

SECTION 1

J'ai enseigné longtemps l'enseignement ménager.¹
I taught (for a) longtime home economics.

Ce qui² veut dire³ que je suis une vieille féministe et que j'ai
Which means that I am an old feminist, and that I have

mené plusieurs batailles dans ma vie. Je [ne] les ai pas toutes
lead many battles in my life. I haven't won them all

10

gagnées,⁴ mais j'en ai gagné quelques-unes.⁵ Par exemple,
but I've won a few of them. For example,

je vais vous dire⁶ -j... j'ouvre une parenthèse si vous permettez -
I will tell you ... I open a parentheses if you allow -

j'ai gagné la bataille de la machine à laver avec mes élèves.
I won the battle of the washing machine with my students.

20

Quand les premières machines à laver ont commencé à
When the first washing machines began

se démocratiser,⁷ qu'on⁸ pouvait en acheter, moi, je faisais un
to fall in price, that you could buy one, me, I was teaching a

¹ **l'enseignement ménager**, *literally*, household teaching. **ménager** = having to do with the household. **le ménage** = (1) the couple; the household; (2) the housework

² **Ce qui** = that which

³ **vouloir dire** = to mean; *literally*, to want to say

⁴ **Je ne les ai pas toutes gagnées**, *from*, **Je** (I) + **ne...pas** (not) + **les** (them (the battles)) + **ai** (have) form of **avoir** (to have) + **toutes** (all) + **gagnées** (won) form of **gagner** (to win). A point for grammar fans: note that **gagné** has an extra **e** and **s** because it must agree in number and gender to the direct object pronoun **les**.

⁵ **j'en ai gagné quelques-unes**, *from*, **je** (I) + **en** (of them) + **ai gagné** (have won) + **quelques-unes** (a few). Another note for grammar fans: note that **gagné** does not agree with **en**.

⁶ **je vais vous dire**, *from*, **je** (I) + **vais** (am going) form of **aller** (to go) + **vous** (you; to you) + **dire** (to tell)

⁷ **se démocratiser** = to become within reach of the majority of the population. This word is used again in section 19

⁸ **on** = one. Depending upon context, **on** can mean "they," "we," "people," etc.

cours à des élèves de quatrième,¹ c'est-à-dire qui
course to students in "4th" that is to say who

avaient quatorze ans.² Et je leur expliquais³ comme c'était
were 14. And I was explaining to them how it was

30 bien une machine à laver, etc. Et les élèves
good, a washing machine, etc. And the students

n'accrochaient pas.⁴ Et un jour, il y en a une⁵ qui a fini
showed no interest. And one day, there is one of them who ended up

par oser⁶ me dire: "Mais madame, mon père, il dit à ma mère
daring to tell me: "But Madame, my father, he says to my mother

40 que si elle [n']est pas faignante, elle fera comme sa mère et
that if she isn't lazy, she will do as her mother and

sa grande-mère et elle continuera de laver au lavoir.⁷
her grandmother and she will continue to wash at the washing place.

Ca [ne] m'a pas plu du tout. Et c'était une petite qui
That didn't please me at all. And it was a young girl who

était pensionnaire. Je lui ai dit: "Tu rentres ce week-end
was (a) boarder. I said to her: "You return this weekend

50 chez toi?"⁸ Elle me dit: "Oui madame." Je dis: "Tu vas faire
home? And she says to me: "Yes, Madame." I say: "You will give

¹ **la quatrième** = 8th grade, the 4th year before the last year of high school which is called "**la terminale**." **la troisième** = 9th grade. **la seconde** = 10th grade. **la première** = 11th grade.

² **avaient quatorze ans**, *literally*, had 14 years.

³ **je leur expliquais**, *from*, **je** (I) + **leur** (to them) + **expliquais** (was explaining) form of **expliquer** (to explain)

⁴ **n'accrochaient pas**, *from*, **ne... pas** (not) + **accrocher** (to fasten; to hitch, to hang on)

⁵ **il y en a une**, *from* **il** (it) + **y** (there) + **en** (of them; some) + **a** (has) form of **avoir** (to have) + **une** (one). **Il y a** = there are; there is. **Il y en a** = there is some; there are some. **Il y en a une** = there is one.

⁶ **a fini par oser**, *from*, **a** (has) form of **avoir** (to have) + **fini** (finished) form of **finir** (to finish) + **par** (by) + **oser** (to dare)

⁷ **lavoir**; a large public washing basin near a river or stream.

⁸ **chez toi** = to your home; to your place

une commission à ton père.¹ Tu lui diras de ma part,
a message to your father. You will tell him from me,

tu lui diras: "Le professeur a dit que tu étais un gros faignant,
you'll tell him: "The professor said that you were a "big lazy"

60 parce que ton père et ton grand-père, ils labouraient
because your father and your grandfather, they plowed

en se crevant derrière le cheval, et toi, tu laboures peinard,
killing themselves behind the horse, and you, you plow peacefully,

le cul² sur ton tracteur. Tu dis bien comme ça à ton père."
your butt on your tractor. You say just like that to your father."

"Oui madame."
"Yes Madame."

70

Et la semaine d'après quand elle est arrivée, elle
And the week after when she arrived, she

m'a dit: "Samedi après-midi, on est allé à Valréas et on a acheté
told me; "Saturday afternoon, we went to Valréas and we bought

une machine à laver."
a washing machine." ■

80

¹ **Tu vas faire une commission à ton père**, *literally*, you are going to do an errand to your father.

² **le cul**: though not used here to be vulgar, this word should be avoided in polite company. It is on the level of a "four letter word" in English.