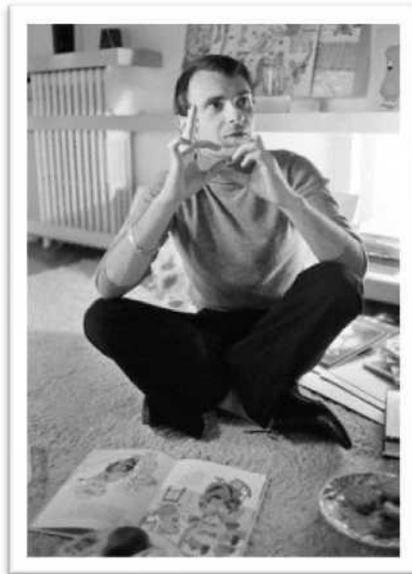


TONY DUVERT

A man speaks



DEEPL TRANSLATION...
A MORE ACCURATE TRANSLATION IS
BEING WORKED ON
2023

JM.THIAN

In my opinion, writing should ALSO explore what turns us on and attracts us to evil.

Frédéric Beigbeder, *Lire* magazine, 2009

"Of what we call sexual perversions, that is to say transgressions of the sexual function in relation to bodily regions and the sexual object, we must be able to speak without indignation. The lack of definite limits within which to confine the so-called normal sexual life, according to race and time, should be enough to calm the overzealous.

"I have no hesitation in regarding as hysterical any person in whom an occasion of sexual excitement provokes primarily or exclusively disgust."

Freud, 1905
quoted in *L'infini*, no. 59, Autumn 1997.

The moon looked out over the entrance to the cave, or rather over the stones that surrounded this deep, black cavity Karim had knelt there, his gaze plunged into the cavern, and seized with a sacred terror he raised his hands above his face, opened his fingers - and he saw them burning with long flames, as if his skin were turning into luminous vapours

Tony Duvert,
Le Voyageur, 1970

INTRODUCTION

The 70s and 80s

THE PERSISTENCE OF PLACE



Source: Laurent Pignon, *La Parole Vaine* N°7, October-November 1995.

"A writer, at that level, is a catastrophe for the homes, that is to say the School, that is to say the State, that is to say the politics of sleeping in a heap." Sollers, 'Faulkner', in *Théorie des exceptions*

"He didn't need to value himself. He shrugged his shoulders at the commonplace notion that one is fulfilled by one's work. Everything that is collective is limited, everything that is solitary is null: between these two convictions, Jonathan would have found it difficult to maintain a love of being an artist." Duvert, *When*

Jonathan Died

We will never admit that a writer is not in the place where he is usually wanted, playing with the same constancy the court of scandal and the call to genius. This impossible situation immediately marks him out as suspicious, cumbersome and UNUSABLE. The fact that he likes to flaunt his contempt for literary sites, and even more, that the alleged strangeness of his words can only grant him an uncertain status according to the common rules, is enough to make him an intruder. Condemned to the cold limbo of sated indifference, he will have to keep quiet, not ask for more than he is offered, than it is possible to accept from him, to fix, to digest, on pain of incurring an even more serious judgement. The strangeness of his words... Unheimliche... The author's worrying strangeness...

While Tony Duvert may seem inappropriate to the book commissioners, it is in fact the swindlers of the literary field who think so, recognising in his words a danger likely to undermine their shop. An imprescriptible, sulphurous, sovereign word, it reveals the game of fools that generally engulfs the fine-arts market, its swaps of allegiance, its collector's manias eager to melt the value of an author and the colour of the shelf on which he sits. "*In your opinion, where should we put Tony Duvert (if we could find just one of his books in the reading room), at 840 DUV-3 or 34396?*" (Michel Vachey, *Toil*). Nowhere, of course, at least nowhere where it would be possible to make it less attractive.

Because Tony Duvert's project has always been unwaveringly free, constantly stigmatising the hypocritical decorum which

make up the present state of our morality. Starting with what forms both its

foundations and its compost, its original and final soil: its textual production. *"Flattering the spineless, licking the soft: that is now all that is expected of written culture - which was the meeting of two free men - No: you will get in here, sir, if you know how to put me to sleep..."* (Tony Duvert, *Abécéditerranée*). (Tony Duvert, *Abécédaire malveillant*). It is not surprising, on the eve of such a contract, to see Duvert remain on the sidelines, with no clearly defined place (as if there could ever be a PLACE for anything, let alone literature). What a wonderful revelation this gap is...

In the same swerve, he demystifies the immunity of the rules to which the collective aggregate and the discourse that justifies it are subject, thereby ensuring his own break with the language of common necessity. Duvert, in writing, takes it upon himself to bring about some major reversal, first and foremost through writing itself, rightly measuring the exclusion that condemns those who indulge in it, even those who have the audacity to contravene the utility of a discourse in order to prefer gratuitousness and enjoyment without contract. The importance of a writer's refusal to submit to the authority of a collective cannot be overstated. It may make you smile, or even seem obvious, evoking the imagery of rebellion that surrounds the literary enterprise, and which appears to all as a due granted to those who proclaim themselves authors: protesting stooge, fashionable narcissism, writing-hero, cult of the accursed, etc....

This would be to forget, however, that the writer has no rights in the eyes of the community, because he is the one who shows the inevitability of his rights, to the community, over his thoughts. Such a position makes him the exception that confirms no rule (1), suddenly appearing in the tight weave of the common consciousness as an element whose living word embodies a danger, and designating him first and foremost for lynching. Disowned, it is first and foremost by the referees of this arena, by those very people who find it in their interest to force the circle, to play on the inviolability of the sacred choir. Guardians of the reserves, sheriffs working for the death of the Indian, for them it is a question of ensuring the work of salubrity demanded of the public. Philippe Muray:

"Such a fervent mass can only be offered products that flatter it. Only books that approve of the present state of the world are taken into account. Maintaining the ghostly reign of the mediators is synonymous with maintaining the public in

this happy coma we call 'culture', the long march of a humanity emerging from ignorance towards consenting bewilderment and approval of anything given official value. Both have the same enemy: the writer who is not convinced that

prolonging their reign is desirable.

Such a panorama does not prevent us from pointing out, in the background, a misunderstanding: namely, that the 'ghostly reign of mediators' of which Muray speaks always arranges an optional part, playing a malign benevolence in the very place where its power is defied, which basically amounts to spreading its base. In this respect, Duvert is no exception, and it will always be easier to give him a prize (as was done in 1973 for his novel *Paysage de fantaisie*, which was awarded the Médicis, a clever way for a jury to defuse the possible threat of such a work, by operating, in one fell swoop, its subversive bliss (2) than to grasp its true relief. An obreptive manoeuvre... won in advance. One thing, in any case, does not lie: these few jabs at the audience did not prevent Duvert's novels from sinking back into near-ignorance. No doubt they do not have the qualities required to swell the money flow, the libidinal economy decently maintained. In this respect, we could speak of the author as a monstrous error, representing in the literary landscape what the hermaphrodite is in sexology textbooks. His uselessness in reproductive functions, the only ones accepted, perpetuating at leisure the forms of general expectation, will be equalled only by his obscenity. The author's clear-sightedness in this market makes it all the more imperative that he be put on the bench, having from the outset set his chosen ground within easy reach of the theatre of operations, at just the right distance to observe the strings without getting his feet caught in them. Excluded, manoeuvring his own exclusion, it is in pursuit of compensation that he devotes himself, the only one worth attempting, what Kafka, envisaging the position of the writer, referred to as 'a leap out of the ranks of murderers'.

NEBEN, to use Vachey's expression, Duvert's writing is a straightforward cut.

If he commonly discourages any attempt at rapid circumscription (politico-rhetorical, moralo-analytical, marginalising-lyrical...), it's because he prevents them all, knowing full well how to avoid the intumescence of discourse in order to better occupy the project by its - definitively displaced - centre. Writing from the side, and never about anything, or in the appropriateness of the commentary:

Writing above all. It remains to define what separates Duvert, his negative light, from certain subversive temptations, in the knowledge that within such a cleavage lies an essential aspect of the literary enterprise. The fact that writing represents a leap out of the ranks of murderers does not mean that the writer is a rival on the border of the murder scene. If he has any chance of escaping the

language of necessity, that is, of organised murder, it is by having cultivated his own language at the whim of a sovereign caprice, and not at the cost of a protesting disguise. To want to assert one's right to the language of necessity is basically to claim power over it, whereas Duvert's word does not arrogate to itself any prerogative over the order of this language. There is no counter-power, and therefore no competition with power. The order exists, arbitrarily. It would be as futile to contest its weight and authority as it would be to imagine oneself dead among the living.

It is precisely because Duvert belongs to this realm that he can measure its falseness, its impossible innocence, and thus play with a merciless conscience. The knot seems inextricable, and yet represents the only way out, the only way to play. In the name of what constitutes him, of the slow and conflicting apprenticeship leading to his formation, the same individual can thus recognise himself as both executioner and victim, conservative and libertarian, without ever being fooled. To do this, he will have to carry out arduous, uncompromising work of undermining his self-esteem, his untouchable bosom of good conscience, and then, at the cost of much grumbling, he will finally be able to establish a genealogy of the usual errors... of the False Commune:

"This is why a subversion that does not first and foremost attack learned subjectivity (forms of self-consciousness, perception, the relationship with others, desire, sexual expenditure, etc.) only results in the reappearance of the old order in a new guise. For the reproductive machines that order has made and spread everywhere are not the rulers, the armies, the police, the powerful, the institutions, the laws: they are our own brains. Decapitate order and keep your heads: order grows back". (T.D, Malevolent primer)

What Duvert inventories in his novels are the various forms of this growth. Like an irrepressible rise in sap, the movement of reproduction that order pursues will always be victorious, constantly finding new cuttings for its growth. Whether it's cutting one and ten

others, even more vigorous, appear in the sun. An exponential, redoubled movement that never stops. Behind all the forms of laxity, liberations and revolutionary bets, a desperate jailer is trying to reconvert. It would be absurd to see him anaemic, languishing suddenly in starvation, as his trajectory invariably approaches an unhopd-for point:

"...nothing is guilty enough any more. Censorship is weakening, prohibitions are cracking, everyone is choosing their own taboos in the name of desire itself, and

we no longer know what repression to devote ourselves to in order to be happy"
(T.D, *Le bon sexe illustré*).

The machine of desire takes strange turns, dragging with it, in the very movement of its exaltation, the cold jaws of a prison. An imperturbable mastication presides over everything, for which appetite and aphasia merge in a dangerous equivalence.

There is undoubtedly a lot to be said about the blindness of desire. But it would be necessary to agree on the use of such a word, which is inevitably accompanied by the least laudable evasions. So it's better to rephrase: there is a lot to be said about the blindness involved in what we try to pass off as our desire. And Duvert sets out to show that this blindness stems from the obstinacy of believing that nothing fabricated enters into it. As if desire could prevail and absorb itself in its primacy while forgetting what manoeuvres it results from, and what stakes it introduces. Desire has never been so much talked about as when it was controlled, surrounded on all sides under the guise of emancipation. It has never been so repressed as in its name. A standard brandished without a direct object complement, desire has become a sacred value carrying its cohort of missionaries: militiamen of the unconscious, adventurous sexologists, teachers of the depths, on their way to new crusades. We are no longer conquering Jerusalem, but a hitherto forbidden temple. What's more, the temple is not conquered, but freed of its defences, converted, made good. And the ban was nothing more than ignorance, which must now be remedied. We no longer force: we sponge, we educate. *Le bon sexe illustré* is particularly enlightening in this respect. Published in 1974, this essay sets out to study in detail the chastening mechanism of so-called liberated sexual education, delivered in the form of teaching manuals for minors. Divided into age brackets from 7 to 18, future inseminators must find in this instruction the answers to the proliferation of questions that are just as listed as the state of their organs.

A few policemen in white coats are trying to surmise the trouble caused to our young men by the clutter of a vitality they don't have the vocabulary for. It's a natural greed that there's no point in camouflaging, but rather anticipating so that it doesn't get lost in useless expenditure. It would be monstrous for the family, the state, the horde, if sexuality were not sufficiently alive for their own purposes, i.e. the reproduction of their order. Anything that escapes in an endless waste, concerned solely with the pleasure that can be derived from sex, will be presented as harmful, directly endangering the dark individual who indulges in it:

"What engenders order is not whether a pleasure is enjoyed or not, but whether one feels so strongly guilty about it that one will give it up as soon as one has access to those that order approves of" (T.D, 'Le bon sexe illustré', p 92).

The enormity of this teaching is that it makes children believe that it is informing them about the resources of their sexuality at the very moment when it is forbidding them. To show them, as it does, the ideal path of a sexuality whose distant goal remains reproduction, is to render inept the eventual gratification of the child, who does not need to be productive, i.e. adult, to enjoy his or her sex. Convince him, then, that he doesn't yet have a sex, the better to make him hope for the one that will be granted to him, and that by dint of persuasion it will be returned to him as a 'conditioned vestige'. You have to earn pleasure, and to earn it you have to be good at it: *"True pleasure rewards moral dignity and biological orthodoxy; orgasm is a headmaster's caress on the feverish skull of the best pupil in class"* (p 34). The hypocrisy of the preceptors of sanctity is practised here like a mother tongue, a language of blessed wood, erecting an enclosure on all sides where self-avowed pleasure cannot figure at any price. We forget that a kid can get a hard-on, he can enjoy himself, he can fuck without asking anyone for anything.

But of course, such a prospect must be suppressed, or at least disguised as a particularly serious perversion to serve as a compunctual example of the 'bad sex'. One more step, and a gallows would be erected at the bottom of the stomach. This danger is countered by the invention of the true medical cross, the immaculate reptation:

"We are thus confirming the absence of a collective sexual discourse, of practical sexual freedom, and we are reinforcing the ban by presenting sexuality in a different light.

as a highly technical field, where it is dangerous and forbidden to venture without a guide, and which the ignorant can only approach once they have subscribed to the abstract and controlled knowledge that is manufactured for their use - knowledge, that is to say, a distance. Distance/approach is the very paradox of sex education" (p 23).

The result is a factory of lardons made of chalky flesh and translucent bones, cloaked in obedience and privileges, imbued with responsibility, a sense of duty and furrowed brows. You have to do your laundry, confess the shame of your sex, kill the enemy, the slobber, and to show your zeal, demand yourself the perfect neutered kit, the kidnapping at home, the surveillance camera in the

shadows. When I say that a kid has a hard-on, comes and fucks, I'm not unaware of the astonishment that such a statement may provoke. But the most astonishing thing is not to say it. It's funny how the most palpable event, the most real in its daily manifestations, namely the sexuality of a being in action, can seem so extravagant as to be obscured. Twenty years after its publication, *Le bon sexe illustré* remains valid in its observations, and this is only to be expected, since the teaching it unravels is, from the outset, perpetuated. What's more, the teaching in question is the very organ of perpetuation, its nodal point. So the fact that a boy's dick with a hard-on can still be an extremely rare document, as Duvert points out at the beginning of his book, is only to be expected.

You have to understand, in the negative, that what would come out of the order is for a kid to get hard, cum and fuck, and not ignore it, finding his own pleasure in it. But we shouldn't get our hopes up too much: the 'reproductive machines' are efficient enough to continue to lull us into healthy illusions: If Duvert's work constantly tracks down the world of children, it is to show what contract it is supposed to be based on, in the knowledge that we only see children through the prism of the adults they are supposed to become, and that conversely, we will appreciate our own innocence by summoning the child we believe we once were, by opening wide the trapdoor of imagery traditionally reserved for them. For Duvert, there is nothing worse than the credo of childlike innocence, of nobility, of the freshness of the soul that bends with a tender curve those slightly more faded images that find, in its contact, material for sweet regrets. For a butcher, regretting childhood in this way is like regretting his first pet. There is no more childhood innocence than there is

would have specific cruelty. There are only different states of destruction of an individual, leaving him more or less unscathed; these degrees often take on greater dimensions in adults. But everything is done to ensure that the child cannot escape, that the power instituted by adults does not go astray. Guardianship is brandished on all sides to ensure that the forms of order are perpetuated.

The first place obviously goes to the parental couple, to this two-headed, ambidextrous statue of the commander, brandishing the shield of law in one hand and playing the comedy of duty in the other, tracing the *axis mundi* in the form of a truncheon. It is no longer necessary for this teaching to contain any truths, any major insights into the separation of the sexes or generations, for any words to emerge, since it must stand on its own as a mute truth, and this by means of the most opaque argumentation, this pre-stretched 'natural law', providing the ideal alibi for forgetting oneself in its perpetuity. The manna is too

good to let go. Fallen from the skies of order, devoted to the imperturbable munching of geniture, what it offers is nothing other than a wicked circle, which has always been recognised as the most perfect form. Knowing oneself to be a repository and custodian, inscribed in the immense web of generations, woven of thousands of other skins to which one must hold on, without a hitch, and then pass on in turn, like a suit of warm filth.

Genetic coding supports the code of good conduct, and engages in mimetic architecture: gene transport... convoys from the invisible depths of the species... sputtering enzymes... nest of drawers... flesh of the flesh, ad infinitum... and above all, let the linkage charge us with the virtues from which it springs, let us hear the voice of its master, the accent of its order, its law. As rod-bearers and respect-bearers, all we have to do is to be, to enter into our duty, that is to say, into submission, into the obligation in which we must hide, and to keep traffic moving. Here we are, unstoppable agents of redoubling, of reproducing partitions, lavishing the square, the box of the bungling and its secret, against any secret, against any exit, quick to plug the slightest leak out of the merry-go-round. Am I exaggerating? Am I getting carried away? Allow me at least to share my excitement, even if the reader will be convinced that the movement that stirs me only comes from fear.

The bitterness of being born, however unreasonable, remains praiseworthy when it sees other possibilities than this evil. Duvert does not speak

or when, with characteristic humour, he complains about the inflexible path we are all on: "*More miserable than Jonah in his whale's stomach, men have to endure nine months in the womb. Many of them never recover. These initiatory prisons, it's true, range from the livable to the murderous: it all depends on the beast that moves around*" (*Abécédaire malveillant*). The beast has countless heads, all merging into a single grimace. A hydra with a huge body, it is the law, and what it is trying to tell us is that it is impossible to enjoy anything outside its gaze. Its reach is vast, and can extend to the most trivial details, the most minute banalities, which we have to endure every day without even realising it.

Take, among a thousand other examples, each more insipid than the last, the posters displayed in all kinds of public places (schools, offices, maternity wards, etc.) showing, in pastel shades, a baby's bottle and ruff impeccably placed next to an empty infant's chair, topped with the caption: "*I'm going to be born soon. My place is already ready*". It's hard not to feel brutally anxious at the thought of this ante-natal call, of this sinister puppet making his voice resonate from the cavity of a well-ordered womb. Pastel foetuses, pastel lives, pastel

deaths; this domestic bonhomieism, played out in advance, already has the accents of a reproach towards the few deserters unconcerned about adhering to the primer, whose sovereign ingratitude is perceived as an insult. Such mawkishness hides its fangs: a product of teat nurseries threatening to calve, the dish they are trying to make us salivate over has all the disgusting appearance of a uterus cake topped with an icing sugar foetus. Personally, I leave my share, knowing more or less the limits of my appetite. If it's a question of having a child 'like a bitch has a bone', to paraphrase Duvert, and satisfying a frenzy of possession and repression on its back, with the same lightness that I'm currently settling my score with procreation, then it's better never to have been born. The misfortune lies in the inconsistency of such perpetuity: procreation is commonly carried out inadvertently, just as suicide is inadvertently carried out. But the terms are not equivalent: committing suicide still requires that you be alive. Without even mentioning the recent victory represented by post-mortem insemination (which shows a determination to survive that is on a par with that of fleas and cockroaches), the consciousness that we would expect from a procreator who decides to produce life is more likely to be found in the person who decides to take it away from himself, in that isolated person, who may be stupid, but who finds himself confronted with the deadline for his death. The only suicidal failure is inadvertent, that of procreation.

where the element of choice disappears behind the element of inevitability that provides an alibi. Since this is the order of things, it must happen. What's more, it must happen at all costs, at the risk of no longer being the order of things. We can convince ourselves that we are still alive by throwing a being into the world, that is, by making it mortal in its turn, but we can only continue to do so on condition that we conceal this death, that we play the game of its silence. Taking Borges in contrast, who asserts that all death is suicide, we can say that all procreation is a suicide that ignores itself, and that maintains ignorance.

It's amusing to hear Thomas Bernhard express his resentment in this regard:

"We are procreated but not promised an education. With all their stupidity our procreators act against us after having procreated us, they act with all the clumsiness that destroys a human being. From the first three years of its life they ruin everything in a new human being of whom they know nothing, except, supposing they do know, that they have manufactured it thoughtlessly and irresponsibly, and they are unaware that in so doing they have committed the greatest of crimes. In complete ignorance and baseness, our procreators, it must be said our parents, brought us into the world and, once we are here, they do not manage to finish with us" ('L'origine').

Not to 'put an end' to procreation is, in essence, to continue procreation and its calamitous equality. Generations of blind people, like Bruegel's painting, hold the cane to fall into the same hole. With each turn, we learn to reproduce the previous error, perpetuating the ignominy like stringing pearls. So we shouldn't be surprised that we are still seeing the most mind-numbing shows, so persistent is this teaching in screwing up everything from the very beginning, i.e. from childhood onwards:

"When I order a child: 'Do this', he only learns to order: 'Do this'. When I punish a child, he only learns to punish a child. When I suffer a despot, I imagine him at 12, hideous, ashamed, cold, with no friends, his head blue with slaps. He can't wait to grow up: in his happy dreams, all of humanity will pass through him, women first" (T.D, Abécédaire...).

Nothing to cheer about, it is true; but it would be pointless, to brighten this

It's a bleak picture, and we want to make up for the infamy with reassuring chimeras. To assure us, for example, that childhood is privileged, that the child is king, that he is naturally allowed to blossom, as naturally as an adult's smile can blossom at the sight of his erethism, would be to forget the conditions of such licence: This smile is made of barbed wire, and its function is no different from a reprimand. It is a question of authorising in order to make its right of surveillance, i.e. punishment and possession, more clearly felt. A child's body in full exuberance is no more than a body on licence, in suspended animation, whose movements do not belong to it insofar as they are part of a sphere regulated without its knowledge. This child will be allowed to make an overflowing gesture only insofar as we know that once he is an adult he will no longer be able to reproduce it but will only, in turn, be able to observe an identical gesture in another child, with the troubled indulgence of someone observing something in the process of dying. This is food for thought:

What is the paradox that an author like Duvert has been able to devote himself unceasingly to describing the world of childhood, while at the same time highlighting the very thing that threatens it: its impossible duration? And how can one write about childhood, using or reconstructing its language, without betraying it? Duvert does not speak like the child he was, or could have been, any more than he envisages his work in the fairytale novel of a primitive land. What he is trying to make us realise is that there is no such thing as a novel of childhood: if childhood often remains a pretext for laughter, or a hollow musing, he draws from it the substance of a genealogical reflection on knowledge, sexuality, on what constitutes him, after all, as a writer. The place of childhood,

in this respect, is privileged, not only because it appears in each of his books, but above all because it is no longer inhabited by the author. It is a place of restless ruins, interrogated as the theatre of a salient disturbance that has not said its last word. These petrified traces contain enough material to fuel a thousand more novels, to attempt a thousand recurrences, in reverse, against all ritual conjuration. In this way, Duvert's work appears as a vast settling of scores, asserting his refusal to comply with a debacle that has been too well spun, with a ventripotent outcome.

We need to talk here about Duvert's position in his writing, and return to some of the points mentioned earlier: regularly returning to the terrain of childhood, excavating its lessons and mechanisms in layers, like a microscope observing a microbial terrain excavated in cotton wool, is the result of the writer himself returning to what may have been in the past.

generate the act of writing. The act of writing is the opposite of action, the opposite of anything that might make it a definitive part of the world and its rules. To find oneself in writing is basically to abandon all responsibility in order to affirm its falsehood. It is an act of refusal, of childishness, of becoming aware of one's sovereignty by declining the repressive forms of language. Bataille, speaking of Kafka, talks of the writer's childishness, the stubborn movement that holds him back from making up his mind about the world, from abdicating by embracing responsible authority, which would inevitably lead to the abandonment of writing: "The crime of reading was succeeded, when he reached manhood, by the crime of writing. When literature came into question, the attitude of those around him, especially his father, was one of disapproval similar to that of reading. Kafka despaired of this in the same way. (...) Speaking of this painful experience, Kafka exclaims: "*I remained seated and bent over my family as before, but in fact I had just been expelled from society in one fell swoop...*". (3)

Expelled from the horde, one foot below, Duvert continues to roll under his pen the body of an impossible childhood. I imagine him bent over his sheet of paper, manoeuvring his hand with ease, writing with a knife. But a knife that embraces the object it touches with an obstinate, prowling caress, describing the convolutions of a maniacal, tactile probe, eager to reveal its surface, volume, temperature, obverse and reverse, before plunging into it in one neat gesture:

"My knife, a blade so worn you wouldn't dare use it to reach, slice or wound anything. An object as tender as any flesh it can penetrate" (T.D., *Portrait d'homme couteau*).

NOTES

(1) cf Sollers, in '*Théorie des exceptions*'.

(2) The dust jacket of *Paysage de fantaisie* (with the agreement of the publisher Minit) contains a number of press reviews and extracts, including the following: "... *The only real subversion leading to a liberated world would involve the risk, shared by authors and readers alike, of destroying the vestiges of the ideology in place, right down to our bodies. To do this, Tony Duvert relies in particular on pornography, which he considers less bourgeois and less recuperative than eroticism.* Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, *Le Monde*". It's rather amusing to discover such warm fuzzies in a critic whose 'vestiges of bourgeois ideology' are more like skyscrapers, having found in his own (unwilling?) body the favour of a comfortable humus.

(3) Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil*.

COUNTER-CULTURE 1969-1989 - THE FRENCH SPIRIT

Source: Philippe Artières, *"Les révolutionnaires seront des enfants ou ne seront pas". Eléments pour une histoire de la sexualité des mineurs dans l'après-68 français, pages 88-97, La Maison Rouge, La Découverte, 2017.*



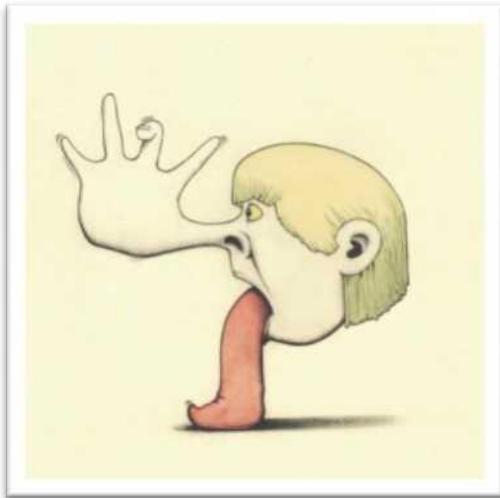
"There are many cases of minors being abducted with the consent of their children, homosexuality among boys is on the increase, venereal diseases are rife and pregnancies among minors are on the increase. [...] Keep this letter confidential, but keep a close eye on your child for his sake and for your own peace of mind. Don't take him head-on, but avoid letting him try the "unknown and tempting pleasures of life" while there is still time.

Extract from a leaflet from a parents' association in Jouy-en-Josas, near Versailles, November 1972.

Outraged by the seizure of the issue of the Cerfi journal *Recherches* entitled "Grande Encyclopédie des homosexualités. Trois milliards de pervers", published in March 1973, and the subsequent trial of its director Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault wrote in the newspaper *Combat*:

"For centuries there has been a politics of the body. [...] What is currently being questioned is whether or not we can reclaim our own bodies, and also the bodies of others - with all the relationships that this implies - for something other than this use of labour power". Foucault added: "It is this struggle for the body that makes sexuality a political problem (1)."

Although the philosopher refers explicitly to homosexuality and female sexuality, we can consider that the sexuality of minors was, during the decade 1974-1983, an absolutely central focus of politics understood as a place of confrontation for the emergence of a new subjectivity. It took different forms and concerned the age group from



from very young children to almost adults. It should be remembered that, following 1968 and the struggles in university halls of residence for the free movement of male and female students, popularised by the 22 March Movement in Nanterre, the age of majority was lowered from twenty-one to eighteen at the start of Giscard d'Estaing's term of office. However, the law remained very strict when it came to relations between adults and minors. The famous affair of Gabrielle Russier, named after her

husband, is testimony to this "prohibition".

of a secondary school teacher who had a sexual relationship with one of her pupils and then took her own life after being suspended from the French education system, investigated and imprisoned.

Obstacles

Although we are now well acquainted with the struggles of women in the 1970s, and in particular the long fight to legalise abortion (2), and the history of the struggle to recognise homosexuality is the subject of an increasing body of work, thanks in particular to the archives of people involved in these struggles - see the work of Guy Hocquenghem, studied in this volume - it has to be said that the mobilisations, however important, around the sexuality of minors are the black box of our contemporary knowledge. Not one of the many volumes on 1968 devotes a single page to it. The only two episodes that are really documented and systematically cited are the Russier affair - mentioned above - and the Carpentier affair.

