

Series: Being right with... Monique Wittig

Episode 2/5 : Monique Wittig "L'Opoponax", a stunning literary debut.



How does Wittig's work fit in with the Nouveau Roman movement? Monique Wittig's landmark book, *L'Opoponax*, is a highly original account of childhood. What is the contemporary critical reception? Is she bringing the political into the Nouveau Roman?

In November 1964, a photo of a 29-year-old woman appeared on the French literary scene: her hair cut into a short bob and her legs crossed, she might embody the idea of the well-behaved young girl of the time, were it not for her wry smile and determined gaze. Monique Wittig has just published *The Opoponax* (Editions de Minuit): a novel about the childhood of several young girls, written from an objective point of view, and in which the pronoun "on" takes a singular place. The novel won her the Prix Médicis, awarded by a jury of writers from the Nouveau Roman. It was also praised by Marguerite Duras, who wrote in her preface: "Nothing has ever been written like this about childhood".

But what is the language of *The Opoponax*? What makes this novel so special? We'll answer these questions with our two guests: Yannick Chevalier, lecturer in French grammar and stylistics, specialist in Nathalie Sarraute, the French novel of the 50s and 70s, and Monique Wittig, co-director of *Lire Monique Wittig aujourd'hui (Read Monique Wittig now)* (with Benoît Auclerc, ed. PUL, 2012), whose work focuses on the relationship between literature and gender; Also with us, writer Anne Garréta, novelist, member of the Oulipo, professor in the USA and at Rennes 2 University, also working on the expression of gender, notably since her first novel, *Sphinx* published in 1986, Prix Médicis in 2002 for *Pas un jour*, and author of a preface for the reissue of Monique Wittig's *Paris-la-Politique*, to be published in September 2023 by Editions P. O.L.

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