the boulevard opposite the Austerlitz station. And well, it smashed my legs, my head, well, it was very badly treated, so I was led to believe that I would end my life on crutches... well. So at the beginning it was a bit difficult to accept and then in fact, well, I was young, I was thirty-three, thirty-four years old, you get used to everything, even being cripple, and so, well, I had my crutches, of course, but I had resumed acting with these crutches, in another Brecht and it was working... well, and then in fact, after two years, all that was more or less settled. And then there was my story with my lover, obviously, there were other adventures at the same time, but there you go, I was very fond of this person and then... We didn't meet Philippe and me in a salon, it wasn't Madame what's-her-name who received us and introduced us to each other, no, we met in a cruising spot, on the Avenue de l'Opéra, near this café, which they called the Royal Opéra at the time, which I think still exists. Well, it was a night spot, when you hadn't done your business walking in the Tuileries grove, it's not far, you'd go up the boulevard and find yourself on the terrace of the Royal Opéra, watching what was going on in the street, well. And then, at the stroke of two in the morning, well, I was still living at the time... I was already living on rue des Écouffes in the Marais. So there I am, I come out of the bar, and then I walk up and down the pavement, saying to myself: „Come on, this is the last line I'll throw, if it bites, it bites, in half an hour if it doesn't bite I'll leave. And then, there was a car park coming up here, near this pavement, and so I was at the entrance of the car park, and then I see a white car coming out, the brand... I wasn't very knowledgeable about car brands, well, this white car is coming out of this car park, and I was right there at the entrance, I was wearing a grey jumper, I remember, knitted by my grandmother, with big bat sleeves, it was fashionable at the time. And so, well, I don't know, this car passes me, there was a driver, obviously, he slows down, he lowers his window, I was on the pavement, „Good evening. - Good evening - how are you? - I'm fine. - What are you doing? - Nothing. - Do you want to come home for a drink? - Well, why not, it's late, the bars are closed. And that was the beginning of a story that has lasted, that has now lasted for forty-five years. So it was a complete coincidence that this car came out of the car park at that moment, that I was at the exit of the car park at that moment, that the car was white, that I had a grey jumper and that it was an encounter. An encounter like thousands of others, but this one was forty... well, it was the beginning of a story that lasted forty-five years, and it was the story of this love, yes, of this life together. And now, well now, for the last four years, we've been married, that obviously hasn't changed anything in our... And what has changed is that I've become a landlord. In a

way that's a bit... not very amusing, because it's not my pills that would have allowed me to become the owner of anything, but it just so happened that, well, at the very moment when Philippe and I had decided to consider a life together, my father died. Well, and then, against all expectations, which surprised all the siblings, because there are five of us, well, he was much wealthier than we imagined, and we all inherited a fairly comfortable sum. It was a bit complicated... a bit complicated... not more than that, but because my father didn't want... had a relationship with the inheritance... well, he thought inheritance was an expression from the Ancien Régime, he thought it was unacceptable that kids, on the pretext that... well, kids, your children, your descendants, on the pretext that you've worked all your life, that well, there you go, for x reason you've amassed money, why should it normally and in an almost, inverted comma, natural way go to your offspring. My father was against inheritance. And he told us that! And besides, a few days before his death, we are five children, three boys and two girls, and he had said: „You boys don't touch...“ because his daughters already had a house that he had... he hadn't bought them, but he had helped to buy these houses for his two daughters. He said, „Well, boys don't touch girls' possessions. So we said: „Well, OK, the girls have houses, fine, we have nothing, it doesn't matter, we don't care. And it turned out, but the banks told us that, because my father was a total secret! They told us, three weeks later or barely, „But there's a lot of money in these Protestant banks“ and so on. And my father had such a difficult relationship with money that he had never spoken about it, that he hated the very notion of inheritance, so we found ourselves with this money and with the idea of : „So we ended up with this money and then with the idea of: „ah well yes, but does dad, post mortem, agree? Well, after a while, after a few questions, it didn't last six months either... Considering what my life has been like, being a landlord doesn't make much sense to me. Well, even if I didn't get along with my father at all, I would have preferred not to get along with him, but I would have preferred him to stay on this land, well, he's not here anymore, and I inherited that. But here's the thing, obviously being a landlord makes life easier, you don't pay rent and then if something happens to you, you have a bit of money which represents the price of your flat, but if you want, for me, to be a priority, apart from that, once again, and it's not negligible eh, certainly not, and then it's once again a chance, in inverted commas, and then of course a privilege, but it's not the fruit of my work, I don't have any, I have no, how shall I put it, glory in being an owner in any way, I have an inheritance, well it's an inheritance, but for me, in the notion of ownership, if there is a notion of permanence, well I'm not an owner because first of all I have no children, so this flat will be passed on to no one, it will be sold, of course, when I'm no longer here, by my nephews, my nieces, in short, who will inherit it at that time, but it won't be passed on. And for me, if there is any poetry in being an owner, it's more in the transmission of memories, the transmission... That's it, and it's still something that upsets me a lot, it's why people get attached to places? I think that my dog, who is dead now, but perhaps he had more, how shall I say, attachment to this space, because animals need very precise reference points, perhaps my dog was more attached to this place than I was. That's why I like old shacks, because I always say to myself: this is not the house of a single individual, it's the house of a whole history. Apart from the immediate relationship you have with someone you live with, you leave little trace of that, in fact, in the space. What leaves traces in space is numbers! Two individuals, a couple, leave little trace in space. What leaves a trace is the children, the world around you. My mother, who now lives alone in this big provincial house, tells me: „Alone I