In 1971, Dr Jean Carpentier was struck off the medical register for having written a leaflet on young people's sexuality with two secondary school pupils, which was distributed outside Corbeil secondary schools and signed by the Corbeil Action Committee for Liberation. A support group was formed and the leaflet became a small volume published by Éditions François Maspero (3). There were several reasons for this profound silence. On the one hand, some of these struggles, as Jean Bérard has shown in one of the few studies carried out on the subject, took a judicial form and consequently most of the archives relating to the various trials that took place cannot be consulted, by law, in the interests of the people involved (4). This is notably the case of the

One of the organisers publicly denounced the organisation of "ballets bleus" (5) by a network of famous people from the intellectual and political world. The affair caused a stir.

Names were mentioned, but there was no evidence to back up the accusations.



It erupted in 1982, a few months after the Left came to power, and was the perfect opportunity to put an end to the "political question" of the sexuality of the French.

It is also, as we shall see later, about inventing alternatives to state care for children with disabilities. There is undoubtedly a second reason for this

Paradoxically, it was the immense output of discourse - particularly journalistic, educational,

literary and psychological - on the sexuality of the young 'polymorphous pervert' during this period that helped to establish the taboo. From the columns of *Libération* to philosophical essays and psychoanalytical reviews, via militant homosexual pamphlets, there is a continent of writings and images. Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu has outlined the extent of this and the history of its treatment in the

The book explores the history of "children's love" in the press from the nineteenth century to the cases that hit the headlines in the early 2000s (6). It also shows the extent to which undertaking a history of the sexuality of minors as a political issue comes up against representations and their superimpositions.

What very quickly became the crux of the 'political problem' was the sexual and emotional relationships between young boys and adult men. We should add here, no doubt as an impediment, the fact that for some, "boy love" had become part of the "post-Sixties decorum"; in other words, that several writers of some renown saw it as nothing more than a motive for "boy love".

They have turned it into an accessory of distinction and aesthetics instead of making it a common subject of struggle. Think of Michel Tournier and some of his statements, such as those made in an interview with *Gai-Pied*: "Of all the bodies of crime, the body of the child is the most charming. The child is the privileged object of sadism and necrophilia (7). The third reason for the silence surrounding the sexuality of minors today stems from this: all attempts to contextualise and/or problematise the sexuality of minors come up against a very contemporary taboo. Questioning this sexuality, even forty years on, is immediately suspect - as we saw during the debates that took place and are still highly topical on harm reduction and HIV prevention among young minors. Attempting to lay down a few milestones in the history of this struggle is, for some, proselytising, while for others, those who took part in it, it is a trial.

In the following pages, we take a risk between these two dangers by attempting to map out this unfinished battle.

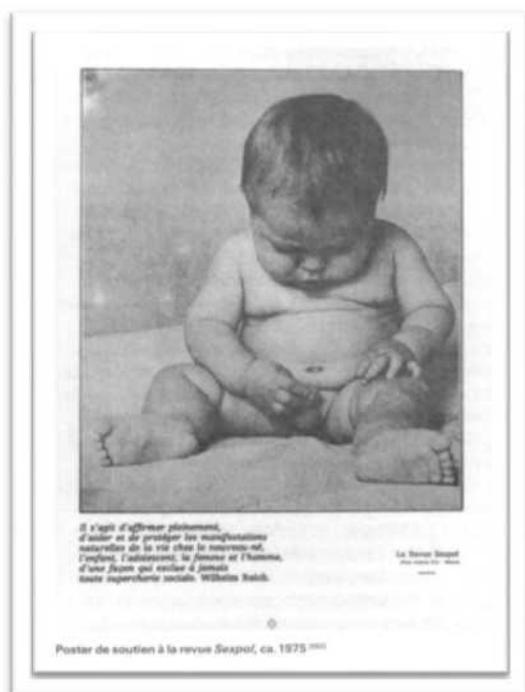


The battle has remained without a winner, because even if the players are not the same, other battles in which sexuality was also at the centre emerged in the early years of the 1980s in France with the advent of AIDS and pushed the issue out of the headlines. It should be added that the current period, characterised by a series of criminal cases involving children and also by a very high level of criminalisation of

This archaeology is not made any easier by the fact that teenagers engage in sexual acts with each other and adults have relationships with young people. These two phenomena neutralise any political re-

problematisation and encourage the production of an extremely globalising discourse, including among today's feminists. The love of children has been overshadowed by a single, monstrous figure, that of the "predatory" paedophile. In the 1970s, however, the sexuality of minors was an eminently political issue, in the sense that it called into question the very fabric of our European societies, the family; it also called into question what appeared to be the great achievement of the Republic: schools and their teachers. In addition, as we shall see, it

It also forced us to rethink the very idea of sexual liberation that was so widespread at the time, particularly through the thinking of Wilhelm Reich. As we can see, dealing with "these troubling children" means entering into the repressed part of our past, into what we prefer either to forget or to caricature; it also means experiencing at first hand the function of history: to tell a story.



Method

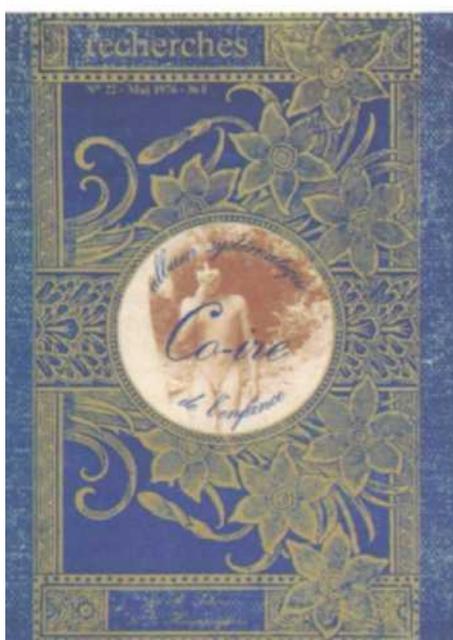
Writing the history of the sexuality of minors undoubtedly requires, more acutely than for other political problems, clarification of the way in which the historian has proceeded, in terms of the choice of sources used, the terminology employed and the questions posed to the archive.

From our perspective - not to make the history of a few, but rather to produce a social history of the counterculture - it quickly became clear that we should confine ourselves to a history of discourse. Very few records exist of the miners themselves,

with the exception of a few who testify less than they make a case or a work - think of Eva Ionesco and her film *My Little Princess*, (8) - or those recounted by adult third parties; preferring a history of discourse also because it is not a question of writing a shameful or scandalous history - the historian is not in search of secrets. As has already been said, judicial or medical archives are not yet available for consultation, so we have not been tempted to try and reopen investigation files. We have confined ourselves to everything that was available: press articles and published volumes that are not currently banned from sale or consultation in public libraries. We have excluded moralist discourse insofar as it is by no means specific to the period; it has been virtually constant from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day. However, we have included in our corpus the anthropological and psychoanalytical discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, which was strongly centred on the notion of the forbidden, and which was the subject of a consensus on which a new repression of sexuality was based - an identical phenomenon appeared at the end of the 1990s around the debates on the PACS. We have adopted the vocabulary used at the time by the

The authors of these texts: 'heterocracy', 'paedophilia', 'childish sexuality', 'pederasty', 'moral order', etc. Our choice, to make a history of discourses in the sense that Foucault understood it, is methodologically fragile; it requires us to plunge into an era that we think is near - because some of the actors are still alive - and therefore known, whereas in some respects it is much further back than the seventeenth century - this counterculture is based on a set of marginal philosophical and political references: Sade of course, Rousseau but also Fourier. It is also constantly nourished by contemporary works, such as those by Philippe

Ariès on the family, Pierre Hahn on sexuality and Fernand Deligny on autistic children. What we are presenting here is in fact only a description of a fragment of a larger map that this volume draws.



Duy Hocquenghem et René Schérer, revue Recherches, n°22, revue du CERFI, Recherches, Paris, avril 1976 96p.

Freud and Co. on trial

The anti-authoritarian aftermath of 1968 was marked by the contestation of psychoanalytic discourse, particularly Freudian discourse. At the heart of this criticism was the omnipotence of "psychoanalysis", denounced by Robert Castel and above all by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *L'Anti-Œdipe* (9). What is being accused is not so much the

Freudian theory than the place occupied by analytic practice in contemporary society and the application of a dogmatism that

'despontanises' desire. In the eyes of its detractors, it is in fact one of the manifestations of the bourgeois order, with its prohibitions: in short, it contributes to reinforcing and nurturing a certain number of norms, including heterotocracy.

If the "paedophile" discourse acknowledges Freud's discovery of the child as a "polymorphous pervers" in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (10), it is only to regret that, on the basis of this fundamental thesis, the father of psychoanalysis preferred to seek to detect the resurgence of the repressed. René Schérer speaks of "the evolutionary and normative conception of a sexuality gradually merging with the function of reproduction to that of a free sexuality yielding solely to the pleasure principle (11)". The

Freudism, by seeking in particular to define the successive stages through which the child passes, would have contributed to a confinement of sexuality to reproductive heterosexuality. In short, while Freud's discovery, like Rousseau's *Emile*, would have opened up a new field of experimentation, the subsequent work of the Viennese, and then of his successors, including Melanie Klein, would have perverted this potential by thinking of it as 'repressed'; on the subject of the little Fritz studied by Klein, Schérer and Hocquenghem, authors of the 'Coire' issue of the journal *Recherches*, write:

"Deeply narcissistic, psychoanalytical-parental thinking wants to force children into a system where their inventiveness and pleasure are confiscated (12)".

Psychoanalysis is not seen here as castrating or as part of Foucault's 'will to know', but as a misappropriated discovery, a space barely opened up and immediately taken over by the family, immediately 'oedipalised'. In short, knowledge that has become an instrument of family appropriation.

Focus on the family

For it is the family that is the enemy of this impossibility of the emergence of a children's culture. The family is, to use Tony Duvert's expression, a "concentra-tionary institution", the institution of a "tidy sexuality that is that of the conjugal bed, the cage-bed where Mum and Dad, their duty done, withdraw and take shelter" (13).

This attack on the family as a means of controlling children involves denouncing the situation of women within the family: "In France, children are used as dildos by thousands of frigid mothers. The 'protection of minors' is the bible of these pleasures - even Françoise Dolto, a Catholic and a pudicist, denounced French maternity in writing and on the radio, this slapping asexual incest", wrote Duvert in 1980 in *L'Enfant au masculin* (14). The charge was violent, but widely shared at the time; the letters to the editor of *Libération* were full of these self-portraits of frustrated women; many feminists saw motherhood as one of the most acute forms of alienation.

Paedophilia" or "pederasty" would thus contribute to the disalienation of women. But it also protects children from the dangers of fathers. Visit

paedophile would be its rival in the sexual order. And 'paedophile' thinking would make it possible to denounce family violence, that of the father against his children. While the mother uses her son as a sexual substitute, the father considers him his property:

"Doctors have long been extremely reluctant to admit the existence of abuse by parents themselves [...]. [Parental crimes are covered up by the general assent of the adults protecting the family". (Duvert, Le Bon Sexe illustré) (15).

The years 1968 were, let's not forget, those of a profound questioning of authority, embodied primarily by General de Gaulle, but also by the boss, the teacher, the policeman and, of course, the father. State violence, but also violence in the workplace, is denounced in the same way as family violence. In his long interview with a fifty-year-old man, Thierry Voeltzel describes in detail the abuse his father inflicted on him (16).

This radical critique of the "incestuous little family", to use Foucault's expression, is not unique to paedophilia theorists. It was in line with a whole series of theses produced by the anti-psychiatric movement, in particular Ronald Laing, who was widely translated at the time. This was one of the reasons for the popularity and support of Guy Hocquenghem and René Schérer when they came under legal attack in the Coral affair. René Schérer was the target of a veritable "witch-hunt" orchestrated in part by the extreme right and the newspaper *Minute*. This "ballets bleus" campaign, which led to Georgina Dufoix ordering the closure of all centres for children in difficulty and forcing all these independent alternative education organisations to obtain state funding, appeared to be a response to the support committee set up in 1979 during the trial of Gérard Roussel, accused of collecting photographs of minors, and made up of Bertrand Boulin, Jean-Louis Bory, Tony Duvert, Serge Livrozet, Georges Lapassade and René Schérer. It read: "Sexual desire and games freely consented to have their place in the relationship between adults and children (17)".

Against the idea of the family, a whole range of cross-disciplinary struggles came together: women, homosexuals, social workers, asylees, which also enabled the

The aim is to promote the freedom and independence of children in a society that is still largely patriarchal.

The school on trial

In the post-68 period, in addition to the family, the other target was education. While criticism of universities was most visible during the May struggles, it was under President Pompidou that criticism of the education system was at its most intense. Opposition to the system often took the form of a refusal to subject children to "barrack schools", as Jacques Pain and Fernand

Oury put it. At the end of the 1950s, Célestin Freinet denounced a series of school-related illnesses, including "scholasticism" and "domestication". Freinet defined the latter as "the very slow process of personality deterioration through training and dumbing down" (18). Paedophilia as a counter-culture is part of this contestation, while taking it to its most radical point. It is opposed not only to the discourse conveyed by educational institutions, from school to lycée, but also to a whole range of structures that are referred to as alternatives. It calls into question the content of teaching, pedagogies and even the very idea of the pedagogue or educator.

In terms of content, all so-called sex-education discourse - including that which purports to be liberal, such as that in *L'Encyclopédie de la vie sexuelle* (19) - is subjected to an all-out pounding that shows its morality, even if it is hidden: such is the case with the discourse on masturbation, a practice that is no longer presented as perverse, but rather as an unfortunate substitute, tolerable only as a preliminary.

The most notorious denunciation was made by Jules Celma during the years 1968-1969, which he reported in April 1971 in a book, *Journal d'un éducastreur*, extensively documented by drawings and texts from his young pupils (20). As a substitute teacher in the Toulouse education authority, Celma experimented with what he described as "non-directiveness, to the point of the total elimination of all directiveness, all discipline, all moral censorship, all the role or function of teacher" (21). The experiment got Celma into a lot of trouble, particularly from his own colleagues, who reacted very violently in the professional journals in which he published his first reflections: "scandalous conduct", "certainly it has no place in teaching", "an experiment of a dubious kind" (22). By putting

In practice, the non-existence of rules and the total neutrality of the teacher, Celma noticed that very quickly the relationship with her pupils became sexualised:

"Allusions, sketchy gestures. All in a deeply oedipal emotional climate. I was the Adult, the Father, with whom incest - and murder - could be contemplated".

Then the children gradually freed themselves from this framework and initiated their own activities and games. Some involved the adult - three pupils stroking his hair, torso and feet - while others performed a "genital-anal massage" in front of him. But, notes Celma, none of the children told anyone at home what was being done in class, because they understood "perfectly well

that the practice we were developing was opposed to the school and family structure they had been subjected to until then" (23). The teacher points out that, although his physiological make-up never left him insensitive to caresses, hints or situations, he never let "the slightest emotion, the slightest repulsion, the slightest desire shine through" (24).

Through this experiment, which others developed on a lesser scale, the aim was to deprivatise Émile. This deconstruction of the school and the teacher-pupil relationship was intended to allow the child to shed his pupil position and rediscover his childlike nature. I use the term 'nature' deliberately, because it is central to this counter-culture. This position was not taken for granted either by the advocates of traditional education or even by the most innovative educationalists at the time. Celma's experiment was intended to highlight a certain number of possibilities, not to forge a new type of education. Through this work, he made situations visible, but for his detractors, he did nothing of the sort.

The detestation of "sexual liberation

What paedophilia was deconstructing was not only the dominant heterocratic sexual order but also what was opposing it at the time - and this is undoubtedly where it lost the attention it was able to attract in the early 1980s. The radical nature of this thinking, which never took the form of an organisation comparable to the FHAR, was also due to the fact that it rejected the principles of harmony and equal rights to sexuality. It was uncompromising. In a text entitled "Bisexuality" (1980), Tony Duvert, on the one hand, absolutely rejected the idea that all men come into the world with the same "quantity of sexuality" and, on the other, was indignant: "It would be unthinkable for a man to be born with the same "quantity of sexuality".

There is no question of replacing the anti-sexual morality according to which the less you do it, the better, with a morality whose elected representatives would be plurisexual and omnipotent, and whose damned [...] would be the 'ill-fuckers', as some old fart puts it". He added: "There is no natural sexual community."

Duvert pointed out an essential element: within the defenders of the desire for children, there were strong dissensions which sometimes turned into controversy; several books at the end of the 1970s highlighted these tensions. The case of *L'Enfant et le pédéraste*, published by Jean-Luc Pinard Legry and

l'éducation sexuelle ?

L'année prochaine selon un décret ministériel rédigé après l'affaire de Belfort, il y aura l'information sexuelle dans les lycées. Personne ne sait encore quelle forme elle prendra, les ministres parlent de physiologie et de sciences naturelles. Aucun lycéen, aucune lycéenne n'a été consulté pour décider de la forme que prendra cette information. En clair, les premiers intéressés n'ont pas à prendre la parole sur ce sujet qui touche directement, immédiatement leur vie quotidienne, recteurs, professeurs, parents en parleront à leur place. Pourtant, une chose est sûre. Ce sont les jeunes eux-mêmes, par leur expérience individuelle, leurs discussions collectives qui se forment et s'éduquent sexuellement. C'est au travers des rapports quotidiens entre jeunes au lycée, au C.E.T. et à l'extérieur que se fait pas à pas une "éducation sexuelle" vivante, non livresque, non professionnelle.

Les ministères parlent d'un côté d'éducation sexuelle sans tenir compte des lycéens eux-mêmes, et de l'autre, répriment souvent tout rapport entre un garçon et une fille dans l'enceinte et à l'extérieur des lycées. - c'est-contradictoire ! -

Au lycée Bergson, si deux jeunes s'embrassent devant le lycée, le censeur sort pour prendre leur rom, les frimble, les gifle. Au lycée Balzac, deux lycéens ont été renvoyés 48 heures pour s'être embrassés dans un couloir. Au lycée de filles Camille Sée, les lycéennes dorment rendez-vous à leurs amis au coin de la rue et jamais devant le lycée. C'est pour dénoncer cette contradiction que nous avons pensé à lancer une enquête sur la vie affective, sexuelle des lycéens et des élèves des C.E.T., leurs difficultés, leurs revendications. Ceci non pour faire un sondage mais pour que les lycéens prennent réellement la parole sur cette question, malgré les interdits et les tabous. Pour qu'on cesse de la prendre à leur place, comme dans les cercles ministériels ou la grande presse (cf. Le parisien, le meilleur).

Nous nous sommes réunis à une cinquantaine de lycéens, lycéennes et élèves de C.E.T., des journalistes et nous avons pensé à ce questionnaire. Pourquoi ces journalistes ? Le journal "LIBERATION" est un nouveau quotidien en préparation qui se propose d'aider à s'exprimer ceux qui n'ont jamais la parole dans la presse ou ailleurs. Il est prêt à éditer dans ses colonnes tout ce que diront les lycéens au cours de cette enquête et de rédiger avec eux les articles qui les concernent, mais le projet du questionnaire est plus vaste, c'est celui de lancer le débat, de faire que la majorité des lycéens s'expriment. Ce questionnaire est limité, mais il n'est pas limitatif. Rajoutez d'autres questions, il faut qu'un tel questionnaire puisse servir à dégager clairement le point de vue des lycéens sur les questions sexuelles et affectives, à forger un programme de revendications lycéennes sur les problèmes de l'éducation et de la vie sexuelle.

Le débat est ouvert.




le débat est ouvert ...

Anonyme, tract «L'éducation sexuelle?», ca. 1973

Lapouge is particularly interesting (25); Lapouge recounts his encounter, as a schoolboy, with an adult and the trauma that followed, while Legry warns against the power of the paedophile adult. Nevertheless, both authors advocate the decriminalisation of sexual relations between adults and children. The debate began in the two leading homosexual publications, *Masques* and *Gai Pied*. Some found the accusation of patriarchy laughable, while others were outraged at the lack of space given to discussion, calling the theorists of paedophilia "Stalinist". This episode is undoubtedly symptomatic of a real

change in mindset. A form of silent consensus was coming to an end, both internally and within French society as a whole. The newspaper *Libération* will no longer report on this struggle. From now on, it will enter into silence.

During the 1970s, paedophilia was a counter-culture aimed at defending the singularity of the child. It was a thing of the past. By the early 1980s, it had become impossible for the child - understood as a bond, beauty and enthusiasm, independent of the "concentrationary institution[s]" (26), the family and the school, mentioned above - to exist. No one could accept that what was at stake for these theorists was neither aesthetic nor erotic, but political: "Society feeds on the death of the child in us and on the death of childhood. Childhood, no more 'in itself' than 'in us', like a nostalgia or a secret, is what is missing from the personalistic atomism that is ours under the despotic machine of power (27)." Extending Charles Fourier's theses, René Schérer invited us to follow him,

"If we are to follow the path of a true liberation of childhood in order to rediscover its deepest passion, it would be more appropriate to desexualise the child. [By this we do not mean desensitising them, once they have recognised that they have perfect erotic tact, but rather unlearning their role, too deeply rooted in them, as little males 'made that way' and no other, or as little females (28)]."

The arrival of the Left in power, contrary to the positions taken by candidate Mitterrand, was to put a stop to this thinking and its development. It went from being counter-cultural to criminal.

Philippe Artières, historian

NOTES

- 1 - Michel Foucault, in *Combat*, n°9274, April 1974, p. 16.
- 2 - See the work of women historians, in particular the study by Michelle Zancarini-Foumel on the history of MLAC, "Histoire(s) du MLAC (1973- 1975)", *Clio*, no. 18, 2003.
- 3 - Mouvement français pour le planning familial, *Apprenons à faire l'amour*, Maspero, Paris, 1973.
- 4 - Jean Bérard, *La Justice en procès. Les mouvements de contestation face au système pénal, 1968-1983*, Presses de Sciences Po, Paris, 2013.
- 5 - A "blue ballet" is the term used from the 1960s onwards in the media to refer to cases of vice involving sexual relations between adults and underage boys; the term "pink ballet" is used when young girls are involved.
- 6 - Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu, *Histoire de la pédophilie XIXe- XXIe siècle*, Fayard, Paris, 2014.
- 7 - Michel Tournier, *Gai-Pied*, no. 23, February 1981.
- 8 - Eva Ionesco, *My Little Princess*, 2011.

- 9 - Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Œdipe. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, Minuit, Paris, 1973.
- 10 - Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Gallimard, Paris, 1985.
- 11 - René Schérer, *Émile Perversi*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1974, p. 128.
- 12 - Guy Hocquenghem and René Schérer, "Co-ire; album systématique de l'enfance", *Recherches*, no. 22, 1977, p. 104.
- 13 - Tony Duvert, "La sexualité chez les crétins", *Minuit*, no. 3, March 1973, p. 62.
- 14 - Tony Duvert, *L'Enfant au masculin*, Minuit, Paris, 1980.
- 15 - Tony Duvert, *Le Bon Sexe illustré*. Minuit, Paris, 1974, is an acerbic pastiche of the first popularised works on sex education, in this case the work by Jean Cohen, Jacqueline Kahn-Nathan, Gilbert Tordjman and Christiane Verdoux, *Encyclopédie de la vie sexuelle*, Hachette, Paris, 1973, from which Duvert quotes numerous extracts, reversing the roles and speakers (parents/children, male/female).
- 16 - Thierry Voeltzel, *Vingt ans et après*, Grasset, Paris, 1978.
- 17 - Quoted in Jean Bérard, *La Justice en procès*, op. cit, p. 206.
- 18 - Célestin Freinet, *La Santé mentale de l'enfant*, Maspero, Paris, 1978, p. 37.
- 19 - Jean Cohen, Jacqueline Kahn- Nathan, Gilbert Tordjman and Christiane Verdoux, *Encyclopédie de la vie sexuelle*, op. cit.
- 20 - Jules Celma, *Journal d'un éducateur*, Champ Libre, Paris, 1971.
- 21 - Ibid, p. 19.
- 22 - Une expérience pédagogique; le laisser-faire", *Le Fait public*, February 1970.
- 23 - Jules Celma, *Journal d'un éducateur*, op. cit, p. 90.
- 24 - Ibid, p. 92.
- 25 - Benoit Lapouge and Jean-Luc Pinard Legry, *L'Enfant et le pédéraste*, Seuil, Paris, 1980.
- 26 - Tony Duvert, "La sexualité chez les crétins", art.cit.
- 27 - Guy Hocquenghem and René Schérer, "Co-ire: album systématique de l'enfance". *Recherches*, op. cit. p. 60.
- 28 - René Schérer, *Émile Perversi*, op. cit., p. 112.

THE WRITER, THE PUBLISHER AND BAD MORALS

Source: Anne Simonin, CNRS researcher. In *Mai 68*, chapter 28, pages 411-425.

"An excellent writer in the 1970s, [Tony Duvert] made paedophilia not just the subject of relentless proselytism, but the very subject of his literature. With the benefit of hindsight, we can reconstruct the evolution of literary criticism of Duvert. An evolution that 'models' the shifts in current opinion", writes Jean-Claude Guillebaud in *La tyrannie du plaisir*, an essay published in 1998 and awarded the Prix Renaudot (1). The point, if we follow Guillebaud, is clear: What 'passed' in 1974, the year of the happy digestion of a liberating and permissive May 68, when critics enthusiastically hailed 'the sulphurous but heroic personality of the underground writer' (2), 'no longer passes' in 1989, when the same critics were up in arms about "the latest frivolous pochade by a retarded sixty-eight year old in the Turkish toilets of Vincennes University" (3), and were up in arms about Duvert's latest work, *Abécédaire malveillant* (Minuit, 1989).

The interest that should be shown in Tony Duvert would thus be similar to that of the jurist who, confronted with a singular "case", formulates, from the exceptional, the norm intended to govern a set of ordinary cases (4). "Cited [...] for documentary purposes, and not [...] to transform this writer retrospectively and unjustly into a scapegoat (5)", the Duvert "case" would make it possible to think about a major "shift", the change in norms that occurred in French society between 1968 and 1998 (6): the insane and praised paedophile Duvert would be succeeded by a Duvert symbol and symptom of a permissive waywardness whose impasse we can see, and from which even the literary memory should be purged. This supposedly historical vision is misleading.

Gabriel Matzneff wrote in 1974: "Lovers of kids are not in fashion. Not at the Quai des Orfèvres, not in homosexual circles, not on the right, not on the left, where the most outspoken advocates of sexual liberation agree that children and teenagers need to be "protected".

(7). " You only have to leaf through *Arcadie* (1954-1982), the first homosexual magazine whose moderate political stance mixed with Catholicism ensured its respectability, to realise the extent to which homosexual intellectual circles approached the issue of paedophilia with extreme reticence, considering that it belonged to "another world" than "the homosexual universe" (8). In 1976, the results of a survey carried out among a group of homosexuals attracted to young boys revealed that 91% of those questioned cited a preferred age of between twelve and sixteen (9), and that while the majority of them "think that the law

should not set an age for sexual majority, we still find 42% who think the opposite, all indicating a legal age of between 12 and 16 (10)". Only one publication will break the circle of suspicion in which paedophiles find themselves trapped, including in homosexual circles: the special issue of the magazine *Recherches*, "Trois milliards de pervers. Grande Encyclopédie des homosexualités", which gives a voice to paedophiles in the same way as to "Arabs" and "queers" (11).

What would characterise the post-Mai 68 era in terms of 'bad morals' would not be a greater permissiveness of doing, contrary to an enchanted retrospective vision, but the extreme freedom of saying (12), guaranteeing the permanence of the order of good morals: "And in a society where all we talk about is transgression, protest and revolution, never has respect for social codes been greater (13)". It is to explore this paradox - an ante-68 governed by censorship that was freer in terms of the circulation of ideas than a post-68 placed under the aegis of the freedom to say anything and do anything? - is the subject of this article.

A liberal theory of censorship: "the literary franchise

"Strange predestination, sign from heaven? The paragraph of art. 331 that makes it a crime to have sex with anyone under the age of fifteen dates from 2 July 1945. That's my date of birth. Nobody could have been born a paedophile under better auspices. That's as good as all the astrology (14). Tony Duvert was born under the sign of censorship, and the most arbitrary censorship there is. The decree of 2 July 1945 to which he refers establishes "sexual majority at fifteen years 15" (an. 331, paragraph 1). What's more, repeating word for word a Vichy text, the Order of 8 February 1945 makes "unnatural acts" performed with a same-sex minor under the age of twenty-one an offence (an. 331, paragraph 3): "Discrimination was thus established [...] since heterosexual activities were considered lawful from the age of fifteen onwards

(16) This discriminatory regime continued in France until 1982. This discriminatory regime continued in France until 1982. The eye of censorship that presided over Tony Duvert's birth did not let go of the writer, who began publishing in 1967, at a time when politics was repressive in terms of morality, but when certain liberal advances made at the end of the Fourth Republic were not called into question.

