

## INTERVIEW

*While surfing the web, I came across a website ([www.denisclarinval.org](http://www.denisclarinval.org)) dedicated to you. I was already familiar with your writings and noticed that on this site, some of them are fully downloadable, others only partially. Clearly, you're not chasing copyright royalties, even though your books are available on Amazon at more than affordable prices. So who exactly is Denis CLARINVAL?*

The result of a long, very long story. But first, let me come back to this lack of interest in copyright. If I chose to publish my books independently on Amazon KDP, it's precisely to preserve a freedom that is dear to me — especially the freedom to retain full ownership over what I write, without having to negotiate corrections or adjustments usually aimed at pleasing the public. That's said! You ask me who I am? I was first trained in philosophy (I hold a licentiate-agrégation in that field), but for purely material reasons, I supplemented my training with studies in management sciences (earning an MBA and a teaching certificate in the subject, as well as the required qualification for higher education).

That's how I came to teach finance and management control in higher education, where I ended my career as a director. Retirement allowed me to return to my first loves: poetry, philosophy, dramatic theatre, and tragedy.

*Your philosophical journey went through several stages — from Sartre to Nietzsche, passing through the post-structuralists. Would you say today that this evolution has finally reached completion?*

In my youth, like so many others, I greatly admired Sartre, and he's the one who led me to study Husserl. Then came the long interlude we've mentioned, before I returned to literature and philosophy. I found myself particularly drawn to the post-structuralists — Foucault and Deleuze in particular, for reasons hard to explain. It was their falling-out,

and especially Foucault's turn toward a more subjective tone in his later writings, that unsettled me. Deleuze, by opening the door to Nietzsche for me, simultaneously closed his own. There's no need to revisit his talents as a forger. Then, almost naturally, Nietzsche led me to rediscover and explore Heidegger — who in turn introduced me to German post-Romantic poetry, with authors like Hölderlin, Rilke, and Trakl. These are now the central references of my intellectual universe.

*About ten years ago, Heidegger was the target of particularly harsh criticism. Didn't those dramatic revelations lead you to doubt?*

Absolutely not! These critiques are sorely lacking in substance, especially the most virulent among them. When I read a text, no matter who wrote it, I am content to read what is written. I don't look for what I would like to find there but is not actually there. And these critics conveniently ignore Heidegger's most precious texts — those that are closely related to poetry. Those are the ones that interest me most, for their depth and the perspectives they open.

*Some passages from your site reveal a very strong sensitivity, especially to silence, absence, or loss. Do you believe this sensitivity is essential to any true philosophical approach?*

I would be inclined to answer yes, without hesitation. But one must qualify this. I don't believe that an aptitude for abstract reasoning or logical mastery — however necessary they may be — can replace this sensitivity to silence, to the unspoken, to what withdraws. I've always been struck by the silences that emerge in the margins of major texts. That's where everything plays out. In fact, the philosophical act — at least as I see it — consists in approaching this silence without forcing it to speak, letting it work within us, under the words. That's probably why I've always loved those fragments where the writing breaks, falters, or becomes a whisper — it's in those interstices that thought is reborn.

*You just said “thought is reborn.” So you don’t consider it something static?*

Not at all. I would even say that thought only lives in its own movement, and that any form of fixation — even aesthetic — threatens it. It is in its fault lines, its hesitations, its tremors that thought becomes most vital. Which is why I tend to distrust philosophical systems, even the most brilliant. What matters to me is what escapes, what flees, what resists capture.

*You also write poetry. Do you draw a line between your poetic and philosophical writing?*

Yes and no. The tone and the rhythm are not the same — nor is the relation to language. But I often feel that both stem from the same impulse, the same urgency: that of approaching the world without enclosing it, naming what withdraws without fixing it. Philosophy cuts paths, poetry lets them echo. But the destination is the same.

*You speak often of “withdrawal.” Could you clarify this?*

Withdrawal is not absence. It’s not nothingness, or a void to be filled. It’s a form of presence so dense, so intense, that it eludes the usual frameworks of thought and language. In that sense, it’s not a lack — it’s an overflow that our categories can’t absorb. Poetry knows how to approach this — far better than many philosophical discourses. It knows how to inhabit that silence without desecrating it.

*You’ve mentioned poetry several times, and yet your poems — or fragments — seem very far from what is generally expected under that name. Would you say you write “poetry”?*

Honestly, I don’t know anymore. What I do know is that I write out of necessity, not out of convention. I never set out to write “a poem.” I write when the inner ground splits, when something arises that can’t be silenced. Sometimes it takes the form of a long

sentence — other times, of broken lines. Sometimes it's very dry — other times, very lyrical. I let the movement come. I never try to control it too much.

*There's something very bare in your writing — as if nothing was meant to reassure the reader.*

That's probably true. But I'm not trying to be difficult or harsh. It's just that the world isn't comforting. The experiences that shaped me — both personally and philosophically — left little room for illusion. So yes, I write from within that fracture, not above it. If the text offers something, it won't be comfort — it will be a shared endurance.

*Do you believe in literature?*

Yes — but not as an institution or market. I believe in the written word as a place of resistance and resurrection. But I must confess, I read very few novels. I'm drawn to writing that leaves things open, that exposes instead of wrapping, that strips instead of dressing.

*What authors still accompany you?*

Many, but they come and go. I read a lot of German poetry — Hölderlin, Rilke, Trakl — who remain for me essential companions. Also Celan, for his uncompromising sharpness. In French, I admire certain solitary voices — Char, Blanchot, Michaux... and even Jaccottet, for his ability to approach the light without ever claiming it.

*And among philosophers?*

Heidegger, always, despite what's been said. Nietzsche, even more than before — because I now understand his wound better. And Simone Weil, for the impossible

balance she sought between clarity and sacrifice. She is perhaps the one who leaves me the most disarmed.

*Let's return to the site. Why did you create it?*

Initially, it was almost a joke. I had written quite a few texts and fragments — some of which I had lost, others I found again. One day, someone told me: “You should put them somewhere, even if no one reads them.” And that sentence stayed with me. So I gathered my texts, formatted them, published a few on Amazon, and built this site with a very simple structure. It's not a blog. It's not a showcase. It's a place to leave traces, nothing more. Some read them — some download them — that's enough for me.

*Have you had feedback?*

Yes. But I don't seek them out. If someone writes to me, I answer. If someone says, “Thank you for this,” I receive it in silence. What matters to me is not the volume, but the density of the echo. And sometimes I sense — through a short message or an anonymous download — that something has passed through. That's all I need.

*Do you hope for posterity?*

Not at all. I hope that this fragile voice I carry may resonate for a moment in those who need it. But once I'm gone, it will all fade, and that's fine. What remains, remains without me.

*How would you define your relationship to writing?*

It's a form of watching, not of producing. I don't write to add to the world — I write to bear witness to what withdraws. And that witness must remain humble, broken, attentive. Sometimes I fail — sometimes I go too far. But I try to remain faithful to that

tone — low, austere, unadorned — that was given to me one day and that I've never truly left.

*If you had to summarize in one sentence?*

I would say: "Write low enough so that silence agrees to sit beside you."

**Words gathered by M.H.**