leave no trace. Alone I leave no trace. You don't leave a trace when you're alone. You leave traces when there are several of you, but not when you are alone. When you're alone you don't leave a trace. You leave, well... but not tangible traces, because to leave lasting traces you need to be numerous. When I was a young communist, I thought that collective flats were great. Even though I was well aware of all the problems that could arise, I said to myself: „Well, it's not bad to share spaces together, because that's what will be transmitted. But when you're on your own, in the spaces, you don't transmit much.

The three films in ,I invited men into my hotel room and asked them personal questions about their lives‘ are the first works of a larger series that will culminate in Reynaud-Dewar’s solo exhibition at Palais de Tokyo in October 2023. Until then, Reynaud-Dewar plans to make one such film every month. The exhibition at Layr was conceived by Reynaud-Dewar as an opportunity to experiment and test things and ideas for the aforementioned show: the gallery therefore functions as a model for Palais de Tokyo’s “arc”. The men she films and interviews in typical Parisian family run hotels, are close friends, former students or family, as is always the case with her collaborations: she has never worked with professional actors or performers. Hotel rooms are both intimate and generic spaces with practical imperatives, and Paris hotel rooms famously lack any spare space. The bed is the center piece, if not the only piece of furniture in those tiny rooms. During shooting there are a total of 5 people in the room: the interviewee, Reynaud-Dewar as the interviewer, Victor Zébo the cinematographer, Pierre Bompoy who is recording the sound and Hodei Berasategi, the script assistant. The filmed subject is closely framed by Reynaud-Dewar and her team’s gaze, and is at the center of both sensual and intellectual attention. Reynaud-Dewar has explored the interview format in her previous work ,Rome November 1st and 2nd 1975‘, where she recorded long “biographical” interviews of all of her cast (24 persons), that were transcribed and published in small individual booklets to accompany the video installation. Here, her topics of interest are still biographical, but the interviews engage in a closer look at notions of private property and masculinity. The three male voices overlap in the space and become audible only when one - in a movement similar to that of the camera in the small hotel rooms - gets closer to the screen. In the films, Reynaud-Dewar’s questions have been edited out and thus giving an impression that these men are monologuing. These purloined questions re-appear visually, printed onto small billboards with images of the artist naked, her body colored in hues similar to that of the very artificial light used to light the hotel rooms. Thus, Reynaud-Dewar’s questions become over-imposing, as if addressed also to the spectator of the show, and echoing in the space.