Jean-Jacques Pauvert recounted his troubles with the law when, in the early 1950s, he decided to print the complete works of the Marquis de Sade. In a

decision handed down on 10 January 1957, the young publisher was fined two hundred thousand francs and ordered to pay costs. The court also ordered the confiscation and destruction of the works in question (17). Pauvert appealed and, on 12 March 1958, a ruling reiterated his conviction, while exempting him from the fine: the publisher was thus saved from bankruptcy.

But this judgement went far beyond the Pauvert 'case'. The conclusions put forward by Advocate General Jean Boucheron defined a new status for writers in the Republic, recognising, under certain conditions, their right to freedom from liability in the context of a radically new theory in literary matters, the theory of "literary frankness":

"In the presence of the freedom of expression recognised by the Constitution and which is surrounded by particularly strong jurisdictional guarantees, I do not think that we would be forcing the spirit of the criminal law which punishes offences against public decency if we had recourse to the concept of "frankness" in order to exclude the application of the law in certain circumstances, or in certain situations revealed by an analysis of the case law. This expression, which conveys the idea of a dispensation rather than a right, seems to me, for this reason, preferable to that of immunity [...].

Jurisprudence provides us with a remarkable example of the fact that certain immunities exist without an express text and find their source and principle in the very nature of the mission or function of the person benefiting from them, concerning magistrates and witnesses.

More generally, immunities that result in exemption from the application of criminal law are based either on the performance of

a duty, or the exercise of a right. The law cannot punish what it orders or what it allows [...].

The exemptions granted by public prosecutors' practice and case law cannot be classified according to a single criterion, and they do not have the same scope with regard to the persons who may be involved.

A/ First of all, there is the interest of science, which implies a strong sense of the rights of research and consequently a claim to freedom based on trust and reason [...].

B/ The freedom of literature and art [then] [...] (18)".

Under the Republic, special categories of individuals - magistrates and the

witnesses mentioned by the Advocate General in his conclusions, as well as Members of Parliament - have always benefited from a special legal regime. The law recognises that, in the exercise of their functions, they cannot be held liable for offences committed by them, whether political offences or offences against public decency. Under circumstances determined by law, these individuals thus enjoy immunity, which, in 1958, Advocate General Jean Boucheron proposed extending to writers under the name of "literary franchise". Sade and Pauvert were the direct beneficiaries of this exceptional exemption from liability imposed by the "literary franchise" theory.

In a judgment handed down on 12 March 1958, ten years before May 68, it was accepted that: "The philosophy of a writer worthy of the name is not a matter for the courts, [and] when the writer's means of expression 'conflict with the requirements of public morality', the publisher [must] only restrict distribution [...]....] the purpose of criminal law is not to punish morality but to punish moral offences only insofar as such offences are likely to become a cause of disorder for society (19). And above all :

"For example, incest, which Sade advocated, is only punishable when committed between ascendants and descendants who are minors or not emancipated by marriage, just as homosexuality is only punished when practised with minors.

Considering that even if it were shown that the works in question contain the expression of facts that could be the subject of an appeal

. it would have to be shown that the publisher of these works had intentionally published them with the aim of provoking third parties to commit the criminal acts or misdemeanours described therein, and of making an apology for them (20).

The immunity or 'literary franchise' theorised for Sade gave the literary posterity of the divine Marquis (Tony Duvert) the right to be free from responsibility in the exercise of the writer's function.

Duvert has a complicated relationship with Sade's work: from a literary point of view, Sade is an omnipresent reference for him. Doesn't the philanthropic institution in which the children in *Paysage de fantaisie* (1973) are confined, and which they refer to as their 'château', bear a striking resemblance to Silling's château? Sade, on the other hand, and the relationship to power he theorises, are an absolute repellent:

"It is the execrable philosophy of Sade which, when it comes to exploring desire, has never done anything but stage the ravings of economic power over the bodies of others (21)".

However, politically, Duvert may owe more to Sade than he imagined: it is not, in fact, thanks to the greater permissiveness of morals but to what might be called the 'Sade jurisprudence' that Duvert obtained, in 1967, his right to a place in the Republic of Letters.

A transgressive editorial strategy

Between 1968 and 1973, as Martine Poulain has shown, censorship was omnipresent: "Raymond Marcellin, in charge of the Ministry of the Interior from 31 May 1968 to 30 April 1973, undoubtedly left his mark on the period. Where successive Ministers of Justice would sometimes be inclined to temporise [...], the services of the Ministry of the Interior would storm and demand prosecution". Three categories of works were targeted in particular: those relating to May 68, those considered to be "calls for world guerrilla warfare", and those "calling for the continuation of decolonisation" (22). So-called "licentious" publications were punished under the law of 16 July 1949 on "publications intended for young people" (23).

Article 14 of the law authorised the Commission set up to examine publications of all kinds, and in the 1960s bans on display and advertising were increasingly imposed on publications that were not, *a priori*, intended for young people, but which, like all products placed on the market, could obviously be bought and read by minors. Jérôme Lindon, CEO of Editions de Minuit and publisher of Tony Duvert, is well aware of this: he sits on the Commission de surveillance et de contrôle des publications destinées à la jeunesse as a representative of publishers. And however well-informed he was, he was unable to prevent Tony Duvert's second book, *Interdit de séjour* (1969), from being "banned from sale to minors under the age of eighteen", from being "exhibited" and from being "advertised" (24).

Editions de Minuit, which had been subjected to censorship during the Algerian war (nine books were seized between 1958 and 1962), tried to circumvent it by adopting a distribution strategy for Duvert's work which, given the nature of the company's output - avant-garde literature (the New Novel) and political documents (the Algerian war) - was completely new to them: Like publishers of so-called pornographic works, Editions de Minuit opted to sell by subscription to a small number of selected booksellers (*Le Scarabé d'Or*, *Le*

Terrain Vague de Losfeld, Les frères Truong International.), who specialise in the sale of 'licentious' works:

"Paris, 25 September 1970

Dear bookseller,

*We are about to publish a new work by Tony Duvert, *Le Voyageur*, which, because of its special character, will be printed in a limited edition of 1,500 copies. As with *Interdit de séjour*, a subscription is now open at a price of 60 frs. After publication, at the beginning of November, the selling price will be 75 frs.*

To enable you to subscribe, we are sending you, on a confidential basis, a set of proofs of the book. Please let us know as soon as possible if you wish to retain any copies, and how many. Subscriptions will only be accepted up to the planned print run of 1,500 copies.

The discount will be one third up to one hundred copies, with a minimum initial order of 50 copies, and 35% above that, plus a 2% discount in both cases. Payment must be made in cash on publication.

Please accept, dear bookseller, our warmest regards.

PS: Please be so kind as to give us your answer before 16 October. After this date, the subscription will be closed (25)".

By disclosing an unusual print-run figure and setting a high price (the average price of Minit books in the 1960s was 40 francs, around 8 euros), the publisher is aware that, if it gets into trouble with the law, it can always point to its lack of proselytism, since the print-run and price of 'licentious' books are considered by the courts to be the surest obstacles to the distribution of offending works.

In 1973, the Minit system was affected: at the request of the Minister of the Interior, Truong International was closed down. Minit published Duvert's fifth novel, *Paysage de fantaisie*, in a deluxe edition (2,500 copies).

In these so-called 'permissive' years, of the seven novels published by Tony Duvert, roughly half the print run of five of them was sold by distributors other than general literature booksellers.

Breaking the law to protect morals?

The 1949 law, amended in 1958 and 1967, which aims to prevent the "demoralisation of children or young people", was not intended to repress the publication of so-called licentious works intended for adults. However, as we can see, this law has become the preferred means of tracking down writings deemed to be contrary to public decency. Jérôme Lindon is fighting the misuse of the law by the public authorities on two fronts.

The first was public, denouncing the ban on sales to minors, exhibitions and advertising imposed by the Ministry of the Interior on Pierre Guyotat's *Eden, Eden, Eden*, in an op-ed published in *Le Monde* on 8 November 1970 entitled "L'érotisme et la protection de la jeunesse" ("Eroticism and the protection of young people").

published by Editions Gallimard, even though, contrary to the provisions of the law, the book had not been submitted to the Commission for review. The affair caused quite a stir. A petition protested against "the arbitrary use being made of a law originally intended for the protection of young people and which has clearly been diverted from its intended purpose" (26).

At the same time, Jérôme Lindon, for Duvert, is breaking the law: "Transgression means going beyond the limits of the law. It's not breaking the law. There is transgression when the meaning given to the law, while remaining in conformity with the letter of the law, ignores its spirit (27)", in this case the application of the 1949 law against licentious publications intended for adults.

Minuit complies strictly with the 1949 law. Duvert was not advertised to the general public. The selected bookseller received the "proof set" usually reserved for journalists, and distributed the company's leaflets to selected customers:

"Le Voyageur

This traveller is not a loner: the hunt for memories that he undertakes from one town to the next is a hunt for boys - an erotic quest in which the children he has made his exclusive prey come and go; and they too seek and love each other before his eyes. [...] The language, poetry and desire that make up this erotic art towards which this book is also a journey, the itinerary of a novelist who gives way to the powers of the flesh and perversion until the entire work is transformed into the body, into sex, in all its scandalous nakedness. And the aim is achieved, as demonstrated by the audacity of this work, which surpasses in

crudity anything written to date in the field of homosexuality - and even cedes the floor, at the end, to the most violent train station graffiti, as if eroticism were true not in the mind of a writer, but in the body of every man (28)."

As a general rule, booksellers of so-called pornographic works demanded a 50% mark-up, which Minuit has always refused to grant, never going beyond a 35% discount. We're in a fictional situation, we're acting "as if" Duvert were pornographic literature, whereas Duvert is, for Jérôme Lindon, something else entirely.

With Monique Wittig, who joined Editions de Minuit in 1964 (*L'Opoponax*, Prix Médicis), Tony Duvert is first and foremost the writer who marked the emergence of the Nouveau Roman. She was also a writer whose work enabled the publisher to continue the fight for freedom of expression, moving from the political arena (the Algerian war) to that of morality. Updating the "right of resistance" to oppression, the "symbolic capital" of Editions de Minuit, founded in 1942 in the underground, Duvert offered Jérôme Lindon, a former member of the Resistance, not so much to take part in the "liberation of morals" as to ensure the "revival" of the historical tradition of modernity in which Editions de Minuit is rooted. This tradition is distinguished not so much by a style - "l'écriture blanche" (Roland Barthes) - as by a certain type of relationship with history that makes the Second World War the matrix of the contemporary, and the public good the ultimate goal of all political positions (29). What makes Tony Duvert-Jérôme Lindon so close, regardless of their differences, is not just the "broadmindedness" shown by the latter, the son of a high magistrate, towards the "sulphurous" themes developed by the former, but a certain relationship to history (30), and an attitude to the law summed up in a phrase by Roland Barthes: "Any law that oppresses a discourse is insufficiently founded (31)". And must therefore be fought.

When you publish, without using a pseudonym, books that bear the name of security measures - *Récidive* (1967) and *Interdiction de séjour* (1969) - you are defying the law. Not belonging to the "free-spirited but incapable of influencing laws and morals" generation (32) that took centre stage in 1968, Jérôme Lindon, in order to publish this unusual author, endeavoured to change the 1949 law by publicly denouncing its abuses (Guyotat) and, as we have seen, transgressing its provisions (Duvert). It is not a question of "cheating", but of "betraying" the law (33): in view of the arbitrary, even illegal, application of the law by the public authorities, this is the only way to apply the 1949 law correctly and to challenge the moral order that is abusively claimed to be established in its name. Jérôme Lindon does not dispute that the law aims to 'protect' young people. He can

even demonstrate that his publishing strategy respects the legislator's intentions: who knows the Minuit reader better than he, the publisher?

Cards inserted in copies of Duvert's works, filled in and returned to Editions de Minuit by purchasers wishing to be kept "up to date with our publications as they come out." The fact that they have been diverted from their advertising function gives us an idea of Duvert's readership:

Who reads Duvert? (34)

	Fantasy landscape 1973	Le bon sexe illustré 1974	Diary of an Innocent 1978
AGE			
under 20	16 (8,6%)	9 (9,1%)	12 (17,9%)
between 20 and 25 years old	51 (27,6%)	23 (23,2 %)	-
between 20 and 30 years old	43 (23,2%)	34 (34,3%)	19 (28,4%)
over 30 years	75 (40,6%)	33 (33,3%)	36 (53,7%)
Total	185 (100%)	99 (100%)	67 (100%)
COUNTRY			
France	166 (75,8%)	106 (93,9%)	61 (79,2%)
Foreign	53 (24,2%)	7 (6,1%)	16 (20,8%)
Total	219 (100%)	113 (100%)	77 (100%)
SEX			
Women	-	24 (19,8%)	13 (16,5%)
Men	-	97 (80,2%)	66 (83,5%)
Total		121 (100%)	79 (100%)
PROFESSIONS			
Popular nappies (secretaries, educators, hostesses...)	8 (4,7%)	3 (3,2%)	6 (8,7%)
Lower middle classes (middle managers, office workers, engineers, civil servants, etc.)	44 (25,6%)	7 (7,4%)	30 (43,5%)
Upper middle classes (teachers, students, film-makers, writers...)	95 (55,2%)	58 (61 %)	26 (37,7%)
Upper layers (doctors...)	13 (7,5%)	27 (28,4%)	3 (4,3%)
No profession	12 (7%)	-	4 (5,8%)
Total	172 (100%)	95 (100%)	69 (100%)

These figures, obtained from wild samples, are of course approximate. They do, however, contain some interesting indications, and attest to the legality of the transgressive distribution method chosen by Jérôme Lindon.

In 1973-1974, Duvert's literature was overwhelmingly "adult literature",

which did not reach "minors" - less than 10% of his readership: "Are minors under the age of eighteen really likely to be the audience for *Eden, Eden, Eden*? I personally doubt it [...]. But let's say

[...] that there are, apart from young literati, a few exceptional teenagers who need *The Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* and *Eden, Eden, Eden* to satisfy their sexual needs. And when would that be? Does society, so sympathetic to their troubles, really hope to cure them by simply depriving them of their reading material? I bet it would achieve quite the opposite. Above all, there are the others, almost all the young people who have no interest whatsoever in adult erotica (36). Another interesting piece of information is that Duvert's literature reaches a massively French audience, and essentially male. *Arcadie*'s survey shows that this audience is largely heterosexual: 37% of people who said they were "paederasts" said they had read *Le bon sexe illustré*, and 85% had read Roger Peyrefitte's *Les amitiés particulières* (37).

In terms of professions, grouped here taking into account both the economic and cultural capital of individuals, a very clear trend emerged in the 1970s: the interest of the "lower middle classes" (43.5% of Duvert's readership in 1978) in literature that had previously been reserved for the "upper middle classes" (55.2% of Duvert's readership in 1973). What if May 68 had been less a movement of sexual liberation than a movement of sexual democratisation, giving readers access to literature hitherto reserved for an elite (38)? This is indeed Duvert's own hypothesis: "As in other countries before us, sexual freedom ceased to be a privilege of high earners and artists: it became a matter for the average person who, until then, had not had a single word, not a single tenable idea, to claim it, to discuss it, to think about it [...]. Paedophilia, reduced to the fine writings of Gid, deserved a Nobel Prize; claimed as a fundamental freedom, here it is a spark of war between each and every one of us (39). Duvert or paedophilia made accessible to "chambermaids and wigmakers" (d'Alembert)?

Bad sex for everyone

In January 1973, thanks to Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, Duvert emerged from obscurity. In his *Le Monde* feuilleton, the critic wrote:

*"The rumour on the Left Bank is clear: Tony Duvert is the up-and-coming young author who will soon be quoted and imitated [...]. Under [the] title borrowed from a 'strangely sadistic' painting by Francesco Guardi, the author unfolds [in *Paysage de fantaisie*], outside the usual narration and punctuation, a succession*

of scenes and

of fantasies dominated by the most varied kinds of touching and mating between boys [...]. If he is disturbing, it's not so much because of his amorality and crudeness, which are on the whole timid compared to those of Sade, Bataille, Genet and Guyotat, but rather, like Guyotat, because of his challenge to our psychological and cultural habits [...]. There is no longer any room for the ego, that luxury commodity: 'it' copulates, that's all [...]. By copying bodily and plural jouissance as closely as possible, with the ultimate aim of making itself properly elusive, in the intellectual and judicial sense of the word, writing stands its best chance of liberating the reader by liberating itself (40).

Five days later, breaking with the protection afforded to his first four books by Jérôme Lindon, Duvert gave his first interview in *L'Express*. Writing is at the heart of what he has to say:

"You don't write things like that out of the goodness of your heart. Eroticism is not a violin d'Ingres, it's a hard happiness, something that, liberated, abuses yourself and others. Perhaps this is what frightens the reader (41).

Not those of the jury for the Prix Médias, who awarded the prize to *Paysage de fantaisie* in the autumn.

This choice, described as "courageous" by the press at the time, was not easy to achieve: only one vote separated Duvert's book from *Premiers mots* by Bernard Noël, whose *Le château de Cène* (Pauvert, 1972) was also "banned for minors" (from display and advertising):

*"When Duvert learned that Barthes had lobbied for the prize that year to be shared between himself and Bernard Noël, he flew into a rage. Barthes mentions this affair in code in his *Roland Barthes par lui-même*, saying that R.P. (Raymond Picard, the academic who specialised in Racine) saw him as a revolutionary, while T.D. (Tony Duvert) saw him as a supporter of reaction (42)...".*

The 'erotic literature' symbolised by Bernard Noël is, for Duvert, the worst kind of cheating, one that keeps so-called 'pornographic' production in a ghetto and validates the bourgeois separation of genres: to eroticism, the

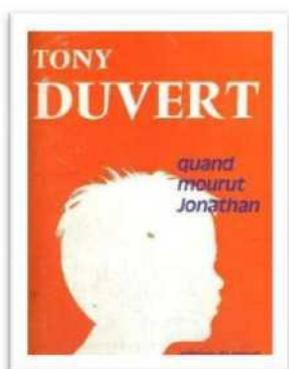
beauty; pornography, the vulgar and obscene. As Duvert wrote in the review *Minuit*, launched in November 1972 and which Jérôme Lindon offered him to edit, "pornography" is never anything more than "the eroticism of others":

"It's not up to porn magazines to show nudity, whores, dykes, and the likes, it's up to France- Dimanche, L'Express, Paris-Match, Tintin, Spirou, and other humanist publications. It's not up to the makers of X-rated films to depict sex lives, it's up to the film-makers who attract the crowds, and the television channels. It's not up to 'special' authors to decipher our bodies, it's up to literature as a whole (43)."

In the early 1970s, subversion, illustrated by formal biases and limited to "techniques that tear apart the non-conformist novelistic and social universe", appeared to Duvert to have reached an impasse. The avant-garde, caught in the trap of an "abstract reading", had to free itself from "non-fiction" and reappropriate the traditional novelistic narrative. This is the only way to reach a readership that school education has "balzacised" or "flaubertivised" (44), and to break with a practice that has insidiously taken hold, "non-reading" - or, what amounts to the same thing, reading limited to academics and a learned public:

"The subversive book is now charged with a fairly vivid socio-cultural aura; it is even a pillar of culture insofar as, by disobeying, it manifests that social freedom proper to the possessing class, and participates in the revolutionary humanism which, because it abolishes all class feeling, is the advanced ideology of the bourgeoisie. Self-contestation maintains the stability of the contested, it proves his innocence, his lucidity and his goodwill; and the subversive book plays its part in spite of itself in this merry-go-round (45)".

So what we need to do is not turn back the clock, but move on, taking subversion to the heart of popular forms of culture, those that escape the academic canon without calling into question the rhetoric inherited from the nineteenth century and taught at school: children's literature for Duvert, crime fiction for Jean-Patrick Manchette - whose attempt to "politicise crime fiction", at the same time, seems to be based on the same premises (46). Protest literature had to be based on so-called "minor" genres and a priori hackneyed forms.



Scout literature and sex

"Were you a scout, Pierre? Then you must surely have read the novels in the "Signe de piste" collection [...]. For forty years, boys and girls on the verge of puberty have been dreaming of those ancestors of the Club des Cinq, Le Bracelet de vermeil and Le Prince Eric.

An innocent dream? That's less certain. A few years

ago, the militant homosexuality magazine *Arcadie* demonstrated very clearly that the amorous friendships of the handsome Eric were nothing but a tissue and a mine of fantasies.



Pierre Joubert's drawings, with their skilfully stripped children and rebellious locks baring doe eyes, provided the model of the pin-up boy for several generations. As someone who knew these people a little, and served as their role model on occasion, I can tell you that the honeyed scouting from which these images emerged was to homosexuality what its executive schools were to Vichy...

If we had any doubts about this, there is one author who has been proving it loud and clear for several books now. His name is Tony Duvert, published by Editions de Minuit. Deep down, Duvert is a pure product of 'Signe de piste'. He has the perverse innocence, but not the hypocrisy. The result is some of the most savagely erotic literature that has been written in a long time (47).

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech is mistaken in attributing to *Arcadie* a study published in the March 1973 issue of *Recherches* already mentioned. Entitled "Pines de Sylphe", the study in question, illustrated and laid out, sifts through with a "perverse" eye the virtuous friendship of the dark-haired Christian and the blond prince Eric (48). Montherlant said it best: "Scouting has rendered invaluable services to the cause (49)".

As far as I know, Duvert never explicitly mentions *Prince Eric*. It is impossible to know which book the child in *Paysage de fantaisie* is reading:

What are you reading?" My question pleases him and he looks up. I'll finish it tomorrow and tell you all about it (50) On the hardback cover, there is a colour drawing showing a boy like Claude and a storm behind him with a black boat smoking in the distance it's surely good (51)."

It may well have been a "Signe de piste" illustrated by Pierre Joubert... *Quand mourut Jonathan*, published by Duvert in 1978, can in any case be read as a rewrite of *La mort d'Eric*, published in the 'Signe de piste' collection by Serge Dallens, a magistrate by profession, in 1943:

"With Quand mourut Jonathan (When Jonathan Died), Duvert returns to the "Signe de piste" scheme [...]. According to the Scout moral, it's the children who show the adults up [...] their physical daring is less adulterated than Prince Eric's

unavowed caresses (52).

La mort d'Eric is a book which, through its attacks on democrats, its criticism of the military mess that made the defeat of 1940 inevitable, its appreciation of German discipline and the necessarily correct Germans, has a Vichy tone. Its mirror image, *Quand mourut Jonathan*, offers the most radical critique of the principles of the racist and gendered public order that the Vichy regime sought to impose.

Between 1940 and 1944, Vichy did not aim to institute a new "moral order", but sought to establish what Duvert called a "heterocracy", i.e. not just the right for heterosexuals "to satisfy [their] personal desires", but "the need for the whole of society to teach and authorise only those desires", hence a public order "which added to the persecution of homosexuals a love order harmful to heterosexuals themselves" (53).

In 1942, Vichy was to reintroduce "into its legal system a provision penalising homosexuality", by creating the offence of "indecent and unnatural acts with a minor under the age of twenty-one of the same sex as the perpetrator" (54). This provision was repeated in 1945 (see above). The essential role attributed to the family, the restoration of closely separated male and female social roles, the adoption of numerous laws increasing State intervention in the private lives of individuals (55) are all characteristic features of Vichy "heterocracy". Duvert's work denounces what remains of this in French society in the 1960s: "The aim of sexual liberation is not that everyone should be able to make love to everyone else, but that the State, its structures and its laws should prevent any scrutiny of private lives [...]. Sexuality is not about

It is a matter of public morality (56). What if the inaudible aspect of Duvert's work was also that it was the most radically anti-Vichy French-language literature at a time, the 1960s, when Vichy functioned more as an anathema than as a serenely analysed political and moral past (57)? The censorship of the 1960s is said to have been succeeded by the self-censorship of the 1980s, and by the wilful ignorance of a work that is freely available and which "considers, in a form that is not that of a reasoned doctrine, the fundamental problems of a historical mode (58)". The evolution of the literary field, in particular the return of the "I" in literature, and the reversal of the avant-garde in favour of autofiction - "I have never spoken of anything other than myself" (Robbe-Grillet, 1985) - have probably also contributed to the de-fictionalisation of Duvert's work and, by the same token, to the legitimisation of his moral disapproval.

Tony Duvert published his last novel to date in 1982 (59), just a few months before, after "long and difficult debates", the "last incrimination concerning homosexual practices" was abolished (60). The whole of his work is part and parcel of the conquest of this freedom, even if, obviously, it does not stop there. The 1980s could have been the Duvert years. But the opposite happened.

Censored in the 1960s and made public thanks to a transgressive editorial strategy, Duvert's work, which came out into the open from the 1970s onwards, became a clandestine work in the 1980s, excluded from the histories of contemporary literature, crushed by the opprobrium of its subject matter (61). Perhaps this was fortunate: "Immortal authors bore posterity to death" (62).

NOTES

1. Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *La tyrannie du plaisir*, Le Seuil, "Points-Essai" collection, 1999, p. 29. Tony Duvert's work has not been the subject of any academic work. The only lengthy study devoted to him is by Laurent Pinon, "Tony Duvert, la persistance du lieu", *La parole vaine*, no. 7, October-November 1995. Available online at www.le-terrier.net.
2. Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *La tyrannie du plaisir*, op. cit., p. 31.
3. Ibid, p. 31. The quotation is by Jérôme Garcin.
4. Yan Thomas, "L'extrême et l'ordinaire. Remarques sur le cas médiéval de la communauté disparue", in Jean-Claude Passeron, Jacques Revel (eds.), *Penser par cas*, Paris, Editions de l'EHESS, 2005, p. 46.
5. Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *La tyrannie du plaisir*, op. cit., p. 32.
6. Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu, "La pédophilie entre les lignes", www.revue-medias.com.
7. Gabriel Matzneff, *Les moins de seize ans* (1^{ère} ed. 1974); *Les passions schismatiques* (1^{ère} ed. 1977), Paris, Editions Léo Scheer, 2005, p. 43.
8. André Clair, "Quelques réflexions à propos de la pédérastie", *Arcadie. Literary review et scientifique*, no. 218, February 1972, p. 73.
9. Léonard des Sables, "Results of a survey of a group of pederasts", *Arcadie. Revue littéraire et scientifique*, no. 276, December 1976, p. 656.
10. Ibid, no. 277, January 1977, p. 44.
11. "Three billion perverts. The Great Encyclopedia of Homosexuality", *Recherches*, March 1973, p. 182: "In everything that the FHAR (Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire) has said since the beginning, and in everything that homosexual movements in other countries say, in general, there is one thing that is almost never addressed, and that is pederasty. There's a kind of guilt that has remained in the movements [...]. There's a ban that exists even within the sexual liberation movement [...]"
12. *Contra* René Schérer, *Emile perversi* (1^{ère} ed., 1974), Paris, Editions du Rocher, 2006, p. 8: "Ne pas craindre de parler, ne pas hésiter à faire fut le mot d'ordre".
13. Tony Duvert, *Le bon sexe illustré*, Paris, Minuit, 1973, p. 80.
14. Tony Duvert, *L'enfant au masculin*, Paris, Minuit, 1980, p. 80, note.

15. Daniel Borillo, *Homosexuels. Quels droits ?*, Paris, Dalloz, 2007, p. 16.
16. Maurice Lever, *Les bûchers de Sodome*, Paris, Fayard, 1985, coll. 10/18, p. 420.
17. Jean-Jacques Pauvert, *La traversée du livre*, Paris, Viviane Hamy, 2004, p. 249-250.
18. The full text of the Opinion of Advocate General Boucheron is set out below, typed by the Bluet firm. Source: Archives nationales, CAC/Fontainebleau, Maurice Garçon fonds. Deposit: 1986 0096. Sade case, file number: 9911 /AP 304. Jean Boucheron, "Conclusions", quoted, pp. 44-47.
19. Quoted in Jean-Jacques Pauvert, *La traversée du livre*, op. cit. p. 260.
20. Ibid, p. 262.
21. Tony Duvert, "L'érotisme des autres", *Minuit*, no. 19, May 1976, p. 9.
22. Martine Poulain, "La censure", in Pascal Fouché (ed.), *L'édition française depuis 1945*, Paris, Editions du Cercle de la Librairie, 1998, p. 573.
23. Ibid, p. 558.
24. Order of 10 July 1969, Journal Officiel of 27 July 1969. Source: Press archives, Éditions de Minuit. Most of the press articles cited in this article come from the same source.
25. Source: Archives Editions de Minuit.
26. Jean-Jacques Pauvert, *Nouveaux et moins nouveaux visages de La censure*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1994, p. 31.
27. Gérard Timsit, "La codification, transcription ou transgression de la loi? *Revue française de théorie, de philosophie et de culture juridique*, no. 24, 1997, p. 87. The author's analysis of the codification process is based on an iconoclastic reading of Michel Butor's *La modification* (Minuit, 1957).
28. Prospectus accompanying the distribution of *Le Voyageur*. Source: Editions de Minuit archives.
29. On the specific relationship between resistance fighters and the public sphere, see Olivier Wieviorka, "La génération de la résistance", *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 22, April-June 1989, p. 114.
30. The Second World War is very present in Duvert's work, as a "ghost" (the "Krauts" in *Paysage de fantaisie*, Paris, Minuit, 1973, p. 23 and p. 28), but also as a philosophical question: "Born in 1945, I cultivated the strange conviction of belonging to the first generation of civilised men there would be on earth", *Abécédaire malveillant*, Minuit, 1989, p. 19. See also his reflections on Nazism, in particular *L'enfant au masculin*, Minuit, 1980, p. 130-131.
31. *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, Paris, Le Seuil, coll. "Écrivains de toujours", 1975-1995, p. 38.
32. Tony Duvert, "L'érotisme des autres", art. cit, p. 11.
33. On the distinction between "traitor" and "cheat", see Gilles Deleuze, Claire Pamet, *Dialogues*, Paris, Flammarion, 1977, p. 53. 1998, ADFP, 1998.
34. Table drawn up on the basis of 237 cards relating to *Paysage de fantaisie*, 124 relating to *Le bon sexe illustré* and 82 relating to *Journal d'un innocent*. Source: Éditions de Minuit archives.
35. The interest shown by the medical profession in *Le bon sexe illustré* is probably linked to the fact that this book-pamphlet against *L'encyclopédie de la vie sexuelle*, published in five volumes by Hachette in 1973, harshly attacks the medical profession. See *Le bon sexe illustré*, op. cit. p. 9.
36. Jérôme Lindon, "L'érotisme et la protection de la jeunesse", art. cit.

37. Léonard des Sables, "Résultats d'une enquête auprès des pédérastes", art. cit, p. 656. Peyrefitte's book was published in 1956 by Club des éditeurs.
38. On the importance of the demand for democracy in 1968, see Ingrid Gilcher- Holtey, "La transformation par la participation? Le mouvement de 1968 et la 'démocratisation des conditions de la production littéraire'", *Le Mouvement social* no. 214, January-March 2006, p. 146.
39. Tony Duvert, *L'enfant au masculin*, op. cit, p. 69.
40. Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, *Paysage de fantaisie* by Tony Duvert, *Le Monde*, 18 January 1973.
41. Interview by Madeleine Chapsal, "La fête cruelle de Tony Duvert", *L'Express*, 22-28 January 1973.
42. A conversation with Mathieu Lindon.
43. Tony Duvert, "L'érotisme des autres", art. cit. p. 6-7.
44. Tony Duvert, "La lecture introuvable", *Minuit*, no. 1, November 1972, pp. 13-14.
45. *Ibid*, p. 12.
46. "La drapeau rouge flotte sur la série Noire", in Jean-Pierre Saïgas (ed.), *Romans instructions for use 1968-1983-1998*, ADPF, 1998.
47. Typescript of Bertrand Poirot-Delpech's broadcast on Pierre Bouteiller's "Magazine", France-Inter, 6 April 1978. Source: Editions de Minuit press review.
48. "Pines de Sylphe", *Recherches*, March 1973, pp. 164-182.
49. Quoted in Gabriel Matzneff, *Les moins de seize ans*, op. cit; *Les passions schismatiques*, op. cit, p. 75.
50. The blanks are the author's.
51. Tony Duvert, *Paysage de fantaisie*, op. cit. p. 39. See also *L'île atlantique*, Minuit, 1979, p. 194: "What are you reading? Julien pointed to the book, which was called *Pirates et capitaines*. It was a buccaneering novel, a book for children, Théret thought.
52. Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, radio broadcast.
53. Tony Duvert, *L'enfant au masculin*, op. cit, p. 52.
54. Daniel Borrillo, *Homosexuels. Quels droits*, op. cit, p. 16.
55. See Francine Muel-Dreyfiis, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin*, Seuil, 1996, p. 212-213; Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue. Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p. 3. *Contra* Marc Boninchi, *Vichy et l'ordre moral*, Paris, PUF, 2005, p. 8.
56. Tony Duvert, *L'enfant au masculin*, op. cit, p. 111.
57. Henry Rouso, *Le syndrome de Vichy*, Le Seuil, 1987, p. 147-216.
58. Pierre Macherey, *À quoi pense la littérature*, PUF, 1990, p. 201.
59. It's a crime novel: *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille*, Minuit.
60. The culmination of a struggle initiated in the 1970s by Michel Foucault, Guy Hocquenghem, Gabriel Matzneff, René Schérer, the law of 4 August 1982 liberalised homosexual relations with a minor under the age of 18, which are no longer punishable, except for abuse of authority or misuse. See Pierre Lascoumes, "L'homosexualité entre crime à la loi naturelle et expression de la liberté", in Daniel Borrillo (ed.), *Homosexualités et droit*, PUF, 1998.
61. "The paedophile is much more than a pervert, a squanderer: he is the rival of the father. No one is closer to the Order, and no one is its enemy more completely. In Tony Duvert, *Le Bon Sexe illustré*, op. cit, p. 100. See also Antoine Garapon, Denis Salas, *Les nouvelles sorcières de Salem*, Le Seuil, 2006, p. 32, note 2, who point out that 84.4% of child abuse (physical, psychological, sexual) occurs within the family.
62. Tony Duvert, *L'enfant au masculin*, op. cit, p. 28.***

A CENTURY OF PAEDOPHILIA IN THE PRESS (1880-2000)

Source: Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu, *Le Temps des médias* n°1, Autumn 2003, p.31-41. Extracts.



Media coverage of sexual abuse of children began at the end of the 19th century. However, it was to be neither unambiguous nor continuous over the following century. Nevertheless, there was a fundamental change in the history of morality: paedophilia, which had previously been taboo, came to light. The discovery of paedophilia in the 1880s was a time of accusation; after a sharp decline in the number of publications on the subject, the sexual revolution of the 1970s saw a plea in favour of paedophilia; finally, the 1990s saw condemnation, accompanied by a debate that now places the abused child at the heart of its questions.

(...) The media coverage of sexual abuse of children - that is to say, their identification, analysis and denunciation in the public arena - have long been doomed to great discretion, not to say almost total silence: during the 19th century, they were very rarely mentioned in the *Gazette des tribunaux* and only if they were accompanied by blood crimes.

From this point of view, the end of the nineteenth century was marked by a considerable increase in the number of reports of indecent assaults on children, against a backdrop of a general decline in other crimes. This trend seems to reflect a growing awareness of what childhood is, of the new issues that arise in relation to this stage of life, and of the vast movement to reflect on the status of children in society: we see an increase in investigations into child labour and the emergence of new legislation for assisted children.

The way in which the press tackles the issue of child sexual abuse allows us to distinguish four periods in this long century, which runs from 1880 to 2000: the discovery of the 1880s, which also corresponds to the time of the

The sexual revolution of the 1970s, when the case was made in favour of paedophilia, and finally, the turning point of the 1990s, when paedophilia was condemned outright, whether or not it was accompanied by violence.

The time of the accusation: the emergence

Sexual abuse of children and ill-treatment, the two subjects - indissociable at the end of the 19th century - made inroads in the press, particularly in popular newspapers, during the 1880s. There was then a drop in the number of articles in 1890 and 1900, followed in 1910 by a recovery that lasted until 1914 (1). In 1910, *La Dépêche* even created a sort of sub-section in its national and local news section called "les satyres" (2), in which it published many stories of rape and indecent assault.

This statistical trend in stories, which can be seen in *Le Petit Journal* and *Le Figaro*, has little in common with the official statistics or the quantified conclusions obtained by Anne-Marie Sohn (3). But this partial discrepancy between the press and official statistics is perhaps simply a reflection of the delay in the press getting to grips with the subject and bringing it into the public arena. In any case, it shows that we are dealing with an embarrassing new issue. Nevertheless, this embarrassment, some of the signs of which we will analyse, does not condemn the newspapers to silence, which, on the other hand, remains dominant in medical and legal discourse: many works on rape and indecent assault do not even mention the question of children.

It is therefore not absurd to attribute the resurgence of these stories in the press to a lowering of the tolerance threshold for this type of crime. The press would be recording the growing indignation felt just about everywhere about sexual crimes, particularly when they are committed against children. It would thus be the almost direct echo of an awakening of sensitivities that is leading to more and more denunciations.

The year 1898 was also marked by the passing of the law on the repression of violence, assault, acts of cruelty and attacks committed against children (4). Children, who embodied the future of the nation, had become one of the major concerns of the Third Republic. And the new discourse that

is one of the responses, among others, to nationalism and concern about the declining birth rate and degeneration.

Nevertheless, the theme represents a tiny percentage of all the accounts of miscellaneous events during the period, and the stories relating to it are often reduced to a minimum, a few lines that are both allusive and dry. What's more, it is often associated with blood crimes, and so loses some of its specificity: many rapes and incest are mixed up with murders. The high-profile crimes that hit the

headlines at the time - Vacher the shepherdess slasher in 1897, Soleillant the murderer of his neighbours' little girl in 1907, Corbin the child killer in 1910 - did, however, have the merit of drawing public attention to the issue.

Characteristics of the crime

Sexual abuse, a "satyr-like" crime committed in more than half the cases against a little girl, raises a whole host of questions. The most serious, if not always asked at least often suggested, concerns the victim's consent. Victim or accomplice? asked the press about girls and young women - never about boys - reflecting a suspicion largely imported from medical (5) and legal discourse. In 1904, Parliament passed a law on the "education of difficult and vicious children in public care", precisely those who had been sexually abused. This suspicion was even more acute in the case of incest: here, the task assigned to the press was to remove or confirm the doubt hanging over the victim's responsibility. This explains the axiological heaviness and moralism that hang over all these stories. What's more, this moralism has tended to become heavier over time, in tandem with the growing dominance of euphemisms. In fact, from 1890 onwards, newspapers increasingly stopped talking clearly about child sex offences and took refuge in allusion, as if the strength of the taboo prevailed.

Rape and indecent assault are almost never clearly named. They can be guessed at without being said. It takes careful reading, the presence of a series of converging clues (the assault by a man on a child, for example, the absence of violence), coupled with the discovery in other headlines of the reality of the act, to conclude with certainty that this is indeed a sexual crime. Sometimes, however, uncertainty remains (6).

The event was not described, and the newspapers were content to report and describe, in order to condemn, acts that they basically refused to report. "Last outrage", "odious attack", "criminal attack", "odious outrages", "odious violence", "odious crime", "delicate affair": these are the euphemisms used to recognise the sexual crime that is assessed at the same time as it is announced. This confusion is all the more enlightening in that it stands in stark contrast to the hyper-verbalistic descriptions of the bodies of the child martyrs: when, in the press of the late 19th century, naturalism gives way to allusion, it is because this unassimilable and barely admittable reality is of the order of sex. People judged and denounced in order to avoid having to say anything; they were indignant in order to escape the demands of description and explanation.

From 1910 onwards, the newspapers became a little more precise and, at

the same time, less strictly moralistic, referring to "special violence against a young girl" (7) and "indecent assault with violence" (8). They all continued to consider that, in cases of rape, court proceedings could not be reported:

"A case of morality for which M. l'avocat général Le Gall would certainly have done better to insist that the court declare the trial in camera. As we do not wish to be complicit in any indecent exposure, we will pass over the details of this trial in silence" (9).

"The details of this affair are so filthy that nothing more can be said" (10).

The economy of silence that characterises these stories is in fact an economy of refusal that corresponds to the avowed, official and radical intolerance of things sexual in the late nineteenth century. In so doing, the press manifested different types of renunciation that affected its usual functioning. Firstly, there was a renunciation of investigation: the editor did not claim for a moment to be conducting or to have conducted an investigation, even in the case of mysterious rapes with an unknown culprit, unlike most other news items. Secondly, and above all, there is a refusal to give evidence, since the assailants, once arrested, are never "heard", unlike most other criminals; nor, for that matter, are their victims, who are beings without words. Children remain mute, absent victims, or to put it more accurately, "ideas of victims".

The ebb and flow (1920-1970)

These characteristics of accounts of child rape and incest remained broadly the same over the next half-century. However, the issue became less visible, as the period from 1920 to 1970 was marked by a marked decline in accounts of sexual abuse of children. Rarer than before, these stories also saw their narrative dry up so considerably that they increasingly resembled agency dispatches. In 1935, *Le Petit Marseillais* headlined the story of a trial as follows: "A sad individual is severely sentenced" and reported the following: "When a 6-year-old girl, of whom he was the godfather, came to play with his children, this individual abused them. During the investigation, the accused confessed, but today he has retracted his confession and proclaimed his innocence before the people's judges. Doctor Rousselier, an expert in psychiatry, concluded that he was "not responsible". He was sentenced to five years' hard labour (11).

In May 1950, *Le Provençal* reported that a young man of 20 had been arrested following the discovery of the bones of a little boy who had disappeared the previous year. He confessed to the murder he had committed and to the rape of a five-year-old girl in 1946 (12). And while blood is often the

occasion for revealing sexual abuse, it does not allow for any greater clarity on these thorny issues. Euphemisms, allusions and awkward periphrases remained the absolute norm, as if this lexical evasion made it possible to keep the matter at arm's length, or even to deny it, as was the case in the reports of the Violette Nozière trial (13). In 1964, *L'Aurore* reported on the double murder of a father and daughter at home and raised the possibility of incest. Under an eloquent headline - "C'était un drame de l'inceste" ("It was an incest drama") - the daily published a very short article, declining "out of consideration for its readers to comment further on this case" (14).

The word of children is still largely open to question. When, in 1960, André Le Troquer, former president of the National Assembly, was convicted along with 23 other people in what the press then called a "Ballets roses" affair (15), the morality of the young girls was scrutinised very closely, since "some, it is true, abused make-up and cleavage", as *Le Parisien libéré* put it (16).

On the whole, sexual violence is still not part of the social discourse, either in the press or in books on the subject.

The French medical profession continues to deny the reality of sexual abuse of children. The driving force behind this blindness seems to be the prevailing moralism that leads observers to remove the child from the scene. The acts committed by these men against children are never condemned for the consequences they may have on the child's psyche, for the damage they may have caused. "Immoral acts" and "indecent exposure" are the terms used repeatedly, and these unchallenged terms show that what is at issue are the broad, vague, abstract notions of morality and decency, much more than acts that affect the existence, sensitivity and future of a child, acts that are likely to destroy an individual. In fact, the child is largely absent from these stories, appearing only when suspected of complacency. So they are not in question, in the strict sense of the word: they are merely the object of the crime, nothing more.

What is hurt by the sexual abuse of children, we read in the press, is not so much the children as society, its honour and morality. So there's a shift - a classic one in the world of news stories - from the singular to the collective. The only difference is that, for the victims, this shift is accompanied by a considerable loss of meaning, to the detriment of possible reparation or even remediation. And it is this exclusively moralising approach that seems to explain the turning point of the following period.

The sexual revolution of the seventies: time for advocacy

In the wake of May 68, speech and bodies were liberated. At the same time, the press lifted the veil it had so modestly drawn over paedophilia - the word appeared at the time - and incest. To denounce them with violence or - and this was the great innovation of the decade - to restore their dignity: by making them part of a global and radical questioning of the social and moral order. This is the time for advocacy. From this point of view, the return of paedophilia to the limelight was part of the same movement that led intellectuals, including the editors of *Libération*, to invest delinquents with a genuine social mission and give them a status that challenged bourgeois society. While Foucault came to the defence of Roger Knobelspiess, journalists from *Libération* secretly met Mesrine, who had broken with the law, and published their interview (17).

A certain intellectual permissiveness already prevailed in favour of paedophiles. Illustrated in a minor way by the unclouded fame of a Gide

or Montherlant, and even the more controversial one enjoyed by Roger Peyrefitte, it is now manifesting itself more resolutely in the way certain newspapers are turning themselves into platforms, extolling all forms of alternative sexuality, including paedophilia, at the opposite end of the spectrum from disapproval and condemnation. At the beginning of the 1970s, the media were still extremely discreet when it came to sex and sexual discourse. In May 1971, Michel Polac was sanctioned by the ORTF board of directors for an episode of his programme *Post-scriptum*, broadcast on 20 April. Polac had invited Louis Malle to present "Le Souffle au cœur", a film about incest. The guests, Alberto Moravia and Professor Grassé, a biologist, talked about incest throughout the evening. Was it the freedom of tone (incest was neither condemned nor praised, but analysed as a fact of life with which a society must come to terms or of which it must get rid)? The programme disappeared in May, when Michel Polac refused to accept ORTF's proposal to turn it into a monthly programme. The editors and readers of *Télérama* and *Télé Sept jours* were somewhat disturbed by this, in the name of freedom of expression, but claimed that the subject was shocking and had been treated very lightly (18)...

That's why developments in the years that followed amounted to a real cultural and moral break: part of the press gave up the discretion it had hitherto exercised over sexual matters, whatever they might be, and the unqualified disapproval with which it had surrounded paedophiles and incestuous fathers. In the name of the liberation of morals, the right to difference of "minority loves"

(19) and the challenge to the bourgeois order, *Libération* welcomes Tony Duvert and Gabriel Matzneff, interviewed by Guy Hocquenghem.

Tony Duvert's books describe paedophile activities without concealing, and even claiming, their autobiographical nature. Descriptions of scenes of flirtation, fellatio and sodomy with children were all contained in this literature, which was soon promoted by *Le Gai pied*, a journal of homosexuality, issue no. 0 of which appeared in February 1979. The lifting of the taboo was not an isolated event. It went hand in hand with the defence of sexual freedom, abortion and prostitution, but was also based on the protest against a repressive education that curbed children's desires and impulses, on the questioning of the exclusive cultural rights of the family and the pre-eminence of mothers denounced as castrating (Tony Duvert speaks of the "matriarchy that dominates the impubescent" (20)). Everything is put on the same level, in the name of the right to

difference: free love, informal couples, homosexuality, zoophilia, paedophilia.

Moreover, paedophilia is defined as a culture (21) that seeks to break the "bourgeois tyranny that turns the child-lover into a legendary monster" (22). *Libération* says it simply wants to "treat relationships between people as facts of society (...) and not ghettoise them, in closed circuits and specialised cinemas" (23). That's why the daily opened its columns to those who, attacked by the right-thinking press, wanted to explain themselves. For example, on 26 and 27 January 1979, Jacques Dugué, accused of indecent assault on minors without violence, who, according to *Libération*, moved in the world of "swinger couples who pass around photos of children" and was praised for "his frankness about sodomy", published a letter written from prison. In a more direct, less elaborate mode than the writers, he defends the same theses: current laws oppress children who, from the age of 12 or 13, are endowed with a sexuality. Describing a "happy and united" family in which the stepfather "makes love with his wife but also with the boys, especially the 11-year-old, and not on the sly, in the marital bed", he urges that parents be left in charge of their children's sex education. And he contrasts the kindness, open-mindedness, cheerfulness, tolerance and pacifism of the young boys he has loved and who have become adults, with the selfishness, jealousy, meanness, stupidity, hypocrisy and racism of heterosexual couples who "often believe in God! The only taboo recognised by Jacques Dugué remains the use of violence. The only taboo recognised by Jacques Dugué is the use of violence: "Let there only be laws for violent sexual acts, which are most often committed by irascible heterosexuals against little girls or young women". But for the others, invoking "natural law" and the "4

billion sperm cells produced by a man in the course of his life", he asks: "Why shouldn't a man have the right to love a child?" (24).

One of the great novelties in this emergence from silence and opprobrium is the new place given to children: here they are at last at the heart of the debate, presented as manipulated, abused, suffering and possibly destroyed victims by those who condemn paedophilia, defined as autonomous and conscious beings, capable of discernment and choice, and above all inhabited by desires by those who defend paedophilia. Not that children are given a voice in the press, but at least they are evoked as persons and sensibilities and not just as pure objects on which an offence or crime is perpetrated.

This position got *Libération* into a bit of trouble. In March 1979, the paper triumphantly headlined "Libération's outrages" and announced that, over the last 19 months, it had been charged with 9 offences against public decency and incitement to debauchery. Serge July described these proceedings as manoeuvres aimed at getting the newspaper "to censor itself and return to a more traditional conception of the press", i.e. to respect the traditional division between politics and sex. What the Minister of Justice and the Public Prosecutor's Office are aiming for is the drying up and sclerosis of a press that is too innovative, a press that, in this case, "respects movement, the contradictory and multiple movements of life", he asserts. It is the freedom of the press that is in jeopardy here, and Jean-Luc Hennig has this to say: "we didn't get *Libération* through politics, we'll get it through our arses" (25). Classified ads asking for minors aged 12 to 18, readers' testimonials, drawings (26), as well as an article announcing the birth of the Front de libération des pédophiles, published in May 1977, were in fact attacked by the Public Prosecutor's Office, in the name of child protection. The daily interpreted this flurry of legal action as the response of the censors, of oppressive society, of the moral order to its revolutionary struggle, the triumph of *France Soir* and *Minute*, reactionary, right-thinking newspapers.

Libération is not entirely isolated, however, in this defence of paedophilia; *Le Monde*, albeit more cautiously, also indulges in it. And more cautiously, because the bias here is more strictly literary: it is often via book reviews that paedophilia emerges from the ocean of silence and disapproval where it lay. In October 1976, an album published by Schérer and Hocquenghem was praised as follows: "the authors make no secret of the fact that they are interested in children's bodies - sexed, desiring, desirable, playful. Their book is not "to be placed in every hand", as some would have said in the past. Today, we'd be embarrassed to say which ones. Parents, perhaps. (27) In November of the same

year, Gabriel Matzneff asked the question: "Is love a crime?", denouncing the long pre-trial detention to which a doctor and his friends had been subjected for three years for "a simple matter of morals, in which the children had not been the victims of the slightest violence, but on the contrary, had told the examining magistrate that they had consented and that it had been very pleasant for them". He, too, pleaded for respect for "the sexual practices of very young girls and boys". More informed than his companions, he invoked articles 330 and 331 of the Penal Code, supplemented by Vichy ordinances, which discriminate between heterosexuality and homosexuality in France.

on indecent assault (28). Two years later, in 1978, the same comment was repeated in *Le Monde des livres*' review of René Schérer and Guy Hocquenghem's latest book: "Under the pretext of 'protecting' children, adult society is drawing a veritable cordon sanitaire around them. [...] In the past, children were told that masturbation drove them mad; now they are taught to be wary of naughty gentlemen and to report them to the police" (29).

The tone began to change a little the following year in the words of Eveline Laurent who, although seduced and touched by those she calls "the new paedophiles", nonetheless contests "the soundness of their reasoning".

"Is it possible to believe this "tourist" to be totally clairvoyant, for example, when he describes Manila, where child prostitution is said to take place in paradise, with the blessings (of the father, the grandmother, the boss) to back it up? [...] We can take what we want from Françoise Dolto's comments (amusingly referred to as the "Savonarola of nurseries"), for whom any seduction of a child by an adult leaves the former with an indelible trauma, but it would in any case seem inappropriate to completely forget the links between the after-effects of colonialism, prostitution and poverty in certain countries".

On the same day and on the same page, Roland Jaccard presented Nancy Huston's first book, *Jouer au papa et à l'amant*. The book, quite offensive, denounced the hypocritical good conscience that "under the double banner of freedom of expression and freedom of desire transforms little girls into women-objects" (30). In 1980, however, in *Le Monde des livres*, Roland Jaccard hailed Tony Duvert's latest publication, *L'enfant au masculin*, with these words: this book "deals with a subject that grieves families, indignities the virtuous, disturbs the most permissive and shocks even the professionals of scandal: pederasty". And Jaccard praises this "so generous a thought" that flushes out "hypocrisies" (31).

Finally, in 1981, Philippe Sollers mixed criticism and praise for Gabriel

Matzneff's latest book. Acknowledging Matzneff as a metaphysical libertine who "reinvents transgression and scandal by throwing himself wholeheartedly into an adventure that cannot fail to revolt the law: hunting minors", he added: "This last point is probably unacceptable. It is completely foreign to me. I'm not judging, I'm just observing. I see that it has

place. I'm trying to understand this obstinate fantasy, painted by its illustrators as a paradise". He goes on to explain how Gide's "allusive pederasty [is] here unfolded, deployed, industrially described", and comments: "there is something odious and sympathetically puerile in all this" (32).

The turning point in the 1990s: condemnation

The complex case of the Coral living quarters in October 1982 did little to clarify matters, as it quickly turned into a detective story where political denunciations and various implications were mixed up. What's more, the Coral affair drew attention above all to the living quarters and called into question the psychiatric innovations of the 1970s, rather than clearly setting out the terms of the problem (33).

So it was not until the 1990s that the law of silence was completely broken and time for reflection opened up. Mireille Dumas' programme *Bas les masques*, broadcast in the spring of 1995 and devoted to child abuse, seems to have been the starting point. On the evening of the programme itself, the subject was raised on the 8 o'clock news by a journalist who spoke of 4,000 cases of sexual abuse committed (or denounced) in 1994 alone. The time has come for a condemnation without appeal and, if not absolutely unambiguous, at least stripped of the reservations and ambivalence of the previous period. For the absolute novelty of *Bas les masques* is that, for the first time, we can hear and see the victims: these children who no longer dare to be asked whether they consented or not, who are unequivocally expressing their suffering. For the first time, the media were talking about the effects of paedophilia on children, leaving it up to the witnesses to talk about their suffering, their inability to forget, to build a happy and balanced life for themselves. From then on, the media were more concerned about measuring the phenomenon and denouncing the sexual exploitation of children. There was also less hesitation in acknowledging that, very often, it was the family that was the main source of sexual abuse. The child pornography trade, child prostitution and child trafficking are now widely reported. This explains the mobilisation of the media around the Dutroux affair in 1996, even though the subject had already been one of the hot topics in magazines for several months.

We are therefore witnessing a fundamental change in the history of morality: paedophilia, which was taboo until recently - a taboo whose power confirms what Michel Foucault said about modern societies that "have devoted themselves to always talking about sex by asserting it as a secret" - has been brought to light, and blindness has retreated in the face of the force of the insult, just as it did yesterday in the case of rape. Long doomed to silence and discretion, to the heavy-handed moralism of an embarrassed society, cases of paedophilia and the sexual exploitation of children are now in the spotlight of the press, and the child is finally taking centre stage.

This is an eminently delicate subject, and one that is difficult for the media to deal with. They are criticised for exaggerating the problems, blurring the trail and potentially playing a role as excitors ("Doesn't talking about perversity legitimise it?" asked Jean-Paul Aron about homosexuality (34)), whereas they undeniably also have the merit, if not - as they sometimes claim - of facilitating the discovery of cases, at least of sharpening the public's sensitivity.

NOTES

1. Dominique Kalifa, *L'Encre et le sang*, Paris, Fayard, 1995 p. 122
2. *La Dépêche*, 7, 9, 16, 21, 23, 25 January, 19 and 25 June 1910.
3. Anne-Marie Sohn, "Les attentats à la pudeur sur les fillettes en France (1870-1939) et la sexualité quotidienne", *Mentalités*, no. 3, special issue on sexual violence, 1989, pp. 71-111.
4. *Journal Officiel*, 21 April 1898.
5. Dr Thoinot, *Attentat aux mœurs et perversions du sens génital*, published in 1898, explained that "rape does not exist under the age of six, and remains exceptional up to the age of ten" and placed particular emphasis on the issue of "false attacks", equating dismissals with unfounded accusations.
6. A 47-year-old locksmith (...) whose wife had left him about a month ago, was left alone with three grandchildren and his seventeen-year-old daughter Thérèse. On Tuesday evening he threw himself on the latter and horribly abused her. After his crime, the wretch fled". *Le Petit Journal*, 1 January 1900. The account is so allusive that only the respective ages of the protagonists, the mention of the culprit's brutal sexual solitude and the very symptomatic "odiously" allow us to conclude - without absolute certainty - that it was a sexual assault.
7. *Le Petit Journal*, 6 January 1910.
8. *Le Petit Journal*, 13 January 1910.
9. *La Dépêche*, 12 February 1898.
10. *Le Figaro*, 14 November 1880.
11. *Le Petit Marseillais*, 10 May 1935.
12. *Le Provençal*, 21 May 1950.
13. To justify murdering her father, Violette Nozière accused him of incest. He even forced her to have an abortion (*Le Petit Journal*, 16/12/1934). On this trial, see *Le Petit Journal*, *Le Figaro*, *L'Humanité*, Oct-Dec 1934.

14. G. Auclair, "Meurtre, inceste, énigme. Étude comparée de presse", *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. VII, no. 2, 1966, pp. 215-228.
15. *France Soir*, 11 June 1960.
16. *Le Parisien libéré*, 10 January 1960.
17. *Libération*, 3 January 1979.
18. *Télérama* 22 and 29 May 1971; *Télé sept jours*, 22 May 1971.
19. *Libération*, 10 April 1979.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Libération*, 7-8 May 1977.
23. *Libération*, 1 March 1979.
24. *Libération*, 26 and 27 January 1979.
25. *Libération*, 1 March 1979.
26. In particular this work by the group Bazooka, taken from the magazine *Regards modernes*, and showing a fellatio performed by a little girl, under the title "apprenons l'amour à nos enfants" ("Let's teach our children about love"), published on 5-6 /11/1978 in the advertisement page "Taules".
27. Signed R.-P.D., *Le Monde*, 15 October 1976.
28. *Le Monde*, 7-8 November 1976.
29. *Le Monde*, 17 February 1978.
30. *Le Monde*, 31 August 1979.
31. *Le Monde*, 14 November 1980.
32. *Le Monde*, 25 September 1981.
33. It is worth mentioning an article published by Guy Hocquenghem in *Libération* on this occasion, which rightly points out that "paedophilia has never been an offence as such in the penal code", 20 October 1982.
34. Jean-Paul Aron, *Le Pénis et la démoralisation de l'occident*, Paris, Grasset, 1978, p. 26 ;

CHAPTER 01

Novels and essays: reviews

RECIDIVE

Novel, 1967. A second version of this novel, revised and corrected, was published in 1976.



Magazine Littéraire, (1967): If ever there was a book that came close to a zero in writing, this is it. Not only is 'literature' quietly ignored in it, but the techniques of the New Novel are used for want of anything else, without much enthusiasm and even with

scepticism. *Récidive* is more like the graffiti that adorns our walls. Like them, they ooze misery and a frightening solitude. This long homosexual delirium of memories, dreams and lies is a symphony, fragments of which can be read every day on the walls of our public places. That's where its astonishing power comes from. Because the surest way to tell us about the hell of these sexual pariahs, to bring them out of the silence in which we exile them, as if to silence a voice that frightens us, is to speak their language. All literature would be a lie: to translate *their* experience into *our* language is to take away what is *different about it*. In the pale, naked flesh of this latrine writing, there is a breath of despair that will freeze you. Because you're born on the wrong side of the tracks, the dice are loaded, there's nothing to be done: humour here takes on the air of suicide... The end of hell comes with an early-morning embrace in the arms of an Arab sailor who, in despair of love, kills our hero with infinite tenderness... Tony Duvert's first book is a must-read.

Madeleine Chapsal (L'Express, 1967): In *Récidive*, the cruelty and violence of male love do not encourage moral reflection, but are the pretext for a writing style that, although formal, is nonetheless remarkably lyrical. An astonishing first book by a twenty-three-year-old author.

Leon S. Roudiez (French Fiction Revisited, 1990): To anyone reading Tony Duvert's first novel, *Récidive* (1967; *Repeated Offense*), it is clear that the

lessons of the previous generation had been assimilated. The relationship between narrative and any possible referent is shaky or problematic and it comes as no surprise to find out that the sequence called "Rappel succinct de ce qui précède" does not at all sum up the events of the previous pages. As the text oscillates between first- and third-person narrative, the subject is put in doubt and a similar indeterminacy affects characters. Linearity also goes by the board. What I find interesting is that, as Maurice Blanchot did with *Thomas l'obscur*, Duvert published a "new version" of *Récidive* in 1976, in which the features I mentioned have been attenuated.

What remains, however, is a strong presence of the flesh: a pervading sensuousness runs through the text, as it does through that of his next work of fiction, *Portrait d'homme couteau* (1969). Those two books were greeted with relative critical silence, possibly because of the combination of an elaborate description with homosexual pornography ("something that inspires a legitimate disgust," Duvert himself wrote, ironically, on the back cover of *Paysage de fantaisie* (1973). *Journal d'un innocent*, on the other hand, renounced working in description; there is a single, unified narrative in the first person, characters have stable referents, and so forth. As a result, journalistic reviewers praised the book and pronounced it worthy of Duvert's great French classic antecedents. What had perturbed ordinary reviewers was that Butor, Robbe-Grillet, Roche, and others had tampered with the notions of "literature," "belles lettres," and style; graphically rendered erotic acts, however, were increasingly acceptable - provided they were encased in "fine" prose.

John Phillips (*Forbidden Fiction*, 1999) : For Jean-Jacques Pauvert, the novel (*Emmanuelle*, 1967) marks the beginning of a new, permissive era, 'the Emmanuelle era' which lasted until 1985, the year when AIDS came to full public attention in France. It is during this permissive era that Tony Duvert and other homosexual French writers (for example, Jean Demélier, Renaud Camus and Dominique Fernandez) publish their explicit homoerotic works, openly projecting homosexuality in a positive light for the first time. *Récidive*, which was originally published by Duvert in 1967, is one of the first examples in France of the pornographic novel written specifically for the homosexual reader.

This is a unique period, during which sexual discourses are relatively free of legal or moral constraints, reflecting the sexual freedoms enjoyed in Western society as a whole; it is a time when Duvert can actively champion the sexual rights of the child in his essays and fictions without becoming the target

of a hysterical witchhunt and when Alain Robbe-Grillet, the leader of the New

Novel movement in France, can make films and write novels in which very young females are depicted as objects of male sexual violence without any overt sense of moral condemnation on the author's part.

Brian Gordon Kennelly, *Rewriting, Rereading Recidive (Dalhousie French Studies number 67, 2004)*:

Curiously, the love of children is linked in the mind to the idea of violence.
Gabriel Matzneff, *The under-sixteens*

Every new work [...] is ultimately the ruin of the one that preceded it. Alain Robbe-Grillet, "*Du Nouveau Roman à la Nouvelle Autobiographie*" (*From the New Novel to the New Autobiography*)

Author of some dozen works of homoerotic fiction, two polemical essays, and recipient of the 1973 Prix Médicis (For *Paysage de Fantaisie*, Paris, Minuit, 1973), Tony Duvert published his first novel *Récidive* in 1967. Seven years later he rewrote it, ultimately publishing a much shorter version in 1976 - which for reviewer A. Thiher resembles what the prose of Jean Genet might have become were it to have been rewritten by Alain Robbe-Grillet. This disturbing work by one of France's most aggressively homosexual writers, a self-proclaimed "pedhomophile" (*L'Enfant* 21), has largely escaped critical attention. In the only study to focus on *Récidive* to date, John Phillips builds on work by Owen Heathcote on the ongoing construction and deconstruction of homosexuality and its environments ("Masochism" 176). Phillips deems Duvert's novel a "homotextuality" and focuses on the mobile nature of homosexual identity in the journey, the quest for sexual experiences pieced together by its shadowy male narrator (*Forbidden* 150, 153, 154). For Phillips, there are three reasons for the lack of critical interest in this work unapologetically promoting pederasty and at times non-consensual sexual violence: modest sales - only 2,000 copies of the first published version and barely 3,000 more of the second; Duvert's reclusiveness - by mailing his manuscripts to Jérôme Lindon, he chose indirect contact with him and his publishing staff at the Editions de Minuit; and the critical marginalization in general of homosexual writing in France (151-2).

What Phillips describes as a "close reading" (151) of Duvert's work proves shortsighted, however. For in his consideration of the homotextual aspects of this "narrative on the loose" (154), he ignores the 1967 version of *Récidive* for the sake of convenience. His exclusive focus on the second version of the novel

alone, which for him was "the only one available" (219), is exclusionary and therefore problematic.

Although the first edition of *Récidive* is no longer for sale in bookstores and as a result more difficult for the general public to acquire than the second, it should not be overlooked. It can be borrowed from academic libraries and can help us better understand Duvert's intentions in rewriting the work - the only one, Phillips reminds us, he considered important enough to rewrite (152). How does the 1967 edition shed light on the 1976 version? What does Duvert's rewriting of *Récidive* reveal about the extent of the simultaneously sexual and textual quest (Phillips 172) it rehearses? Is his privileging of circularity, repetition, and fragmentation in the novel's promiscuous and abusive textuality ultimately more extensive and further reaching than has been assumed?

Paratextual Preview/s

Besides the surprising 53-page difference in length between the 1967 and 1976 editions of *Récidive*, the most obvious differences between the two texts are paratextual.

While both versions of the work contain as an epigraph an ominous excerpt from the Mayan *Livre de Chilàm Baldm de Chumayel* ("Every moon, every year, every day, every wind moves on and on. Likewise all blood arrives at the place of his quietude, as it arrives at his power and his throne"), only the second version of Duvert's novel attributes the translation used to Benjamin Peret. With due translational credit given, it thus underlines that this excerpt is only a version of the original celebrated and prophetic Mayan texts, (In his introduction to the *Livre de Chilàm Balàm de Chumayel*, Benjamin Perét notes: "Qu'importe, en effet, de savoir que, dans cet ouvrage transparaissent nombre de croyances indigènes, puisque nul n'est en mesure de ressembler ces bribes en un tout cohérent" (35)) one step removed from them in the same way that the second version of *Récidive* is a pared-down version of the original.

Both editions are, moreover, divided into four unequal parts. The numbered parts of the second version of the novel (I, II, III, and IV) are further subdivided into paragraphs alone. Besides being named, the four sections of the first version ("EXPOSE," "EN FORÊT", "EN CHEMIN DE FER", and "EN VILLE") are more complex.

"EXPOSE," the first part of the 1967 version, is composed of seven subtitled sections. Each one is additionally subdivided into paragraphs, and in

the case of the fifth section, two sets of paragraphs are divided by a blank space. On the surface, the seven sections appear to be organized sequentially and to span the three months of a French autumn. "*Première narration: octobre*" (11) is followed, and as a result problematized by "*La même, mensongère*" (13); this is followed by the equally enigmatic "*La même, mais qui mentionne un nom véridique*" (15) which itself leads to "*Rectification*" (16), casting doubt on the whole October narration. These first four sections of the first narration are followed in turn by the second and third narrations; they purportedly cover the remaining autumnal months of November and December respectively. Not only are the lengths of both narrations different - with nine-and-one-half pages devoted to "*Deuxième narration: novembre*" (19) and six pages to "*Troisième narration, provisoirement limitée à un épisode apocryphe. Décembre*" (29), but in the second narration a colon separates the noun "narration" from the month it purportedly spans - as it does in the first narration too -, suggesting equivalence. On the other hand, in the third narration the caveat in the legal nuance following the noun "narration" and the subsequent period sets it apart, highlighting its fragmentation and incompleteness.

Now just as the nuance of the adverb "*provisoirement*" - "qui est rendu, prononcé ou auquel on précède avant un jugement définitif" (*Le Nouveau Petit Robert*) - betrays reservations and thus arouses suspicion on the part of the reader, so too the seventh section, "*Rappel succinct de ce qui précède*" (35), is less a reminder or summary for the reader of details that have just been presented in the first section than an effort further to complicate or confuse through deceit. Exaggeratedly succinct, this so-called review of the facts skips over the longest, second narration; it altogether ignores the month of November; and by framing them as questions, the events it revisits are cast into doubt:

In October, he set off one afternoon by suburban train. At the terminus - he got there around five o'clock - he took the road. He walks. When night fell, he went to sleep under the trees. The next day, he set off again, and walked some more. It rained all day. In the evening, he goes

to a deserted church. He falls asleep there. He is found there. The priest arrived with the cops. Afterwards, I stayed with the priest, who gave me dinner. That's all there is to it. Why did I leave?

In December, I'm starting again. I took the train, in small stages. The first took me as far as Tours. The second, to Lyon. This is Michel's home town. I spent half the night walking there, in the suburbs and elsewhere. Then another stage: Avignon. The fourth day is a Sunday, 25 December, if you need a date. I go down

to Marseille. Then back to Nîmes. He bought some stuff in a chemist's, and the man on duty gave it to him without taking any notice. In Nîmes, at night, he swallowed the stuff. After that, the hospital was silent. What for?

That was it. I didn't see anything, I didn't want anything, I didn't understand anything, I didn't meet anyone, I didn't want to do anything I did. It meant nothing. But I wouldn't admit that for the world. Is that clear? So let's shuffle the cards (35-6).

With its ludic and likely false chronology, the "EXPOSE" preemptively complicates the three sections which constitute the heart of the novel: "EN FORET", "EN CHEMIN DE FER", and "EN VILLE". As the first and most striking example of false advertising or mislabeling in Duvert's text, this ultimately unreliable preview of intratextual recidivism showcases the shifting scaffolding for the half-truths the novel attempts to string together. Like the cards in the loaded deck of a dishonest dealer, each episode, sequence, and section, each character, narrative voice, presence, and strand is shuffled, reshuffled, arranged, and rearranged by the author in an effort to mislead and subvert. Indeed, this novel whose very title collapses repetition and circularity with criminality also exemplifies the formal experimentalism and self-conscious literariness of the *nouveau roman*, showing that literarily speaking, it is not any different from other New New Novels (Robbe-Grillet, "What" 98). Duvert's "texte sans totalité" is thus analogous to the Deleuzian definition of a structure, where as Robbe-Grillet notes, "parallel series would exist, where there would be gaps and excesses and oh all that would move, would move without any possible stop in search of a meaning, because this instantaneity and this fragmentation are not bearable" ("L'exercice" 244).

The fragmentary summaries at the beginning of each section are just as troublesome as the empty promise of "EXPOSE" which should - following the definition of the noun - develop a specific and precise subject in methodological fashion.

The first example, the list-like preview of the main elements of the second section ("EN FORÊT") reads: "*Cabane, forestier, vieillard, enfants - inventés. Walk, rain, cure - true. Premier avatar de Michel*" (39), Already alerted to the text's duplicity by the "EXPOSE", the reader is well- advised also to treat with skepticism the seemingly facile, clean-cut separation of fiction from fact presented here.

Similarly, the skeletal summary for the third section ("EN CHEMIN DE FER") is revealing only insofar as it subverts the narrative; at the same time as

promising, it also pollutes the factual with the fictional and calls into question the logic of character choice and precedence:

"trains, stations, hotels, authentic attempts. Illusory remarks about this book and its author. Imaginary vomiting. Above all, an Arab sailor who, because he is invented, temporarily supplants the ci- in front of Michel" (93).

As though this overzealous blurring of the boundaries between the authentic, the illusory, the imaginary, and the invented were not enough, the synopsis of the fourth and final section ("EN VILLE") pushes the limits of the very fiction(s) it previews.

The tension established by Duvert in the 1967 version of *Récidive* (but cut from the 1976 version) between these paratextual summaries or divisions and what they purportedly summarize or divide is further played out in the incomplete citation from Alfred Jarry's *Ubu cocu*, which serves as epigraph for the final section, "EN VILLE": "Pour vous prouver notre supériorité en ceci comme en tout, nous allons faire le saut périlleux (...)" (141) While separating this final section from the rest of the novel by virtue of its difference as an epigraph and as the only sectional epigraph, it is also devoid of context. Proclaimed in Jarry's play by Père Ubu to his conscience (which suggests truth and accountability), it is also a reaction to publicity. Père Ubu directly precedes his statement with "Cornegidouille, Monsieur vous faites bien du tapage." Each paratextual summary is a form of false publicity. It recognises them as such and subverts them upfront:

"The author's autobiographical project is apparently made a mockery of by the metamorphoses that affect certain events and

characters in his work. The Arab sailor concludes, after a few juvenile avatars" (143).

What, then, does Duvert accomplish by stripping his text of its paratextual scaffolding in the 1976 edition of *Récidive*? If the slippery signage in the first edition serves the useful purpose of alerting readers to the textual abusiveness it showcases, by removing it does Duvert 'dilute' his novel and, as Thiher's 1977 review would suggest, make it 'more readable'? To be sure, with less to mislead them, readers of the later version of *Récidive* might be less confused. But because the longer 1967 version also engages and amplifies the textual self-questioning rehearsed paratextually in *Récidive*, by removing the misrepresentative framework scaffolding his novel, Duvert seems also to render

it less richly ambiguous. Readers of the second version are not provided false explanations. Neither are they set up, misled by the false advertising of its titles, subtitles, summaries, and signage. Still, the perceived "simplification" comes at a cost: for deprived of this paratextual warning system, readers more quickly fall victim to the text's duplicity.

Recidivist (Re)Reading/s

Whether desensitizing by "dilution" or not, Duvert appears at least to be discounting, deemphasizing, or downplaying the importance of the relationship between texts - intensified in this case in the dramatic tension established between the paratext and the text it frames. Yet to perceive the Duvertian deemphasis of the relationship between texts this way would be to misperceive it. In his rewriting of *Récidive*, Duvert seems rather to broaden his novel's intertextual stage, providing an additional layer, if not the penultimate dimension for the recidivism it rehearses. Whereas Phillips notes the numerous intertextual echoes of Alain Robbe-Griilet, Raymond Queneau, Marguerite Duras, and Robert Pinget within the 1976 version of *Récidive*, the "ironic intertextuality" underlining the novel's status as text in a universe of texts and not as reality (161 -2) most dramatically extends between versions of itself. The plural, shifting, and limited viewpoint, the uncertainties and contradictions, the fragmentation and "self-mutilation," indeed the displacing of moral responsibility and criminal agency "overspill[ing] the boundaries of individual subjectivity" and highlighted by Phillips (156,164, 169) all also spill over the artificial, temporal boundaries measured in the nine years between successive publications of *Récidive* and represented within the covers of each version.

Perhaps the easiest gauge of the novel's plural, shifting, and limited viewpoint are the changes in personal pronouns it orchestrates. When considered intertextually, changes within the first published version have increased resonance. Symptomatic of the mobility of homosexual identity, which Phillips notes is constantly self-questioning and constructed from fragments of memory and fantasy (154), they complement and thus underline the changes revealed in propriety in the shifts from third- to first-person singular possessive adjectives, "son imperméable" (39) to "mon imperméable" (31) for example, or vice-versa, from first- to third-person, "mon vélo" to "le vélo du curé" (65). A sequence in the third section of the first part of the 1967 version ("EXPOSE") shifts, for instance, from third- to first-person singular:

He went to bed peacefully. But the night was too beautiful. He couldn't sleep. It was a full moon - and in that case, even a sceptic believes in magic. So I got up

and set off again, barefoot, towards the forest. I'd left my shoes there, I was going to come back (14).

Rather than restage this pronominal shift from third- to first-person in his rewriting of *Récidive*, Duvert minors the shift from "il" to "je" in the shift between versions from "je" to "il":

He lay down on the moss. But the night was too beautiful and he couldn't fall asleep. It was a full moon, which makes you believe in magic. He got up and set off again, barefoot, towards the forest (13).

This shifting, pluralizing of viewpoint in the rewriting of his text is not a collapsing of perspectives to render his text more readable. Rather, it establishes the critical imperative to read both versions in order fully to reveal the richness of the novel's recidivism - both from cover to cover and intertextually, between the covers of each version.

Indeed, the text consistently, obsessively rewrites itself and thus undermines any possibility for stability or finality. It thus precludes any possibility of arriving at a sequence of established "facts" (Smith 349). Just as Thiher sees coherence in the 1976 version in the repetition of various "narrative hypotheses" (249), the two versions of the text cohere by the revisioning of these same narrative hypotheses between texts. Uncertainty, for example, later within the second section over the position in which the young runaway and the older forester will have sexual relations is also reiterated,

played out between texts. Just as the runaway shifts from the imperfect to the conditional, he shuffles the possibilities of position in the 1967 version of the text when he asks:

Was he going to do it standing up, or on all fours on the floor, or lying on the bench? It would be better on the ground, the bench would shake me on it, the wood would hit me in the bones, the small edge would crush my instep (49).

The equivalent and contradictory sequence from the 1976 version shows, on the other hand, that whether in a jeep or on all fours, whether on the ground or standing up, the sexual positioning possibilities are as numerous and the various combinations ultimately only as important as the imagination allows:

Were we going to do it standing up, or in the jeep, or lying on the bench? It'd be better standing up, the bench my bones would hit against the board, the guy would crush me. And there was no way I was going to follow him in his jeep (38).

Further discounting any logic of finality, the unfinished, fragmentary sequence at the end of both versions of the same section in the novel turns the text's overzealous selfquestioning on its head by suspending it and thus subverting it from within. In the 1976 version, the reader's attention is turned from the runaway temporarily to a completely unrelated topic, the narrator's mother:

But what the child was, what he had done, who he had met, where he had come from, how old he was, what sex he was, who had taken him in, fed him, given him back to his family, that's what I've forgotten, although he certainly told me. How can I attach importance to such trivial details? Let's talk about something else instead. My old mother, for example; for she is very old, almost impotent and, despite all her good will, she is more of a burden than a support to me: so it would be desirable for a cleaner, more vigorous young person to be placed at my disposal (66-7).

The narrator's mother, however, is merely an additional pretext for further fantasizing. But by suspending his description of the younger person he idealizes in her place, the very attributes he desires in this person - and

therefore the fantasy itself - are themselves called into question. In his rewriting of the text, Duvert intertextually reiterates this same subversion, for in the first version the desired qualities are not even the same. The comparative of the later version disappears, and a relatively non-descript adjective is substituted for cleanliness: "il serait souhaitable qu'on mette à ma disposition *une jeune personne vigoureuse et amène qui*" (90) (An intertextual comparison of the idealized younger person is also invited by the fact that one version reads "vigoureuse" and the other "plus vigoureuse").

The shifts and deemphasis of individual subjectivity and ultimate truth that are played out through the mobility, ambiguity, and contradictions within and between each version of *Récidive* and which, as a result, further destabilize the text, are paralleled in the shifts and deemphasis of proper names and of time, or what Phillips calls the evacuation of the social referent (152). The idealized blond-haired, blue-eyed Michel[s?] of the first version, described as "ideal[s] pédé[s] d'un autre genre que le marin" (101), who because of his [/their] good looks trouble the social order (102) and need to be killed ("Tuons-les, ils dérangent") is [/are] never named nor given permanent, stable physical attributes in the later version. He [/They] are at times "le blondinet" (59), "le petit blond" (62), "le blond" (51), "un jeune garçon brun, ou un blond" (14), or merely "votre héros" (93).

Similarly, in the first version cities are named but the specificity of place is also deemphasized: "Le train ralentit, s'arrêta doucement On était à Marseille, ou à Paris, ou à Lyon, ou n'importe où" (120). This occurs between versions too with "Paris" (40) of the 1967 edition becoming "la ville" (32) in the 1976 edition, with "Lyon" (35) rewritten as "sa ville" (27), and with the fourth section "EN VILLE" of the first edition reduced to the Roman numeral IV in the second.

Moreover within the 1967 version of *Récidive*, duration of sequences or specific times are frequently called into question: "I said it was six o'clock. But it was only afternoon [] It was mid-morning, decidedly, around ten o'clock perhaps" (54). All examples of "un temps sans temporalité" (Robbe-Grillet, "L'exercice" 243), they are nevertheless doubled, exaggerated, confused, and rarely equivalent in the 1976 version: "cinq secondes" (51) becomes "dix secondes" (39); "six heures" (54) is increased to "sept heures" (41); "onze heures" (59) is simultaneously and problematically "onze heures" (44) and "minuit" (45); "cinq heures et

demie" (61) is reduced to "cinq heures" (46); and "plus d'un an" (66) is greatly increased to "plus de cent ans" (50).

If there is a tendency both within and between versions of *Récidive* to deemphasize and thus call into question the importance of proper names and time, the obsessive recounting and reversioning of sexual exploits and fantasies within the first edition of the novel tends towards more specificity and graphic detail between editions. "Se marrer" (63) becomes "s'enculer" (47), in the same way that "grandes cuisses" (74) reveal a "grande bite" (57) in the later version. Furthermore, sequences such as "aaaahhh toi d'abord chéri, couchons- nous mais non il n'y a pas tant de, couche-toi, secoue-moi nous glissons chéri entre-moi dedans joli garçon travaille nous y sommes tout à fait" (80) are expanded, like the blood-engorged penis they now highlight, to "aaaahhh toi d'abord chéri prends-moi mais non il n'y a pas tant de merde secoue-moi nous glissons chéri entre-moi dedans joli garçon fais travailler ta jolie bite" (57).

While this increased sexual graphicness between versions parallels the movement towards heightened sexual violence within the text - and which encompasses scenes stretching from comparatively simple, albeit illegal anal sex with a minor in a forest, the gang rape of a ten-year-old by youngsters on a river bank, necrophilic fantasies and murder in a partially demolished city building -, it is also framed, contextualised by the intertextual shifting and displacement, the recidivist and ultimately self-mutilatory *Récidive*. Extending the homotextual violence, the promiscuous and abusive textuality within each version to the

extratextual stage between both versions in his rewriting of *Récidive*, Duvert cuts scenes, sequences, and ends of sentences in much the same way that in a brutal scene towards the end of the fourth part of the novel, in an effort to heighten sexual tension, the narrator positions his idealized sexual partner to be cut up by a rusty barbed wire-entwined bar:

Only the first touch is hard, from her cheek to her thigh, and all the way down her belly. The barbs pressed down, held, it doesn't matter if they graze or tear, the pain is lost. My blows to him will make it new. But I doubt that he will endure his dream until then (178; 1967 version).

[...]

He lies down carefully. His face is very pale. The strip of wire disappears beneath him. The first contact is especially hard, his cheek, his thighs, his belly. The barbs are pressed down, held in place, it doesn't matter whether they graze or penetrate: I'll fuck him. The astonishing

softness oh I lie down makes me forget what thorns it covers (128; 1976 version).

In one of the sequences that he cuts from the later version of his novel ("*propos illusoirs sur ce livre et sur son auteur*"), Duvert reveals perhaps the most about it and also about his fears as a highly "self-conscious" writer (Heathcote, "Jobs" 176). The reader must be very aggravated, he observes, for when his narrative seems to be moving forward, he intervenes; he cuts, interrupts, shifts attention elsewhere, immobilizing the action, or at best allowing it only to limp along:

[I] force her to limp to make sure she moves forward, so much so that the grace of a sustained movement resembles the immobility I fear, that of the dead and of legends.

But in painstakingly trying to avoid the immobility that he fears, and also painfully aware of his ability to tell - but reluctance to reveal - true from false, fact from fiction, fantasy from reality, Duvert ultimately finds the continual shuffling and reshuffling of narrative possibilities - so enthusiastically embraced at the end of "EXPOSE" - tiresome:

This cheating is beginning to displease me, because I know exactly what is true, and false, what is false even in what I give as 'true' [] Woe to the architect who builds his labyrinth around yourself. After all, it's not a cage, you can learn to explore it, to live in it. Then I'm freed from it as soon as I finish the book, there's no such thing as a

perpetual prison. Finally, by putting myself in there for a while, I discovered some help.

If, by finishing his book, the author is free of the labyrinth, the perpetual prison he builds around himself, by rewriting *Récidive* he thus presumably submits to, becomes prisoner of the text all over again. He thereby also betrays the masochistic pleasure he must surely derive from his craft. Only in cutting this sequence from the text in his obsessive, self-pleasurable rewriting of it, in opening his work up by extension of it does Duvert truly free himself from the narrativized nexus of pain, transgression, and exposure, the allegory of violence and violation, of violence through violation (Heathcote, "Masochism" 176) that it is. And with his self-liberation through homotextual (self-) mutilation, he suggests that the reader also might as a consequence be empowered, might reshape the work through rereading it:

But I have to rely on the reader's talent, which will be to contract around the work and make it into a dome, or a dustbin, oh to contain, sealed in one block, this puzzle whose pieces refuse each other (130-1).

Complementary, but also ill-fitting parts of a recidivist set, containing elements that by definition can be both the same (*special recidivism*) and different (*general recidivism*), the two versions of Duvert's text represent repeat(ed) offences and extend this puzzle very fittingly.

WORKS CITED

Duvert, Tony *L'Enfant au masculin*. Paris: Minuit, 1980.

Recidive. Paris: Minuit, 1967.

Récidive (new version). Paris: Minuit, 1976.

Heathcote, Owen "Jobs for the Boys? Or: What's New About the Male Hunter in Duvert, Guibert and Jourdan." *Gay Signatures: Gay and Lesbian Theory, Fiction and Films in France, 1945-1995*. Ed. Owen Heathcote, Alex Hughes and James S. Williams. Oxford: Berg, 1998. 173-91.

"Masochism, Sadism, and Homotextuality: The Examples of Yukio Mishima and Eric Jourdan." Paragraph 17.2(1994): 174-89.

Jarry, Alfred *"Ubu cocu. Ubu"*. Noël Amaud & Henri Bordillon. Paris:

Gallimard, 1978. 133-83.

Le Nouveau Petit Robert Paris: Le Robert, 1993.

Book by Childm Baldm de Chumayel Intro, and Trans. Benjamin Péret.

Paris: Denoel, 1955.

Matzneff, Gabriel *Les moins de seize ans*. Paris: Julliard, 1974.

Phillips, John *Forbidden Fictions: Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth-Century French Literature*. London: Pluto Press, 1999.

Grillet, Alain. "L'exercice problematique de la literature." *The traveller: texts, talks and interviews (1947-2001)*.

Ed. Olivier Corpet. Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2001. 237-45. "From the New Novel to the New Autobiography." *The Traveller: texts, talks and interviews (1947-2001)*.

Ed. Olivier Corpet. Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2001. 259-69.

"What Interests Me is Eroticism." Interview by Germaine Bree. *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts*. Ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1979. 87-100.

Stephen, "Toward a Literature of Utopia." *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts*. Ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1979. 341-52.

Thiher, A. Rev. of *Recidivism*. *World Literature Today* 51.2 (1977): 249.

John Phillips, Homotextuality: Tony Duvert's *Récidive* (*Forbidden Fictions*, chap. 8, 1999) :

Born in 1945, Tony Duvert is the author of a dozen works of fiction, all of them homoerotic, and of two polemical essays. Although Duvert has never achieved the public acclaim of a Duras or the notoriety of an Arsan, the undoubted literary merit of much of his writing has not gone entirely unrecognised: his fifth novel, *Paysage de fantaisie*, won the Prix Medicis, a literary prize that rewards innovation, in 1973. Duvert now lives in seclusion in a small, provincial French town and has had no direct contact with his publisher, Editions de Minuit, for many years. His last published work, *Abécédaire malveillant*, dates from 1989. Most of his writing, however, covers a ten-year period from the late 1960s to the late 1970s.

Duvert follows in a long tradition of homosexual writing in France, the twentieth century being particularly rich in this kind of literature. From Marcel Proust to Andre Gide, from Jean Cocteau to Jean Genet, homosexual themes run through the work of some of the century's major French authors. In the context

of such an 'embarras du choix', it is therefore necessary to justify devoting the only chapter of this book that specifically deals with homosexuality to Tony Duvert. There are four main reasons for choosing Duvert against the others (given the need, within the restricted scope of the book, to make a choice at all).

Firstly, Duvert was one of a new wave of aggressively homosexual writers that emerged during the 1960s, aiming to depict homosexuality free of guilt for

the first time. Duvert's positive portrayal of homosexual themes was in part a reaction to the largely negative portrayal of the homosexual in previous literature, for example, as 'an agent for the dissolution of society in Proust, an agent of death in Cocteau, a symbol of all that is conventionally evil in Genet', (1) and also a reaction to anti-gay legislation of the day: while it is certainly true that the 1960s saw a gradual relaxation of sexual mores in France, this was also a period in which legal sanctions were introduced against homosexuality for the first time. (2)

Moreover, there was still a good deal of intolerance in the populus at large, especially outside sophisticated intellectual Parisian society, in the provinces, which provide the setting for much of his fiction. (3) Homosexuality had remained a clandestine activity throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Even among the Parisian intelligentsia, attitudes were slow to change: neither Roland Barthes nor Michel Foucault ever 'came out'. (4)

Secondly, Duvert stands at a crossroads in the literary representation of homosexuality, for, in spite of his aggressively positive approach to homosexual issues, the effect of Duvert's portrayal of homosexuality as furtive and sordid behaviour is unavoidably negative. Furthermore, there are pederastic/paedophilic elements in Duvert which demand attention from the point of view of a sexual politics, as does the sexual violence that runs throughout his work. His writing is artistically interesting precisely because its representation of homosexual desire is conflictual and, on a political level, its pederastic themes seem especially relevant to current concerns about paedophilia.

Thirdly, in past literature, homosexuality had largely been depicted in stereotypical terms, with homosexuals portrayed as drag queens or at the very least as effete or effeminate. (5) Undoubtedly the most positive aspect of Duvert's writing, from a political viewpoint, is his dismantling of such stereotypes and his representation of homosexuality as a fluid rather than a fixed position. In *Récidive*, Duvert's first novel, which I shall be focusing upon in this chapter, it is the *process of construction* of homosexual identity that is

foregrounded, undermining attempts to view homosexuality as a fixed essence, which is why *Récidive* might be termed a 'homotextuality', since this is the term that has been used to stress the mobile nature of a homosexual identity which is constantly being constructed and deconstructed in changing social contexts. (6) The representation of homosexuality in Duvert as fluid and resisting fixed categorisation is in itself a sufficient reason to reread him in the 1990s, given the recent emphasis of Queer Theory on the destabilisation of identity and sexual and gender hierarchies. (7)

Fourthly, though much of Duvert's writing is now over 20, and *Récidive* over 30 years old, its privileging of circularity, repetition and fragmentation puts it very much in tune with both modern gay theory in particular and what Jean-François Lyotard called 'the postmodern condition' in general. (8)

My presentation of Duvert will not be wholly uncritical: *Récidive* has considerable literary merit, but it does not entirely project the positive image of homosexuality that both Christopher Robinson and the author himself claim for his work.

Recidivism: Publication and Reception

The original version of *Récidive* appeared in 1967 and it was then rewritten in a much shorter version in 1976. (9) Before moving to a close reading of the text, I should briefly like to consider the novel's initial reception in the light of its highly controversial, explicitly pederastic themes.

Initial sales of the novel were modest, the first edition selling no more than 2000 copies. The second edition fared a little better, though at no time has the novel achieved anything like bestseller status. (10) Given the lack of public interest in the novel, it is hardly surprising that there has been very little critical interest. (11) Duvert's reclusiveness doubtless contributed to *Récidive*'s lack of impact; (12) his first novel, in fact, passed relatively unnoticed. Jérôme Lindon, Duvert's editor, recalls only one review by Madeleine Chapsal in *L'Express*. Even Jean-Jacques Pauvert curiously omits *Récidive* from his recent anthology of erotic writing in this century (13).

This lack of critical and public attention perhaps helps to explain why *Récidive* was not the object of any direct attempt to censor. In spite of the radically changing attitudes to sex in general and to erotic fiction in particular which characterised the period, (14) the novel might well have attracted the attentions of the *Brigade des mœurs*, if there had been more critical interest.

(15) Whilst the heterosexual excesses of *Emmanuelle*, published in the same year as *Récidive*, sold copies in their thousands and even attracted critical plaudits, the French establishment was no more ready for the open expression of homosexuality and paedophilia in the fictions of Duvert than in those of Sade, Pierre Guyotat or Bernard Noël. (16) Though the social and political upheavals of 1968 were just around the corner, the France in which *Récidive*

was first published was still Gaullist, a France choked by political and literary censorship and repression.

Admittedly, this absence of public and critical response to the novel has to be placed in the wider context of the critical marginalisation of homosexual writing in France in general. (17) Yet, this explanation is not wholly satisfactory. After all, other novels by Duvert have not been so conspicuously neglected by the critics. One is bound to wonder, for example, why Robinson, though according Duvert an important place in his study of male and female homosexuality in twentieth-century French literature, does not even mention *Récidive*, which has the distinction of being both the author's first published work and the only work which he considered important enough to rewrite.(*). Could it be that, in its unapologetic promotion of pederasty and of a sexual violence which is at times non-consensual on the one hand and its clear allegiance to a style of writing (the nouveau roman) which completely evacuates the social referent on the other, this is a text that sits uneasily between polemic and fiction, between sexuality and textuality, between the committed socio-political agenda of an author of the 1960s and the equally earnest sense of duty of a critic of the 1990s anxious to project positive images of homosexuality?

Recent critical approaches to gay fiction have tended to emphasise the 'mutual inextricability of textuality and sexuality'. (18) Robinson, for instance, ends his book by insisting that gay body and gay text are one, that gay readers look for life and not merely signs within the pages of gay literature: 'They happily collude with the texts they read in the "experience" of gay desire, deciphering the literary systems as a translation of lived or liveable experience'. At the same time, he continues, this experience is an aesthetic one, 'A set of responses to a particular literary discourse.' (19)

In thus making out a special case for homosexual fiction, in re-establishing a circle of identification and influence between text and reader, Robinson and others recreate a tension between the mimetic and the purely aesthetic functions of the text, which has serious political implications in the case of all representations of sexual abuse and violence.

I have argued in other chapters of this book that such representations are textual and not real and, as such, are contained within an erotic imagination which not only has every right to exist but probably needs to do so for the sake of the physical and mental health of us all. Like many other gay

writers of the contemporary period, who do write scenes of sexual violence, Tony Duvert is problematic, therefore, in wanting to bring the textual and the real closer together. In what follows I should like to focus on both the political and the artistic dimensions of *Récidive* or on what we might term in shorthand the 'sexuality' and the 'textuality'. Notwithstanding their 'inextricability', I shall attempt to deal with them separately, but first we need to consider the novel's overall shape and structure.

Themes and Forms

Récidive embarks us on a journey which takes on the character of a quest for sexual experience or, more profoundly, for sexual identity, in a dimly remembered past, or perhaps in the virtual realm of fantasy, as a shadowy male narrator struggles to reconstruct his adolescent sexual experiences. Instead of a conventional, linear plot, the novel consists of a series of scenes. From scene to scene, but also sometimes within scenes, the narrative voice migrates from first person to third person, from a 15-year-old boy who appears to have run away from home in search of sexual adventure, to what may or may not be an older writing persona and, on occasions, to some of a number of passing lovers or objects of desire, who include a forester in a jeep, a young sailor whom he first meets in a station waiting room and eventually follows to a hotel bedroom, a lonely old man, living in a manor house, a handsome 17-year-old, a cute young blond boy, a 15-year-old builder's apprentice with tight jeans and a bulging crotch, a group of young lads out playing by a river. The perspective therefore circulates with the narrative voice between homosexual adolescent and adult pederast, between boy and man.

Circularity, in fact, underpins all the novel's thematic and structural levels. The word 'Recidive' comes from the medieval Latin, 'recidivus', meaning 'that which returns'. The modern French word has three basic meanings: 1. 'Recurrence of an illness (especially an infectious illness) following a recovery, due to a new infection by the same germs'; 2. 'The act of committing a new offence after conviction for a previous offence; condition of a person who has committed a new crime or a new misdemeanour'; 3. 'The act of relapsing into the same fault, the same error'. (20) Duvert's title, therefore, broadly covers two semantic fields: repetition and circularity on the one hand and criminality on the

other.

Both of these isotopies can be seen to underpin the representation of (homo)sexuality in the novel. The circularity, dislocation and fracture of the novel's narrative form directly mirror its presentation of homosexual identity as constantly selfquestioning, constructed from fragments of memory and fantasy, and both criminalised by and alienated from the surrounding society. Duvert's text thus harmoniously combines the disharmonies of form and content. (21) Not only do the scenes of the narrative repeat themselves as the narrative voices return again and again to the same locales (railway station waiting room, woods, seedy hotel bedroom, etc.), (22) but thematically, too, there is repetition - in the obsessive preoccupation with homosexual stereotypes (sailor boy, blond, blue-eyed cherub), in the endless circularity of desire. Memories are filtered through the subject's (and the virtual reader's) fantasies to produce a 'narrative on the loose' in which the time perspective constantly oscillates between past, present and future.

In addition to isotopies of circularity and repetition, the word 'Récidive' also generates an isotopie of criminality which forms another kind of circle, this time between the textual and the real. Like all of Duvert's fiction, the novel represents 'pederastie', the literal meaning of which is sexual relations between adult males and pubescent or pre-pubescent boys. It is true that 'pederaste' and 'homosexuel' have been used more or less interchangeably in the French language, although the former term carries more pejorative connotations. (23)

Tony Duvert's reputation derives principally from his defence of pederasty and, indeed, Duvert is a self-proclaimed 'pedhomophile' ('paedhomophile'), a term he coined for himself in *L'Enfant au masculin*, the second of his two polemical essays. (24) As far as Duvert's distinction between paedophiles and pederasts is concerned, those who favour pre-pubescent boys are the former, while those attracted by post-pubescent boys belong to the latter category. For him, all other distinctions are merely 'effects of the penal code' (25).

All of the sexual behaviour depicted in *Récidive* would have been criminal in 1967, when the novel first appeared: the age of consent for homosexuals in France had been 21 since 1942 (compared with 15 for heterosexuals since 1945). Moreover, in 1960, an amendment to existing law had made homosexuality one of a list of 'plagues' from which children must be protected. (26) In 1974, two years before the second, revised edition of *Récidive* came out, the general age of majority was reduced to 18, still three years above the age of

consent for heterosexuals. The 15-year-old boy whose sexual adventures dominate the narrative of the novel would have been permitted by the laws of

1967 or 1974 to have sex with girls or women, but his homosexual activities remained criminal acts, and his older partners pederasts, for readers of either version. (27)

Admittedly, there is a clear case here of discrimination against homosexuals, given the disparity between the homosexual and heterosexual ages of consent. One might also argue that in either case this age is culturally and temporally relative and not necessarily indicative of biological, or even emotional maturity. As Duvert insists himself, 'Le dépeçage juridique de l'homosexualité [...] ne correspond à aucun clivage des sexualités réelles' ('the legal categories of homosexuality [...] in no way correspond to real sexual divisions'). (28) On both grounds, novelistic representations of sex between an adult male and a 15-year-old boy are neither pederastic nor paedophilic in the strict sense. All the same, illegality and, from a conventional point of view, immorality, hang disturbingly over the writing like ghosts at the feast.

Moreover, Duvert's representation of pederastic acts is far more direct and explicit than anything that had been written before and would have been novel in the 1960s, even for French readers. (29) A matter-of-fact, prosaic style goes some way to creating the impression that these activities are quite ordinary, even day-to-day, but overall, as the novel's title implies, we feel drawn again and again into a world of transgressive activity. In this respect, one could argue that Duvert's portrait of the homosexual and especially of the pederast, as isolated by his community and driven to seek sexual satisfaction in secret, is just as negative as that of many previous gay French writers (notably Jean Genet).

Is Duvert's fiction, then, guilty of promoting activity that is both criminal and ethically and morally reprehensible or is it a fiction bearing no direct relation to reality and so unbound by social or political responsibilities? In answer to this question, let us first consider those aspects of the novel which reinforce its status as a text of fiction or a 'homotextuality' and which therefore suggest the constructedness of homosexuality in the real, before turning to examine its problematic representations of promiscuous and violent sex involving adolescents and children.

Discontinuity

Récidive assaults the expectations of the reader accustomed to more

traditional narratives. A story told by voyeurs rather than by a single voyeur, it

presents the plural, shifting and therefore limited viewpoint of the nouveau roman rather than the all-seeing perspective of an omniscient Balzacian narrator: there are uncertainties and contradictions throughout. Moreover, the novel is constructed in a largely episodic, even fragmentary manner: the narrative jumps arbitrarily from one scene to another and there are even unfinished paragraphs and sentences. The most glaring examples of the text's self-mutilation are probably the abrupt ending of sections and even chapters in mid-sentence.

There are some passages in which punctuation is selfconsciously absent, others in which the syntax breaks down completely. The lack of punctuation frequently suggests the incoherent and breathless delivery of a child and, even though it is not always clear in these cases that the narrative voice is that of a child, the child's perspective manufactured in this way displaces narrative and thereby moral responsibility. The fragmentation of syntactic structures also suggests a child's language, serving to confuse fantasy and reality in a 'stream of consciousness' flow.

Time, in *Récidive*, is not represented in a chronological or linear manner either, but serves an internal, textual logic, dictated by the unreliability of memory, the unsatisfactory nature of fantasy and, above all, by the movement of desire. The central role played by desire in the novel is beautifully evoked by the recurrent images of the railway station waiting-room, a furtive meeting place for those whose age and sexuality put them outside the law, and of the ever-moving train:

And when you go from train to train and station to station looking for something that hasn't been there for a long time, that may be somewhere else later, or that was here the minute before, or that doesn't exist, you can't see anything, you forget what you wanted, if not one train and another, you live in a corridor (pp. 77-8).

And when you go from train to train and from station to station in search of something which disappeared long ago, which is perhaps somewhere else, some time later, or which was here, just a minute ago, or which doesn't exist, you don't see anything any more, you forget what you were looking for, unless it's one train or another, you live your life in a corridor.

Elsewhere, the use of future and conditional tenses, alongside the more

dominant past, suggests a need to escape linear time and emphasises the role of fantasy and desire in the construction of sexual scenarios.

Such changes in time and space construct a world which is virtual, not real, a world of desire rather than fulfilment, in which the subject's identity drifts between the insecurities and anxieties of adolescent desires and a predatory adult sexuality, between the perspective of a 15-year-old boy and those of his older lovers. It is a highly subjective perspective, hedged around by the admission of its own limitations, often doubtful, contradictory, playing on the reader's own needs to fantasise and underlining the discontinuous nature of homosexual identity (30).

This privileging of the plural and the fragmented undermines the binary structures of heterosexuality and its exclusivity, (31) and it also serves in *Récidive* to blur the boundaries between adolescence and adulthood, aiding and abetting the evasion of responsibility. (32) Such discontinuity of form may not, in fact, strike the 1990s' reader as especially unusual. After all, as Michael Worton points out, 'It is now virtually axiomatic that the text is not only ambiguous, but actively polysemic and enticingly protean.' (33) In 1967, however, Roland Barthes had not yet published *S/Z* (34) and the fragmentation of subjectivity was still a relatively novel feature of fiction writing. (35)

Self-referentiality

There are strong elements of a self-referentiality in *Récidive*, which extends to the interaction between the reader and the text. We are reminded on more than one occasion that we are reading fiction, implying that the fantasies which it contains can therefore not be thought criminal. Such passages often exhibit a dry humour that also offsets the novel's harsher elements. The sailor, declares the narrator with relief, robbed me but didn't take my watch: 'Precise details of time are too important in my narrative.' (p. 89) ('Precise details of time are too important in my narrative.') There are direct references to the architecture of the novel - 'Je me contenterai d'utiliser les rochers d'un chapitre antérieur' (p. 93) ('I shall make do with using the rocks of a previous chapter'), 'Oui. Voilà des faits plausibles, enchainés correctement' (p. 116) ('Yes. These are plausible facts, appropriately linked') - and to the very process of writing - 'Je suis en train de raconter un suicide' (p. 116) ('I'm in the process of relating a suicide').

A particularly novel feature of this textual self-referentiality in *Récidive* is the ironic *mise en scène* of the reader's active role in the construction of the

text. The narrator claims that he feels the need to justify the invention of a character who does not conform to the pederast's ideal object of desire, that is, a blond, blue-eyed 13- or 14-year-old, with pale skin, no glasses or spots, a cute little bottom and a big penis. The reader, explicitly positioned as pederastic, is invited to compensate for the omission by exercising his own imagination:

But I know, pederasts who read me, that you loved one of them. So look in your memories, your photographs, your novel characters, for some pretty kid who made you hard, or made you cry. Can you see him? Find your blond boy: who doesn't? [...] Look at his lips, that your mouth could have bitten [...] (pp. 74-5)

But I know that you pederasts who are reading this have loved one of them. So search your memories, your photographs, among your novel characters, for some pretty boy who gave you a hard-on, or who made you cry. Can you see him? Find your little blond boy: who hasn't got one? [...] Look at his lips that your mouth could have bitten [...]

Having thus excited the reader's private fantasies, however, the narrator mockingly dashes any hopes he might have nurtured that the text was about to satisfy them:

Don't even think about it. Because this kind of blandness disturbs public order, this kind of mawkishness is criminal, this kindness would get you sent to court - and above all it bores me to devote this chapter to it. (p. 75)

Don't think about them any more. For these sick tastes disturb public order, these delicate matters are criminal, these attentions could land you in court - and anyway, I find it boring to devote this chapter to them.

The text thus ironises the potential criminality of the desires it may conjure up whilst projecting any responsibility for them upon the irresponsible reader. At the same time, Duvert acknowledges the tradition of reader seduction which has helped define the erotic genre since the seventeenth century, a tradition which includes the portrayal within the text itself of a

reader substitute, a voyeur whose job it is to teach the reader how to respond. (36) Thus, Duvert creates a mock complicity between reader and narrator. Later in the text, for instance, the narrator humours the reader with a brief portrait of his stereotyped pin-up, the 'little blond boy', in the most clichéd of romantic settings. This time, the reader appears at first to have achieved equal status with the narrator, accompanying him into the narrative, taking an active part in it as a homosexual with strong paedophilic tendencies:

The boy will have gone for a walk with me, in the forest, one summer day, there will have been a stream [...] Your hero had taken a detective novel with him. He doesn't say much, disappointed to be with me, with you bothering him.

Lying flat on his stomach, bare-chested, he stretches out across the stone and reads. You and I look at his wise profile [...] His right hand throws a finger on his left forearm and strokes it mechanically. We are fascinated by this caress: our blond boy is loving himself in front of us.

With firm eyes, we lie down beside him to warm our backs against the rock; [...] we touch his silky ribs [...] (pp. 93-4)

The boy will have gone for a walk with me in the forest, on a summer's day, there'll have been a stream [...] Your hero had brought a detective novel with him. He hardly speaks, disappointed to be with me, with you pestering him.

Lying on his tummy, with his shirt off, he stretches himself out on the rock and reads. You and I observe his chaste appearance [...] He strokes his left forearm absent-mindedly with a finger of his right hand. We watch him do this with fascination: our little blond boy is making love to himself in front of us.

With our eyes closed, we lie down next to him to warm our backs against the rock; [...] we gently caress his silken body [...].

The boy, however, does not take kindly to being propositioned in this manner and leaves - cue for the now smug narrator to reassert his superiority over the reader: 'Ce n'était pas le moment de nous intéresser à lui, je vous avais prévenu' (p. 94) ('I warned you that it wasn't the right time to pay him attention'). The link back into the 'sailor' storyline, favoured by the narrator, is nothing short of brilliant, playing as it does on the boundary between the inside and the outside of the narrative.

The disappointed reader is teased and coaxed back into a creative partnership with the narrator which has, nevertheless, proved far from equal: 'Non cette tête. Le marin, comment il s'appelle?' (p. 94) ('Oh, what a face you're pulling! What's the sailor's name?') The narrator immediately turns from the truculent reader to address the sailor directly - 'Comment tu t'appelles?' ('What's your name?') - and the *récit* continues with the former firmly in control.

Whether ironic or not in character, such self-referential interludes as these might be considered a form of textual narcissism, paralleling the sexual narcissism which, in a Freudian perspective, underlies homosexual desire (37) - a further sense in which sexuality and textuality can be said to mesh together in Duvert's well-crafted novel.

Intertextuality

This meshing of the sexual and the textual can also be found in *Récidive*'s numerous intertextual echoes, which place it on the avant-garde side of the French novelistic tradition and give it a ludic character, generally associated with the 'New Novels' of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Raymond Queneau, Marguerite Duras, Robert Pinget and other writers of the genre. Unorthodox handling of syntax and punctuation recalls Marguerite Duras, whilst the playful orthography of 'causons zinpeu' (p. 57) ('let's chat a little'), 'pêchons lézam' (p. 57) ('let's fish for souls'), 'oussadon pourquidon' (p. 58) ('where then? who for, then?') and 'sitorevu' (p. 136) ('if only you'd seen'), whereby written language is distorted to humorous effect to give a phonetic transcription of slangy, spoken expressions - is clearly a homage to Raymond Queneau.

Above all, *Récidive* owes a large debt to Alain Robbe-Grillet, whose novels, in both its sexual and its textual transgressions, especially the sadomasochistic elements, it closely resembles. Some scenes may even be read as a parody of Robbe-Grillet's preoccupation with geometric description, of his 'chosiste' style or of his experimentation with structure and page layout (38).

There are echoes, too, of more traditional literature. For example, *Le Grand Meaulnes*, the modern French novel of adolescent desire in the Romantic tradition, gets a tongue-in-cheek mention:

so he left, because he wanted to find what you always find in the forest when you're fifteen, read novels

*a castle
with a park [...] (pp. 49-50)*

*so he left, because he wants to find what you always find in a forest when you're fifteen, just read novels
a castle
with grounds [...]*

Unlike Meaulnes, it is a beautiful young boy, not a girl, that the narrator fantasises about meeting, and the language is far more explicit than in Alain Fournier's novel: 'Ils seraient soudain face a face, son sexe durcirait dans sa culotte déchirée' (p. 50) ('Suddenly they would come face to face, and his penis would harden inside his torn pants').

This ironic intertextuality injects humour into an otherwise rather sombre

narrative and, at the same time, could be argued to function, precisely as it does in Robbe-Grillet, to underline the novel's status as text in a universe of texts and not as a reality, for which the author/narrator must be held morally responsible. (39) For Michael Worton, intertextuality in gay fiction generally decentres the text and the reader, saturating the text 'with so many intertextual signals that no single position can be adopted by "his" reader', (40) and so serves a similar function to that of the plurality of narrative voices in *Récidive*.

Duvert's first novel is, in so many respects, such a good example of the New Novel's ludic formal experimentalism and self-conscious literariness that at times it reads like a homage to the genre's main proponents. However, unlike the fiction of Alain Robbe-Grillet or Robert Pinget, Duvert's novel contains passages of a startling psychological and social realism in which sexual violence predominates.

In fact, Tony Duvert is a writer with a social and political mission much more reminiscent of the *littérature engagée* of a Sartre or a Camus than of the *nouveau roman*, to the extent that his fiction might be seen as an extension of his polemical essays, *Le Bon sexe illustré* (1974), a fierce attack on conventional sex education material, and *L'Enfant au masculin* (1980), which is more directly concerned with the defence of adolescent homosexuality. Both works promote sexual freedom, regardless of age or inclination, a freedom which, for Duvert, is closely linked to social liberation. Parents and what Duvert calls 'heterocracy' impose heterosexuality on children. (41) There is no essential difference, he

argues, between pederasty and other forms of homosexuality. Above all, he wants the sexuality of adolescents to be free from adult exploitation.

Duvert's vision of human sexual behaviour, which simply ignores certain harsh realities, is decidedly utopic. The view that an adolescent, whether pre- or post-pubescent, is emotionally and psychologically mature enough to sustain a sexual relationship with an adult on an equal footing must be highly questionable. Indeed, it seems nothing short of naive to imagine that any sexual relationship in which power were not an issue could exist.

Other aspects of Duvert's representation of homosexuality demand attention from the point of view of a sexual politics: the tendency of his characters to objectify the other, their rampant promiscuity and especially the violence which never seems far from his characters' desires.

Objects of Desire

The narrative vehicle of *Récidive*, a man recalling scenes from his adolescence, is necessarily a voyeuristic one. Indeed, very early on, the narrative specifically draws attention to this: 'Je vis toujours par les yeux, par eux seuls' (p. 20) ('I always live life through my eyes, through them alone'). Like the eye of a sex tourist's camera, the viewpoint moves from scene to scene, pausing to capture moments of interest, focusing on visual detail with the prurience of the pederast: 'Je regarde les autres gargons, bras crispés, grimaces, culottes étroites et sales qui précisent les reins quand ils s'accroupissements et s'étirent pour embarquer ce qui est lourd' (p. 17) ('I watch the other boys, with their clenched arms, their grinning faces, their tight, dirty shorts that reveal the shape of their bottoms when they crouch down and stretch to carry something heavy on board'); 'his trousers drew his cock' (p. 85) ('you could see the outline of his prick through his trousers'). In the description of a naked young sailor asleep, there is a sense of the mastery of the other's body as the narrator follows each contour, inspecting every crack and fold, mapping the territory of his desire:

He didn't wake up. I was free at last. The darkness, his slumbering body and my slight daze were giving me a waking dream. I could take all the liberties I wanted and, despite my age, be, without the sailor's knowledge, the master of this great body, (p. 98)

He did not wake up. I was finally free. The darkness, his sleeping body, a slightly dazed feeling put me into a waking dream. I could do whatever I liked and, in spite of my age, without the sailor's knowing, I could be master of his big body.

This polymorphous narrator is in many important respects Alain Robbe-Grillet's voyeur, obsessively surveying the physical geometry of his subjects, his vision shaped by the subjectivity of passion.

The voyeurism of Duvert's text is dependent on a descriptive detail which is remarkably well observed and, I would suggest, justified as a structural element of a narrative quest conveyed in images which are predominantly visual. Visual description, after all, is a mainstay of the novel as a genre (even the New Novel) and if what is being described is the male body it is because the quest is for a homosexual identity. Moreover, objectification of the other's body is an inescapable function of sexual desire and even of what we popularly term 'romantic love'.

As we have seen, the reader, too, is invited to take an active part in the

quest, but often feels intentionally led astray by a non-linear narrative which seems to delight in its aleatory movements. The climate of confusion is increased by frequent changes of narrative voice from 'he' to 'I' and the mixing of character roles, which suggest a polymorphous perversity, overflowing the bounds of individual subjectivity. The narrator of *Récidive* is thus a chorus of subjectivities, each one determined to have its solo spot.

This promiscuity of narrative form is, of course, perfectly suited to the promiscuous sexual content of Duvert's novel, in which the narrative voices relish the memories (or the fantasies) of sex with a plurality of partners. Promiscuity is a stereotypical characteristic of homosexual behaviour in a Euro-American context, but the homosexuality depicted in Duvert's novel certainly confirms the stereotype: 'J'ai probablement aimé déjà l'un d'entre eux' ('I've probably already loved one of them'), says the narrator, thinking of an adolescent boy he encounters in a railway station waiting room, and of many others like him, and he adds ironically, 'Je l'ai connu, touché, nommé de son prénom' (p. 21) ('I've known him, touched him, called him by his first name'). Like so many homosexuals in the real world, 'He liked boys too much to be content with taking down only one boy's trousers' (p. 123).

Worton suggests that, like the narcissistic component of homosexual desire, promiscuity (or what he calls 'cruising') does not have to be viewed negatively: 'Rather than denying the narcissism and the episodicality of their erotic lives, gay men can, and should perhaps, strive to rewrite their self-images, for instance, seeing the multiple encounters of cruising not as a fragmentation and shattering of desire, but (potentially, at least) as serial plenitude.' (42) Foucault, Worton reminds us, openly advocated gay promiscuity when he declared that gays must invent different models of desire to 'make ourselves infinitely open to pleasures'. (43) In *Anti-Oedipus*, (44) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari had redefined desire as fragmented, as somehow divorced from real subjects and objects, operating mechanically, with people as 'desiring machines'. For Deleuze, 'There is no subject of desire, any more than there is an object [...] Only the flows are the objectivity of desire itself. Desire is the system of meaningless signs with which flows of the unconscious are produced in a social field.' (45) Guy Hocquenghem picks up this argument and applies it to the homosexual's promiscuity, which he attempts to rehabilitate as what Worton calls a 'mechanical scattering' that corresponds to the 'mode of existence of desire itself'. Hocquenghem goes even further, praising homosexual promiscuity as 'anticapitalist' and 'revolutionary' in potential. (46) Not only do these arguments seem childishly self-indulgent (and Hocquenghem's in particular quaintly dated after the demise of Eastern European communism - *Le Désir*

homosexuel was originally published in 1972), but set against the background of a worldwide AIDS epidemic, they are loftily irresponsible.

Worton presents a similar pro-promiscuity argument, emphasising the *process* of cruising, attempting to draw attention away from the object of desire to the act itself: 'Cruising is essentially about desire [...] unfocused. In cruising, it is the act rather than the individual object of desire that is important. This act is necessarily and compulsively repeated, and what is sought is simply an encounter, a fleeting encounter where pleasure may be had (often anonymously), rather than an encounter with someone, a meeting with an individual who could have an identity and therefore become an Other.' (47) However, by depersonalising homosexual sex in this way, it seems to me that Worton stresses instead its negative character.

Both Robinson and Steven Smith seem uncritically to characterise Duvert's eroticisation of adolescents as wholly positive, but their arguments in favour of promiscuity appear much more acceptable from an ethical viewpoint than those of Hocquenghem and Worton. For Robinson, Duvert's adolescent is

not an object but a subject of desire, an autonomous agent, positively assuming his own sexuality, and the pederasty he depicts is not a separate sexual condition, or set of acts. (48) The pleasure principle is seen by Robinson to be an absolute moral defence: what matters is mutuality so that sex between adult and adolescent is acceptable, provided that the younger partner experiences equal pleasure, but his view that gay male writers 'have had to reclaim the role of object' seems at variance with his 'mutuality' argument and sounds far too absurd to take seriously as an attempt to justify abuse. (49)

In fact, not all of the acts of pederasty depicted by Duvert are consensual, and there are passages of a brutal violence. Even in cases of apparent consensuality, issues of power, abuse and exploitation in relation to the seduction of boys by adult males remain unresolved.

Sexual Violence

Erotic violence is not only a current focus of fiction and media alike, but it is also 'a key theme of recent gay writing, notably in the work of [...] Tony Duvert'. (50) Heathcote, Hughes and Williams argue that violence in a gay context may have a 'subversive force': 'These writers [Duvert et al] key into contemporary debates about gay/lesbian erotica, pornography and sexual abuse.' (51) Heathcote sees sexual violence specifically as a way of highlighting

what Judith Butler calls 'gender trouble'. (52) He even suggests that gay violence can play a positive role: 'Violence between single-sex male protagonists can be used to question not only stereotypical male violence but also stereotypical male homosexuality as an orientation and as an identification.' (53)

All of these recordings of violence as positive presuppose (one assumes) that it is consensual, which in Duvert's writing is not always the case. Duvert's novel is replete with sexual violence of both kinds, from descriptions of the pain of being sodomised to sadomasochistic torture, multiple rape, suicide and finally murder. All of these events are brought to life with realistic physical detail and psychological observation.

In a scene which combines both promiscuity and paedophilia, the narrator, now an adult, watches a group of young boys playing by a river. As elsewhere, there is a strong voyeuristic element, rendered more acceptable, perhaps, by a keen sense of observation and an impressive insight into the sexual psychology of young male adolescents: '[ils] glissent la main dans leur

swimming costumes to pull up their prick and make it stand out proudly. One of them, the biggest, doesn't take his hand away' (p. 107) ('[they] slip a hand into their trunks to pull up their prick and make it stand out proudly. One of them, the biggest, doesn't take his hand away'). But this narrator goes beyond the merely voyeuristic, actively manipulating what he sees, as his fantasies orchestrate the gang-rape of a nine-year-old boy by three older companions. Narrative distance and a deadpan, matter-of-fact style give an impression of harmless child's play, an impression reinforced at the end of the passage as the boys return to their more usual games, but the horror of child-rape persists, both in the slow transformation of the victim's screams into a sort of naive acquiescence and in the ostensibly disinterested presence of a fifth, much younger child:

The boy is naked now. [...]

We're after him. Screams. The kid is grabbed and put on the ground. Palaver. The kid shakes to free himself. They laugh. They hold his arms and legs apart, flat on his back. The big guy slaps his bottom and lies on top of him. You don't hear laughter any more, but repeated, high-pitched ayes.

The kid doesn't say anything more. The other fucks him with very sharp thrusts. Modest, he hides his cock and adjusts himself.

He takes one of the kid's arms and legs instead of the second, who runs on his knees to sit on the little one.

It has stuck its tail in and is wagging. It looks like it's fighting a duffel bag, a

dormitory snake trapped underneath it, subdued with great difficulty.

Then the third imitates him. We can't even hold the kid any longer; his nose is crushed in the grass, and he responds to the jokes.

Now they are bathing. The fifth, the very small one, who has been watching the scene with a cold eye, is nibbling a crouton with his back to the river. Two of them stand motionless in the current, the water halfway up their bodies. (pp. 107-8)

The little boy is now naked [...].

They run after him. Shouts. The kid's caught and thrown to the ground. Palaver. The child tries to wriggle free. They laugh. They hold him face down, with his arms and legs apart. The big boy slaps his behind and lies on him. The kid stops laughing and starts screaming. The kid falls silent. The big boy pushes into him, with short, quick thrusts. He stands up again, modestly covering his prick and puts his clothes straight.

He grabs hold of an arm and a leg from a second boy, who quickly kneels down to take his place on top of the youngster.

He's stuck his cock into him and is moving it about. It looks as if he's fighting a pillow, holding it underneath him with great difficulty.

Then, the third boy does the same. They're not even holding on to the kid any more; he's joking along with them, face down in the grass.

Now they're having a swim. The fifth boy, the really young one, who has watched the whole scene coolly, is nibbling a crust, with his back to the river. Two others are standing in the current, with water up to their waist. They're being splashed (54)

The writing is so persuasive, the detail of the scene so well observed that we cannot help but be simultaneously gripped, and moved, and angered, and morally outraged. And yet, all of these emotions are immediately undercut in the passage that follows, in which the first-person narrator, this time the 15-year-old boy, rehearses different narrative possibilities, implying that all these activities are virtual, not real, fantasy, not documentary. Moreover, we tell ourselves, his perspective is certainly more respectable than that of an older male. Throughout the novel, the narrative point of view drifts in this way from man to boy, from sodomiser to sodomised, displacing moral responsibility and criminal agency. The representation of a homosexuality, which is not only promiscuous but abusive, is thus somehow made artistically respectable by an equally promiscuous and abusive textuality.

The novel concludes with a gruesome scene in which a young boy is

tortured and then murdered by two others. Thus, the text ends on a grim note, not simply because the final scene involves murder, but because the possibilities of youth have given way to the certainties of adulthood. These closing pages seem to make an irrevocable, depressingly fatalistic statement about the fixed nature of adult homosexual identity. It is, in the excipit, the 15-year-old of the incipit that is murdered. (55) In the hotel bedroom, the sailor awakens next to the boy and pushes his hardening penis into the boy's anus, fantasising that the boy is dead and that he is sodomising the corpse. This final act of the narrative, however, is less sexual than symbolic, a gesture not born of excitement but of a need to bid an affectionate farewell to a memory of adolescent sexuality:

He remained motionless, petrified, as if he was afraid of undoing the flesh of a corpse. His cock, rigid, an artery joining the two bodies (p. 143).

He remained motionless, petrified as if he was afraid of damaging the flesh of a corpse. His cock, rigid, an artery joining the two bodies.

Both sailor and boy are immobile, fixed by the penis that turns them into a single dead body, the corpse of their virtuality. The death of the boy, therefore, signifies the death of a fantasy- and/or memory-based desire. The sailor finally withdraws from the boy and brings himself off by hand: 'Comme la première poignée de terre qu'on jette sur un cercueil' (p. 143) ('Like the first handful of earth thrown on to a coffin'). The narrative ends with an image combining death and *jouissance*, the 'petite mort' of the masturbator signifying the end of the narrative subject's 'recidivism', of his repeated forays into memory and fantasy, journeys which prevented his sexual identity from coagulating in the mire of adult homosexual stereotypes. Duvert's morbid ending emphasises the solitude of the adult male homosexual whose search for identity is complete:

He had needed to imagine this death to dare to bury his entire presence in the warm bowels, so solitary that a living person would have rejected it. Then he could leave (p. 143).

He had needed to imagine this death to dare to bury his entire presence, so solitary that a living person would have rejected him, in those warm bowels. Then he could leave.

A new life, in a new direction may be about to begin, but it is a life empty of sperm, devoid of fantasy and desire.

Récidive is ultimately a celebration of adolescent *disponibilité*, as opposed

to adult fixity - the Gidean influence is obvious - and implicitly a plea for the sexual freedom of the young.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that in addressing adolescent homosexual desire openly, unashamedly and directly, Tony Duvert's first novel is an important milestone in gay fiction, both inside and outside France. Rather than hanging onto the coat-tails of France's strong novelistic tradition, Duvert speaks with the voice of a new authority, that of a literary avant-garde for whom there is no discourse that is taboo, since art does not answer to any ideology or ethical

code. Though in our more politically correct times, there are repeated calls for the artist to be morally and ethically responsible, we should perhaps remember that *Récidive* is a text of the 1960s, when the principal defence against the allegation of pornography was to persuade a court that a written text (or a film or a painting) had aesthetic value.

Récidive presents itself, therefore as a work of literature because, according to both the legal and cultural climate of the day, any other kind of text which explicitly appeared to promote sex with adolescents would have been deemed immoral, and dangerously so. From this perspective, *Récidive* is a 'homotext' because it has no other alternative. As in the case of Robbe-Grillet's fiction, the nouveau roman format of the novel appears to provide a perfect vehicle for the presentation of a sexuality which refuses conventional descriptions and categories, and which questions its own status as real. The guilt associated with the text's homoerotic and, in particular its paedophilic elements, is displaced from reality to fantasy, from sexuality to textuality. The text thus finds ways of evading responsibility for its own contents by disguising them as formal experimentation.

However, as we have seen, there are enough reasons to judge the novel on realist terms and so to hold it responsible for the images it contains. Where Robbe-Grillet insists on the unreality of his text, or the gap between art and life, indeed, on the subordination of content to form, the reader of Tony Duvert's fiction is implicitly encouraged to view it in tandem with his polemical essays, since the former illustrates the views expounded in the latter, and thereby to focus upon the sexual content. In Robbe-Grillet's work, form merges with content to the point of becoming it, whereas there is no such fusion in Tony Duvert. The most problematic passages of *Récidive*, that is, the passages of sexual violence, for instance, do not exhibit *new roman* characteristics and

indeed are relatively conventional in form. It is therefore not convincing to suggest, as Robinson does, that 'insistence on details of the sexual act itself coupled with a fragmentation of the text' (56) prevents the reader from seeing the characters as individuals to focus instead on a pleasure that somehow exists independently of them, or that 'a reader might be excited by description of the acts, but the form of the text prevents him from voyeuristically possessing the actors', (57) since there is no sense in which the form can actually be said to prevent the reader from constructing individual characters (the adolescent runaway, the sailor, the pederastic forester, the young boys playing by the river) or from enjoying them voyeuristically. Nevertheless, such voyeuristic enjoyment is indeed a feature of all of the texts we are considering

in this volume and, as I have suggested above, is not reprehensible in itself. The realistic and yet uncritical depiction of an aggressive promiscuity and, in particular, of a repugnant sexual violence is quite a different matter.

On a purely artistic level, *Récidive* has considerable merit as a narrative form that skilfully (and in some ways, ironically) mirrors its thematic content. The title entices the reader to join a quest that is both sexual and textual, so that he becomes a textual construct, alongside all the other narrative voices, and ultimately one of many homosexual virtualities. The novel's chief merit, on a political level, is its subversion of normative labelling and its promotion of a more liberated version of desire than that imposed on homosexuals (and indeed others) by an age-obsessed society. One cannot help feeling, however, that Duvert attempts too self-consciously to persuade the reader that this is experimental fiction inhabiting a space, like Robbe-Grillet's, beyond the troublesome area of political and ethical responsibility, and that the attempt founders on the rock of a frequently sordid and gruesomely realistic depiction of violent sexual abuse. In spite of his choice of the anti-realistic New Novel as his writing vehicle, Tony Duvert wants to engage seriously and directly with the realities of homosexual experience, an ambition difficult to reconcile with the virtual absence in his fictional writing of any ethical dimension. It is precisely this problematical relationship with social reality which makes Tony Duvert an important voice in the current debate on both paedophilia and the influence of texts on sex.

NOTES

1. Christopher Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink. Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth-century French Literature* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 70.
2. Ibid, p. 78.

3. It appears that public opinion was more hostile in 1975 than in 1968: see *ibid*, p. 30.

4. The homosexual text is perhaps the best example of writing censored by critical authority in France during the latter half of this century. Robinson argues that critics have either played down or ignored homosexual elements in the life and work of writers like Proust and Gide or, if they have acknowledged them, have linked them to perversion and criminality: see *ibid.*, p. vii. Indeed, Robinson suggests that gay Catholic writers such as Julien Green and Marcel Jouhandeau have been critically marginalised in favour of straight Catholic writers like Bernanos and Mauriac, whom Robinson considers much less

interesting from an aesthetic point of view (*ibid.*, p. 92, n. 7). This is less surprising when placed in the wider context of societal attitudes to the homosexual in general: as late as the 1960s, for instance, homosexuality was considered an illness that medicine could cure (cf. Porot, *Manuel alphabétique de psychiatrie* (1960), cited by Robinson, *ibid.*, p. 20).

5. For Robinson, 'Proust, Cocteau and Genet all work to the same stereotype of maleness, one which by definition consigns the homosexual to an inferior "feminine" role.⁷ (*ibid.*, p. 71).

6. See E. Apter, *Andre Gide and the Codes of Homotextuality* (Stanford: Anma Libri, 1987) and Owen Heathcote, 'Masochism, sadism and homotextuality: the examples of Yukio Mishima and Eric Jourdan', *Paragraph*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1994), pp. 174-89.

7. I am referring in particular to the work of Butler and Sedgwick: see, for example, Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994).

8. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

9. The second (1976) edition of *Récidive* is currently the only one available, so it is this version that I shall be discussing here.

10. Total sales to date (March 1998) amount to no more than 5000 copies: 'I don't remember the book being the object, at the time, of any kind of ban. Admittedly, it didn't make much of an impact when it came out.' (Jérôme Lindon of Editions de Minuit, personal fax from JL to JP, 31 March 1998).

11. The MLA catalogue contains no reference whatsoever to any journal or book article on *Récidive* since its appearance until the time of writing.

12. Manuscripts were posted to the editor, Jérôme Lindon, who had no other contact with Duvert (source: personal letter from JL to JP, 30 March 1998).

13. Jean-Jacques Pauvert, *Anthologie historique des lectures érotiques. D'Eisenhower à Emmanuelle 1945-1985* (Paris: Stock/Spengler, 1995). Pauvert

does, however, include an extract from Duvert's first polemic, *Le Bon sexe illustré*, which he describes, somewhat ambiguously, as 'appreciated in some quarters, ignored in others' (ibid., p. 842). Pauvert quotes a relatively anodine passage from this book, in which the author reproduces a conventional sex education entry from a contemporary encyclopedia, the 1973 five-volume Hachette *Encyclopedie de la vie sexuelle*.

14. See Chapter 1.

15. . A repressive form of book censorship was still being practised in the last years of the 1960s in France, despite the fall of the Gaullist regime in 1968: in 1968 and 1969, for example, there were more than 60 prosecutions: see Robert Netz, *Histoire de la censure dans l'édition* (Paris: PUF, 1997), p. 117.

16. Pierre Guyotat's *Eden, Eden, Eden*, Bernard Noel's *Le Château de Cène* and, notwithstanding the legal victories won by Jean-Jacques Pauvert, the works of the Marquis de Sade were all subject to forms of legal control in the 1970s: see Chapter 1.

17. Until Robinson's *Scandal in the Ink*, published in 1995, there was only one extensive study of French homosexual writing in English: Stambolian and Marks (eds), *Homosexualities and French Literature. Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979). In France, F. Martel, *Le Rose et le noir. Les homosexuels en France* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1986) was a welcome addition to the field and, within the last few years, three more excellent studies have appeared in English: Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan, Jr (eds), *Homosexuality in Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Vernon Rosario (ed.), *Science and Homosexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and A. Hughes, O. Heathcote and James Williams (eds), *Gay Signatures. Gay and Lesbian Theory, Fiction and Film in France, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

18. Hughes et al, *Gay Signatures*, p. 15.

19. Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, p. 259.

20. *Le Petit Robert*.

21. In contrast, Steven Smith sees Duvert's fourth novel, *Le Voyageur*, as innovative in form and as presenting a liberated and positive view of homosexuality. Smith argues, in relation to a corpus of five novels by Duvert and other homosexual writers, that there is a high correlation between form and socio-psychological content, so that traditional mimetic writing is more likely to portray traditional, negative attitudes towards homosexuality, whereas in writing, like Duvert's, which acknowledges its own fictionally, 'homosexuality is accepted as a manner of authentic self-expression, a legitimate pathway to genuine pleasure and fulfillment' (Stephen Smith, 'Toward a Literature of Utopia' in Stambolian and Marks, *Homosexualities and French Literature*, p. 349). Smith, therefore, clearly views the disharmonies of form of Duvert's

writing as 'liberated', rather than as expressing the existential crisis of the homosexual subject.

22. For Roland Barthes, homosexual 'cruising' means inhabiting an unattractive world: see *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-80* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), p. 299; cited by Michael Worton, 'Cruising (Through) Encounters' in Hughes et al, *Gay Signatures*, pp. 29-49; this reference p. 37.

23. The French word 'pederaste' is defined as 'an adult male who has a taste for pre-pubescent boys' (Dominique Fernandez, *L'Etoile Rose* (Paris: Grasset, 1978), p. 89; cited by Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, p. 172, n. 2). Though the term 'pédé' has recently been recuperated by Queer Theory, it was still a term of abuse in the 1960s, except perhaps when used ironically by homosexuals themselves. In an article on Robert Pinget's novel, *Le Libera*, for example, Duvert himself uses the term pejoratively to draw attention to the sexuality of the characters: see Tony Duvert, 'La Parole et la fiction', *Critique*, no. 252 (May 1968), pp. 443-61; this reference, p. 448.

24. *L'Enfant au masculin* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980), p. 21. Despite the linguistic proximity of this word to 'paedophile' (defined as an adult person who has sexual desires for, and possibly relations with, children), commentators like Heathcote and Robinson, who are concerned to emphasise the more positive dimensions of French homosexual writing, not surprisingly seem reluctant to use a word that is currently highly emotive in Britain and the USA, if not in France.

25. Ibid, p. 21.

26. For Duvert, it is not from homosexuals that children need to be protected, but from what he calls the dictatorship of heterosexuals: see ibid, p. 120.

27. For a detailed discussion of the legal status of homosexuals or pederasts in France since the ancien regime, see Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, pp. 2-6.

28. *L'Enfant au masculin*, p. 23.

29. The images of pederasty found in the work of Andre Gide, for example, are conveyed in a far more euphemistic manner, and 'Apart from Gide, none of the main texts prior to the 1960s acknowledges sex acts between adult males and boys under seventeen' (Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, p. 155).

30. Owen Heathcote links the 'uncertainty' of the narrative to a sexual uncertainty in Duvert, a blurring of the labels of maleness and masculinity: see Owen Heathcote, 'Jobs for the Boys? Or: What's New About the Male Hunter in Duvert, Guibert and Jourdan?' in Hughes et al, *Gay Signatures*, pp. 173-192; this reference p. 176.

31. Worton, 'Cruising', p. 31.

32. The denial of a fixed identity is, moreover, part of a more general campaign by Duvert against the normalising influence of families in particular and the institutions of a control-obsessed society in general. However, the liberal character of this campaign is very much diminished by the author's

misogyny. Queer Theory places similar emphasis on fluid identity, especially with regard to gender boundaries, but there is no attempt in Duvert to dismantle the heterosexual/homosexual binary division. On the contrary, the near absence of women from his fiction helps to perpetuate it. In *Récidive* sex with a woman is represented, in the only scene in which it occurs, as a sordid and unpleasurable affair: a fat prostitute, who enjoys deflowering boys, does the business in a deserted building; the bleakness of the location prepares the reader for the repulsiveness of the act itself.

33. Worton, 'Cruising', p. 33.

34. Roland Barthes, in *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970), argued that the literary text was constituted by a plurality of voices, and that the fragment was in itself erotic.

35. The plurality of narrative voices within the narrative and the denial of fixed identity that this connotes are paralleled by slidings of authorial identity outside it. It has been suggested that the elusive Tony Duvert may be an avatar of the gay activist and writer, Renaud Camus: see Lawrence Schehr, *The Shock of Men: Homosexual Hermeneutics in French Writing* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 140, n. 2. I am grateful to Alex Hughes for drawing my attention to this possibility. Schehr leaves the matter unresolved, so we must form our own conclusions according to the evidence of the text. There are certainly many close thematic and formal similarities between the work of both - the avoidance of a fixed homosexual identity, for example, or the blending of sexual and textual experience (for a summary of Renaud Camus's approach to writing, see Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, pp. 99-100). On the other hand, unlike Duvert's, Camus's fiction does not display any predilection for young boys. On balance, then, I think it unlikely that they are the same writer.

36. Jean-Marie Goulemot, *Forbidden Texts. Erotic Literature and its Readers in Eighteenth Century France* (London: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 42-50.

37. For Freud, narcissism is an important component of homosexual desire and the anxiety that accompanies it. Julia Kristeva reiterates Freud's negative view of homosexuality when she associates the narcissism of the homosexual with 'emptiness': see Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 43; cited by Worton, 'Cruising', p. 37. Michael Worton, however, suggests that terms like narcissism can be recoded positively, arguing that one needs to love oneself to survive as an individual in society (*ibid.*).

38. Smith sees striking similarities between Duvert's *Le Voyageur* and Robbe-Grillet's *Projet pour une révolution à New York*, especially with regard to the emphasis on fictionality and the essentially comic exploration of eroticism: see Smith, 'Utopia', p. 349.

39. The novel's important intertextual dimension also establishes it as part of an existing literary tradition and so validates it as literature. For Robinson, this is

a common technique in homosexual writing: see Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, p. 132.

40. Michael Worton, 'You know what I mean? The operability of codes in gay men's Action', *Paragraph*, 17 (1994), pp. 49-59; this reference, p. 58; cited by Christopher Robinson in 'Sexuality and Textuality in Contemporary French Gay Fiction', *French Studies*, vol. LII, no. 2 (April 1998), pp. 176-86.

41. Duvert defines 'heterocracy' as the system in which heterosexuals consider themselves sufficient and universal: see *L'Enfant au masculin*, p. 51.

42. Worton, 'Cruising', p. 38.

43. Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits: 1954-88*, vol. 4 (1980-8) (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), cited by Worton, *ibid*, p. 38.

44. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: The Athlone Press, 1984).

45. Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), pp. 96-7, cited by Worton, 'Cruising', p. 39.

46. See Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire* (Durham NH and London: Duke University Press, 1993) and Worton's commentary on it, 'Cruising', p. 39.

47. Worton, 'Cruising', pp. 39-40.

48. Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, p. 157.

49. *Ibid*, pp. 248-9.

50. Hughes et al, *Gay Signatures*, Introduction, p. 3.

51. *Ibid*, p. 14.

52. Heathcote, 'Jobs for the Boys', p. 173.

53. *Ibid*, p. 175.

54. There is, perhaps, an implication here that the fifth child, who sees all, is doomed to enter the cycle of abuse himself, first as victim, then later as abuser. This notion of sexuality as learnt behaviour is acknowledged, somewhat resignedly, as an unhappy ending to the *Grand Meaulnes* fairy tale: 'He would leave the grounds the forest the countryside he would go back to the city say it's me and join the army where veterans with huge muscles a square jaw and a very big cock would choose him as their mascot and fuck him ten or twenty times a night and in the end he would become like them, that's it' (p. 50) ('He would leave the grounds the forest the countryside he would go back to town would say it's me and would sign up with the army where veterans with enormous muscles square jaws and very large pricks would choose him as their mascot and between ten and twenty of them would fuck him every night and in the end he would become like them, there you are').

55. The terms incipit and excipit respectively denote the opening and closing passages of a text.

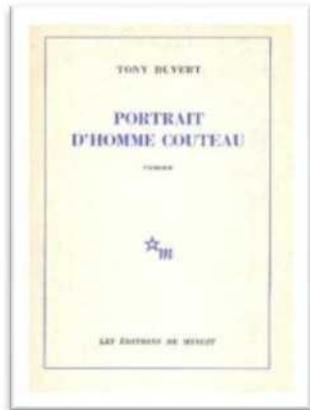
56. Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, p. 161.

57. *Ibid*.

PORTRAIT OF A KNIFE MAN

Written in 1967, published in 1969 (192 pages) at the same time as *Interdit de séjour*.

This text was revised and republished in 1976.



André Dalmas (*Le Monde*, 1969): Published simultaneously, these two stories [*Interdit de séjour* and *Portrait d'homme couteau*] reveal both a skilfully developed technique and an original talent at the service of a very subtle, curious and even daring sensibility in the secret of its path. For what is completely new about Tony Duvert's work is that it is a work of art,

is the transformation undergone by the notion of time in the novel. Present and past, intertwined in the narrative, are in reality, and at the same time, yesterday's present and today's present, yesterday's past and today's past. So much so that things, beings, reveal at every moment, at the same time as their nature, the stigmata of their ageing, those of ruin, decay and dead.

These metamorphoses are not simply phenomena of writing. They serve a particular ethic, that of 'evil' (crime, rape, homosexuality), an evil that has become myth, with its ritual and liturgy of images, concealing decrepitude and death through its décor. *Portrait d'homme couteau* is dedicated to Henri Michaux: "A knife from the top of his forehead to the depths of himself, he keeps watch. The book recounts the rape and murder of a little girl.

Of a different kind, more than scabrous and crude, *Interdit de séjour* is the long, funereal odyssey of the homosexual, at once an individual and a crowd, but protected when he finds himself within that crowd. [...] An uninterrupted account of these nocturnal rambles where places and cities open up, before the narrator's eyes, abysses of strangeness".

Colette Piquet, *Texte Couteau* (L'Unebévue no. 32, November 2014)

Like each of my previous books, this novel contains homosexual obscenities, violence and even amusing passages: all things that inspire legitimate disgust. However, if we skip over these painful places, we find here and there

a few lines to hold the interest of honest people; the novelistic form, which is rather unusual, may also arouse their curiosity.

The characters in *Paysage de fantaisie* - the title comes from a strangely sadistic painting by Francesco Guardi - are children, in other words, a dying adult, since childhood does not exist.

Because children don't name childhood; their very games deny it, pulling it towards an uninhabitable elsewhere: the adult world, "reality".

In this respect, childhood and writing use an identical imaginary: they recklessly create reality, tearing it to pieces, reshaping it, indulging in the illusion and duplication of play, where we pretend for good.

This is why a fiction - and a perversion - dedicated to childhood can only play with this illusion, be twice fictional - divided between the belief it has in the mythical universe it stages, and the certainty that it is pure fantasy, an unbearable lie, too real to be true, like any object of desire, memory or culture.

Tony Duvert, Presentation of *Paysage de fantaisie* for Éditions de Minuit.

Childhood doesn't exist; writing brings to life a world that doesn't exist either. Like childhood, writing is a game, a lure, an exercise in illusion, why not say an exorcism? Henri Michaux is not far off, writing in the preface to his magnificent collection *Epreuves, exorcismes, 1940-1944*:

It would be quite extraordinary if the thousands of events that occur every year resulted in perfect harmony. There are always some that don't go away, and that we keep inside ourselves, hurtful.

One of the things to do: exorcism.

All situations are dependencies, and hundreds of them. It would be unheard of for there to be any satisfaction without a shadow, or for any man, no matter how active, to be able to combat them all effectively in reality.

One of the things to do: exorcism (1).

The time of this collection is that of war, terror and crime. "I am writing to you from a land that was once clear. I am writing to you from a land of cloaks and shadows. We have lived for years, we live on the Tower of the half-mast pavilion. Oh! Summer! Poisoned summer! And since then it's always been the same day, the day of encrusted memory...". (2). The poet's aim is to ward off the suffering and anguish caused by violence, war and death, by an uncontrollable world, an uncontrollable time and an unpredictable future. "We don't like the day any more. He screams. We no longer love the night, haunted by worries (3)". Henri Michaux gave writing the power of exorcism.

Many contemporary poems, poems of deliverance, are also an effect of

exorcism, but an exorcism by trickery. By trickery of the subconscious nature, which defends itself by appropriate imaginative elaboration: Dreams. By concerted or groping cunning, seeking its optimum point of application: waking dreams.

Not only dreams, but an infinite number of thoughts are "to get out of it", and even systems of philosophy were especially exorcising, believing themselves to be anything but (4).

Doesn't Tony Duvert say very similar things? Childhood is difficult, painful, prevented. It refuses itself, and writing, like childhood, resorts to games, illusions and deceptions that deny reality and plunge both the writer and the reader into a kind of waking dream that is a form of exorcism. Exorcism by trickery.

And if we are thinking of Henri Michaux here, it is because Tony Duvert, in the first version of *Portrait d'homme couteau* (5) (1969), chose this exergue, so beautiful and so strange, which comes from a poem entitled "He writes..." and which illuminates the title of the novel and covers the entire narrative with its powerful signifiers:

With a knife from the top of his forehead to the bottom of his body, he keeps watch (6).

In the second version of *Portrait d'homme couteau (Portrait of a Knife Man)*, the only one still published and available in bookshops, he also removed the title.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. We have a long way to go to get to this magnificent and terrible *Portrait d'homme couteau (Portrait of a Knife Man)*, which will appeal to us and keep us here for a while. Not just because it's so original,

very interesting. Why not say at the outset that it is a particularly moving read?

At the start of this journey, there's a strange question that comes to mind every time you read a book or article by Tony Duvert:

Is there only one little girl in Tony Duvert's work?

Why this question? In *L'enfant au masculin* Tony Duvert recalls the words of Lewis Carroll: "I love all children, except little boys (7)". Does this mean that Tony Duvert could go so far as to say, "I love all children, except little girls"? We won't go as far as that rather risky hypothesis. But it should be noted from the outset that the difference between the sexes is very strongly asserted in his

writings. So we meet a few little girls in passing, admittedly rather unattractive, and often bullied and rejected. None of them is the central character of a novel, the erotic focal point where all the threads of a story converge. No one who is a child's beloved companion, who haunts a boy's dreams, who beckons a young man's gaze, a teenager's desires.

On the other hand, his books are full of seductive little boys. And not just any little boys, but those who are the preferred prey of paedophiles, those he describes in "La casserole au bout de la queue" :

Because every practising paedophile - and I do mean practising - discovers the child's sexual paganism. Their selfishness. His easily messy eroticism, where pipi-caca is as good as Continental (American); his mawkishness, his inordinate narcissism; his sentimentality in chewing gum and nails (all sizes); his passion for transvestism, hamming it up, manners, fuss and make-up; and the overwhelming purity of so many imperfections. All the myths and all the worlds, all the crimes and all the excesses, all the geniuses and all the saints, are expressed and given birth to in the love of a child and an adult (8).

Wild and somewhat messy little boys, Parisian titis, or suburbanites, or 1970s peasants, with white skin, fine and silky under haloed dirt. Not exactly the little Arabs that Gide loved, with their black eyes and shiny brown skin under their torn hard clothes.

Nor the fine teenagers, as beautiful as envoys of the gods, whom we meet at the turn of a poem by Virgil. The ones Tony Duvert likes have strong, wild wrists and knees, and are all the more erotic for it. He evokes them in the first version of *Récidive* (9) (1967):

I wanted to take his hand. I mean the wrist... Yes, it's the wrist I want. Hands have too much intelligence, too much education. You detach them from your arm to say hello. But the wrist remains wild, sexual, secret. When you hold it, you hold everything.

And again:

Or the touch of my hand, which rested very lightly on his knee, on the flannel trousers, which were a very light grey. Just the knee, for him. However thin, however sculpted, however narrow, a knee remains rough, heavy and bony in the palm.

You'd think you were reading Gide or Gombrowicz... He recognises them

as soon as they appear. These attractive little boys are seven or eight years old, as filthy as can be, they don't take showers or baths except in smelly swamps, they don't smell of soap or lavender water, they don't take any care with their clothes, which are more like rags torn ten times as they pass bushes, fences and low walls, and their hair has never been combed or shampooed.

Soon, the sound of footsteps was heard. And there stepped forward a boy of eight or nine, of supernatural beauty. His hair, more dazzling than the sun at its zenith, dishevelled, stiff and short, was overgrown with dust and dry grass; his cheeks, whiter than camphor and pinker than roses, were stained with chocolate, earth and tomatoes; her eyes, larger and happier and more lively than the crystal spring for the thirsty, had a little black shit in the corner; her figure, slimmer and plumper and more supple than the orange branch where the fruit dances, was disguised in rags pierced with indiscreet snags; her two hands, more delicate than the saffron stalk, were as dirty as two feet.

This child of supernatural beauty is the little Boy-with-a-hard-head that Prince Clair-de-Lune has come from an oriental country on his flying horse,

lurks in the corner of a bush, dazzled by such wild seduction. Let's take a closer look at this charming tale.

A tale of a thousand and one nights in reverse.

Le petit garçon à la tête dure (10) is a very pretty tale, with all the right ingredients for a tale of a thousand and one nights: a distant and poetic oriental country, an all-powerful and cruel king named Splendeur-du-pal, a very handsome young prince, Clair-de-lune, whom the people adore to the point of nicknaming him Visage-de-vélo (!). There are no women in the story, apart from the king's wife, who is barely mentioned, contented herself with the subordinate role of procreation and then disappears from the tale.

Now, at the age of fifteen, the young prince suddenly felt the torments of desire.

- "What a strange thing," thought his father the king. But let's see what would make him feel better.

The king's harem consisted of three hundred and sixty children, one for each morning, three hundred and sixty teenagers, one for each noon, and three hundred and sixty young men, one for each evening (in those ancient times, the years were not long).

After enjoying these pleasures, the prince fell prey to insatiable desire

and fell back into his melancholy, to the great despair of the king.

The king offered him monkeys, rabbits, figs, fish, lungs, a flaky pastry, a lizard, a frog, a gazelle, the queen, the king, a dog, a jar of turds, a sugar loaf, a sherbet, a dish of rice with cream and cinnamon, a sword, an enema, a skull and crossbones, a coloquinte, a mirror, the pal.

But Clair-de-lune refused sadly and shook her head: her love of who knows what was inconsolable.

The prince was wasting away, and his face was turning yellow like the vulva of a scorned she-camel! To distract himself, he wandered incognito through the markets and alleyways, and one day, in a poor shop, he met an old man who recognised him and said.

- Prince Clair-de-lune, you wouldn't say you weren't looking for anyone if you knew there was a certain young child.

- Er," says Moonlight.

- A child as beautiful as a lily, as happy as a gargoyle, as sweet as chocolate mousse...

- Shut up!" suddenly exclaimed the teenager. Because now I recognise the child you're portraying: and it's the wonderful little Hard-Headed Boy! Now, old man, father of old men, why do you want to make me suffer? Everyone knows that the Hard-Headed Boy does not exist.

As this is a tale of a thousand and one nights, and what doesn't exist does, the old man gave the young prince a golden needle to stick upside down in his armchair, which he did. But nothing happened to the young prince, who didn't know how to use the golden needle. As he slumped back in his chair, disappointed and very angry, he was startled by a howl. The needle had sunk into his buttock or his thigh or somewhere else, and that's when the flying horse of fairy tales appeared to transport him to the land where the Boy with the Hard Head exists. A shaggy boy, indeed out of a tale of a thousand and one nights in reverse, since the flying horse took the oriental prince to the other side of the seas and mountains, to what looks like our Paris suburbs, or the Butte Montmartre, or the Porte de Saint-Ouen, to meet the Boy with a hard head. The child, a true little parigot of the time, before even spotting the Prince hiding behind a bush, improvised these inspired verses in his childish, crooning voice.

On the way

D' Saint-Frusquin

I found three little rabbits!
I put one in the cupboard He says: It's too dark! I put one in the drawer He says
to me:
Go and sit down!
I put one on
In the cupboard
He said to me:
Don't you have the time?
I don't care

With tits
He's giving me hickeys!
I'm screwing the other one
Behind my back
He's biting into my little pit!
I'm putting the other one in
My cal 'çon
I' m' boulott' my little roustons!
Are not well
Rabbits
Going for a walk in Saint-Frusquin!

The young prince then made himself known and the boy immediately asked for some cakes with slug oil (?) which he seemed to enjoy very much and which, fortunately, the prince had taken the precaution of taking with him.

The child then offered to marry him, which means that they did what they did in a delicate manner, as befits boys. The prince rewarded him with some chips syrup (?) that he also had in his bag. And then they got married again, and the inspired young boy improvised these licentious verses.

Tongue up the arse It's all limp Put it on top It's driving me crazy! Pine up your
ass
My shirt's flying! Piss' on it Let it stick!

The cakes with slug oil and the syrup of chips ran out, but the young prince wished to prolong this time of delicious pleasure, at least for the three days which are the good custom of successful marriages, according to his oriental tradition. This was not, however, the custom in this western country, and the boy gave him his leave in these terms.

No, it's fine. We got married. Now go home!

The desperate prince threatened the child with his death, but the Boy-with-a-hard-head simply replied by somersaulting, ironically, but with tears in his eyes.

Ouch, ouch, ouch!
If you're dead
You'll be screwed
In a sideboard
You won't have air
And the little worms
You'll eat your behind
Ouch, ouch, ouch!

In this marvellous West, weddings can only last a single day, and the prince had to make do. A final, tender and comforting poem before we say goodbye.

Arsehole Whatever you've had, don't you feel good about your arse Arsehole
Whatever you've had, don't you feel good about your arse?

And the young prince returned to his kingdom of a thousand and one nights, carried away on his enchanted horse. A dialogue of wisdom between the king and the prince brings this ironic tale to a close.

- Am I to believe, my son, that you really found the Hard-Headed Boy by going through the needle?

- Yes, sire my father, I'm not lying to you (my word on my eggs!): I found him! And he was as beautiful as a lily, as happy as a gargoyle, as sweet as chocolate mousse! And his sex was white and smooth, and his warmth was that of an adolescent perfumed like the orchards of God, and his lustfulness was that of pearl-toothed infants and his orifices had no incontinence! And he, O eternal one, sang like the springs of Isabelle aux Cabrioles, and like the water games of the rocking garden, and like the drunken birds...

of the Little Mirliton Tree! And I married him! I married him. And now here I am.

- And were you happy?" asked the king.

- Yes, sire, I was," sighed Clair-de-lune.

- Don't sigh, once is better than never," sighed the old king.

How could a little girl fit into such a bachelor atmosphere?

An erotic place, or just a charming place for the slightest boy? Never, we think.

And yet the presentation on the Editions de Minuit website of *Portrait d'homme couteau* (1969) and *Interdit de séjour* (1969) includes an astonishing commentary by André Dalmas, first published in *Le Monde* when they were first published.

Published simultaneously, these two stories [*Interdit de séjour* and *Portrait d'homme couteau*] reveal both a skilfully developed technique and an original talent at the service of a very subtle, curious and even daring sensibility in the secret of its journey. For what is completely new in Tony Duvert's works is the transformation undergone by the notion of time in fiction. Present and past, intertwined in the narrative, are in reality, and at the same time, yesterday's present and today's present, yesterday's past and today's past. So much so that the things, the beings, reveal at every moment, at the same time as their nature, the stigmata of their ageing, those of ruin, decomposition and death. These metamorphoses are not just phenomena of writing. They serve a particular ethic, that of 'evil' (crime, rape, homosexuality), an evil that, having become myth, with its ritual and liturgy of images, conceals decrepitude and death through its décor. *Portrait d'homme couteau* is dedicated to Henri Michaux: "A knife from the top of his forehead to the depths of himself, he keeps watch. The book evokes the rape and murder of a little girl (11).

In addition to the fact that, in this text, André Dalmas, evoking evil (crime, rape, homosexuality), seems to confuse Duvert and Genet, and that he gets confused

This incoherence was not picked up by Éditions de Minuit, who continue to publish this old text as *Portrait d'homme couteau*. Dalmas writes: "The book is an evocation of the rape and murder of a little girl". However, the second version of *Portrait d'homme couteau*, from 1978, the only one currently published, seems to recount the rape and murder of a little boy, and these expressions, rape and murder, are never used in the book. [Of course, I've been scouring booksellers' websites for the original version of *Portrait d'homme couteau*, and I've found it for a fairly reasonable price, but not for the original version of Genet's *Journal du voleur*, which I'm still looking for].

And indeed, this first version, much to the reader's astonishment, features

a little girl, a rape and a murder. Questions arise.

- Why did the little girl in the first version disappear, and a little boy appear in the second version, especially as the author, who took his time reworking the story (between 1970 and 1974), retained several passages from the first version, which appear to a superficial glance to be inconsistencies or even contradictions?

- Or conversely, why would he put a little girl in this first version of the novel, if she wasn't a real little girl, in the social sense of the term, and not a boy in disguise?

- Finally, why in the second version did the author delete Henri Michaux's enigmatic and superb exergue, to which the title refers directly? "Knife from the top of his forehead to the depths of himself, he watches..."

We don't think we can answer these questions since, as far as we know, the author did not say or write anything about his intentions, but we can try to analyse the effects of these changes on the reader, because, after all, a novel is made by its author and by its reader too, and each reading recreates it anew. We can only note that the second version is much shorter, with a very different construction, and that, despite the notable disappearance of the little girl and the appearance of a little boy, without there being any substitution, this second version retains some traces of the first.

These traces can certainly not be considered as oversights or negligence on the part of the author.

Once again we read Tony Duvert:

Childhood and writing use an identical imagination: they recklessly create reality, tearing it to pieces, reshaping it, indulging in the illusion and duplicity of play, where we pretend for good.

Imaginary made up of a tearing apart of reality, what Henri Michaux calls exorcism.

So has the little girl in the first version been the object of an ill-considered creation of the real, of its tearing to pieces, of its re-creation, of what would then be an exorcism by trickery? Or is it the text of *Portrait d'homme couteau* itself that has been torn to shreds?

So I'm going to focus on the magnificent first edition of *Portrait d'homme couteau*.

The little girl announced.

The astonishing exergue comes from a poem by Henri Michaux, "Il écrit...", one of the most beautiful poems in *Epreuves et exorcismes, 1940-1944*.

He writes...

The paper ceases to be paper, and gradually becomes a long, long table on which comes, directed, he knows it, he feels it, he senses it, the as yet unknown victim, the distant victim who has devolved upon him.

He writes...

His fine, fine ear, his only ear, listens to a wave coming, fine, fine, and a following wave coming from a distant age and space to direct, to bring the victim who will have to give in.

His hand is getting ready.

And what about him? He's watching.

With a knife from the top of his forehead to the core of his being, he keeps watch, ready to intervene, ready to slice, to decapitate what is not.

would not be his, to cut into the carriage that the overflowing Universe is pushing towards him, which would not be 'HIS' victim...

He writes... (12)

In this poem, which is undoubtedly his literary manifesto, Henri Michaux associates the work of poetic writing with the execution with a knife of the victim, the one assigned to the poet, whom he must slice up and decapitate in order to accomplish his work. Writing is an exorcism by trickery," he says in his preface. This exorcism here takes a form that seems sacrificial, and in this hypothesis, the victim could be an expiatory victim. And if Tony Duvert has chosen this poem by Michaux above all others, it is undoubtedly to affirm this collusion of writing and sacrifice, in a very pagan philosophical context.

What sacrifice? The rape and murder of a little girl, says the commentator, peremptorily. But perhaps this sacrifice concerns the poet himself, one suspects, the sacrifice he must make of a part of himself in order to accomplish his work.

A violent event is certainly announced, expected from the beginning of the book, but is only gradually discovered, hidden and revealed, without the words rape and murder ever being uttered. As Heraclitus (perhaps) said,

"Nature loves to veil itself", and we will be reminded of him throughout this reading, which will follow the thread of this story, perhaps a novel, perhaps a poem.

Right from the start of the book, Tony Duvert describes a man's daily life.

Banal, monotonous, solitary, in a square, empty and bare room, small in size it seems, lit by a single hanging bulb that emits a faint yellow glow. A cupboard, a table, a bed, a sink and perhaps a bathtub are the only rudimentary furnishings.

There is very little furniture in the room that has a drawer, very few drawers in the furniture that does, and very few objects in those drawers. [...] The house is one of those that has no past. [...] He opens a cupboard and takes out a jug of water.

He opens... he, a man, we don't know who he is, we don't know his name or his age at the beginning of the story.

a story that didn't begin and probably won't end with the narrative. It's all very ordinary. But on the second page we read this surprising sentence:

He takes this knife and stabs it into the wall opposite him. The knife doesn't hold in the plaster, leaves a wound and falls; not to the floor, but to the table.

That knife... What knife? There was no mention of a knife in the previous few paragraphs, only in the title and the heading. Or even in the rest of the story, which is yet another way of subverting its temporality. Michaux's exergue is therefore an integral part of the text. The knife is the central character, the sign and instrument of a destiny that overtakes everyone, as in an ancient tragedy.

Who will be the victim? The victim is still unknown.

Michaux's poem contains the major signifiers that inspired Duvert's writing. So much so that we can speak of an intimate and powerful encounter between Duvert and Michaux. Writing, the sheet of paper, the table, the devoted victim, the human hand, the ear, the knife... And also the overflowing universe, destiny, in other words, time that doesn't exist, exorcised time.

For the time of the narrative unfolds as a time that is denied by the writing itself. But isn't this always the case with all literature, all poetry? It would

be a way for an author to deceive his reader to make him believe that there is a before and an after in the story, unforeseeable and impossible to anticipate, as in life. That when he starts writing, he doesn't know how the story will end. That there is no way the reader could begin reading the last paragraph of the book, even though it is there, published at the same time as the first, and that, even if the reader refrains from doing so in order to create the imaginary suspense intended by the author, to obey his silent injunction to follow wisely the sequence that he, the author, has consciously devised, he knows, the reader, that he could begin with the end, that this ending can no longer be changed, that it is foreseen from the very beginning of the published story or poem, that it is inescapable, that there is no escaping it, neither the reader nor the characters, that it then resounds like destiny, that in short the poet or novelist exorcises time, denied in the text, by the text, perhaps to ward off anguish, suffering and death. The future, unpredictable in real life, is always

A story, a novel, threatening but reassuring at the same time, because it's already there, it's already happened. As in an ancient tragedy.

Reading always illusory, exorcism by trickery.

Tony Duvert has constructed his book strangely, like an unravelled, jumbled jigsaw puzzle.

Is it a puzzle? Or is it the fantasy of the reader who is looking for an order, a rationality in what he is being told? A man is mentioned, but is it always the same man? We see a little girl arrive, is it always the same one? We are constantly moving from the past to the present, from one paragraph to another, often even from the beginning of a sentence to its end. So, at random :

He is naked and lies down in the water. He puts one foot on the enamel of the bath and withdraws it steaming with scalding water. The water is cold. He plunges a hand into the water. [...] On the tray, a white porcelain cup filled with tea. A few drops of lemon in it. He stirs the tea with a silver spoon, which he has turned over to use its narrow handle, more convenient in this miniature blue plastic cup.

Readers of this provocative book are left with the strange desire to put back together what seem to be the pieces of an imaginary jigsaw puzzle, to construct or reconstruct a story, to identify characters, to find or rediscover the course of events, to name the time before and the time of today, and perhaps to escape from the threatening event around which we revolve.

Is it a game? It's not as funny as all that. An exorcism by trickery, says the poet.

An extraordinary interpretation machine," says the reader, who is looking for meaning, a story, temporal and spatial reference points, where the author, no doubt ironically, seems to be toying with him and his haphazard interpretations. Let's not forget that "a fiction - and a perversion - dedicated to childhood can only play with this illusion, be twice fictional - divided between the belief it has in the mythical universe it stages, and the certainty that it is pure fantasy, an unbearable lie, too true to be true, like any object of desire, memory or culture".

A game in which a little girl gradually arrives.

Announced first of all by the traces it leaves or may have left of its passage.

He takes the cup from the windowsill and stirs the coffee with a blue plastic spoon borrowed from a child's tea set. [...] He bends down and scoops out small clean pebbles from the water, which he throws away, and then a blue plastic object: a spoon from a doll's tea set. [...] There are trees and a staircase. He picks it up, winds it up and puts it away.

These small objects are the signs that traditionally identify a little girl, what we commonly call a real little girl, a socially acceptable little girl.

A game where the knife is the central character, insistent, violent, murderous.

He threw the knife on the floor. [...] The blade folded back towards the handle, forming an acute angle with it. This angle is pinched on one finger and the blood flows. [...] He dipped his hand in a watering can, which the rain filled for weeks; the blood spread in filaments. [The injured finger was the index finger of his right hand; the cut was on the side of the phalanx facing the thumb. He used the same hand to continue digging the pit. [...] He stuck his knife straight into the damp earth, picked up a hardwood dagger and carved it.

The knife is an accomplice of the man, but also an actor, capable of turning against the man, himself a victim, perhaps the first victim.

He wipes his hands. His right hand is injured; a long cut across the palm. The lips of the cut are jagged and swollen. It won't heal; every effort of the hand opens up the wound, peels away the flesh that looks like it's been cut with a

knife.

The knife returns with a vengeance, the harbinger of a terrible event, expected, anticipated and past all at once, inescapable even if we don't yet know what it will be or what it has been.

That knife on the red tiles, nothing else. [...] A clamour from outside, from the other side of the house, as of an injury, a fall, a murder or rape.

The words are there to accompany the reader, to guide them through the maze of interpretations, to provoke them too. That's it, you might say, the rape and murder of the little girl. But who is really the victim?

A knife ready to slice away anything that isn't "HIS" victim, says the poet.

Times past and times present are intertwined, often indistinguishable, the only clues being the signs that, like small pebbles, the author scatters throughout his narrative, gradually indicating the places and objects of past or present history. The moat where the water stagnates, the pit that the man digs with his hands, the manor house in the moat, half-collapsed following a fire that ravaged the first floor, like a bombardment, it is said, the avenue of lime trees that leads to the manor house, the orchard next to the manor house, and also, who knows where? the poor room in the basement where the man seems to have locked himself up, for how long, we don't know, and then the large sheet of paper where he endlessly draws a map of places past or present, inscribing words and things, perhaps to keep a trace of the feared event, past, present or future...

There are long straight paths, some parallel, others intersecting. They form flowerbeds, thickets, copses and lawns.

He writes...

He, this man, the same one, or so we think, draws on a large sheet of almost transparent white tissue paper a map of the place, we don't know which, or why. Of the house in particular, which perhaps, one assumes, belongs to him or belonged to him. And he returns to it every day, obstinately, obsessively.

The house, where? Which house? Why draw the floor plan of a house on a sheet of paper that bears the marks of a figure-of-eight fold : the house is laid out folded in a figure-of-eight, mixed with earth.

[...] A graphite pencil; its trace is a light grey on the sheet. On the back of this sheet, in the bold blue ink of a biro, is an enlargement of the main rectangle of the other drawing: the house.

He closes the envelope, slips it into another envelope of strong paper. All under a sheet of olive green blotting paper folded in half, which serves as a desk pad. The table he's sitting at has wet spots on it.

This work of drawing and writing, repeated a hundred times over, daily and obstinately, is also, there can be no doubt about it, in abyme, the very writing of the story, which must be for the author what Michaux calls an exorcism by trickery. We could say that it is the work for which man is going to accomplish the sacrifice of the victim, which could also be the sacrifice of a part of himself, of his life.

And then the jigsaw puzzle of time seems to fall into place, separating past and present.

The time before and the time after. The time of the still unknown event and the time of the memory.

Naked foot coming up: fairly large knee, long, dry leg, thin knee, shapely thigh, brown skin covering the flesh of an old man. [His face is marked, dry, like that of an old man; his neck is tucked between his shoulders [...]]. About 50 years of grey flesh, the sun at nine o'clock in the evening His belt: he threw it on the floor at the door. [...] About thirty years old once.

Yet we can never be sure of anything, everything remains uncertain. Or perhaps, nothing is as it once was, or can be as it once was.

He doesn't walk these paths, he doesn't lean over these flowers, he doesn't know this space where the vegetation looks too much like him.

We can dream for a long time about the meaning of such negations and such closeness at the same time... Is it because the man seems to be recluse in a basement, probably, we think, the basement of the big house now closed, avoiding any human encounter? And at the same time attracting the curiosity of young girls passing by, perhaps suspicious.

Led by a man of uncertain age, dressed in a grey smock and whose blue serge trousers break at the instep, a double row of children aged between eight and ten pass through the street without uttering a word. The little girls look curiously at the closed shutters of the windows. And

especially the window well, open to the darkness.

At the far end, however, there is a tiny yellow glow, almost orange because the bulb is so old and dirty.

The little girl appears soon, approaching with light steps.

A lonely little girl, perhaps a runaway, attracted by this manor house overlooking the street through long, high windows with wrought-iron bars. She enters the unfamiliar house, curious and carefree, and even lies down in front of a fire lit by who knows who?

Crouching down by the fire, she lets herself be drawn into the swaying flames. It is dark.

She mechanically keeps one hand on the box on the floor containing her doll's dinner set.

Her skirt, already short, was hiked up above the knees and folded down over the thighs to her belly; at the back, it covered her heels like a bell.

A wandering little girl, wandering among the plants, flowers and tiny animals that make up her little country girl world. Plants, flowers, even insects. What is she looking for? Probably nothing, we don't know. She's simply there, so close to nature, so curious, dragging along her doll's dinette, which is of little interest to her.

Her steps are capricious, for she is going nowhere, enjoying the path. Many lights, soft for her childish skin, the quiet presence of the world, tiny, among [...] The little girl crouches under the lowest fence and observes, at the far end, the play of spiders, mice and shadow. [...] In the distance, behind the trees, the little girl sits. [...] Like a butterfly, the white face approaches and skirts around the flowers.

We think she prefers air, sun, plants and small animals to the company of other children. She plays with flowers and insects. She is a little

Later in the story, a bird of prey appears who will play a role in the story, but we don't yet know which one, and it's not certain that it will be the same bird of prey.

She holds out her fist to the window. A small diurnal bird of prey lands on her fist.

The little girl, who is so close to animals and plants, becomes an

accomplice to this narrow-eyed, aggressive, jerky bird. She knows the right gestures to make, she knows that she should raise her fist and that the bird will then close its talons on her and stand up, attentive, as it should be.

Its wavy, deep red plumage rustles in the breeze.

And the man, during this time, or later, is there, waiting, watching, he is the knife man.

He listens. A wave coming, thin, thin.

A little girl, the same one whose wanderings we follow, or another, we don't know, gives herself to be seen and heard. The man listens.

He goes downstairs, turns the knob on the door. He bends over, takes off his high rubber boots. He looks at a little girl running down the street in front of the bars.

He comes down the stairs. He opens the door.

The lock is on. He knocks on the pane of the door and smashes the glass with his fist. The sun is low in the grass. He carefully turns the knob on the door.

[...] He hears a little girl singing in the street.

[...] He flinches. The little girl no longer sings.

Past and present are always indistinct. Is this because history could repeat itself months or years later, or is it the effect of the memory of an event that cannot be erased, or is it because time has been exorcised? We could also say, in a very Freudian way, that the unconscious knows no time.

What remains of the event that is still unknown, yet already here, soon to happen?

A few objects that the elderly man seems to treasure: a lock of hair, a blue and gold ribbon, a dried flower. Tender reminders of a little girl's passing. Traces that he wants to keep as a souvenir, slightly faded photos of a past moment that will never return.

Among the grasses shines a lock of chestnut hair with golden highlights, very fine to caress. It is laced with a blue and gold ribbon. The hair is fresh, but its perfume is from the back of a wardrobe: mothballs, lavender flowers in a cheesecloth bag, old leather with the scent of a ball. [He stands up. The wind blows a lock of his grey and white hair into his eyes. A cup he fills with water to catch the broken flower he has picked up. A dried flower that he takes from the tap [...]] The flower dusted clean, its colours brightened in the water. [...] He

chooses a compact, hard-bound book from the library. Between two pages, he puts the flower to dry, after removing the blue and gold ribbon from the stem, which would make the book look thick.

The little girl, we learn, is dressed in a golden yellow silky dress. Her golden brown hair is held back by a blue ribbon, and her doll's dinette is made of blue and gold plastic. All wrapped up in blue and gold, the colour of the kings of France, this little girl is dressed like a queen. Is she a queen? Stripped of her clothes, her finery, all the things that make her a little girl, so pretty, one might doubt it. Is it the narrator's pen, or that of the man contemplating her, that is so ferocious?

In a cellar, or behind the rockslides, it's there. Unmoving. She's not playing. Naked, silly, her arms spread wide, her body bony. Because she's skinny, with big heavy bones, small with a face that's too big.

Described without tenderness, she appears to the reader without charm, without emotional, erotic or even intellectual appeal. The little hard-headed boy was far more attractive to Prince Clair-de-lune. But isn't that how the narrator describes her? For the man waiting for her, she exists, erotically no doubt.

The small figure doesn't move. He senses it, delicately alive, unafraid.

What is he looking for, watching for, since he seems to be hiding? We are a third of the way through the book. The intrigued reader is gradually given an answer to this question, which he or she will have to guess at, or invent, as the book unfolds, right up to the end, like an enigmatic jigsaw puzzle with cleverly jumbled pieces that the reader is invited to put in order and interpret. And yet there is no identity, no certainty to which the reader can cling. We follow the thread of the story closely.

The exorcised little girl

What is man looking for? The distant victim that devolves upon him, says the poet.

... Under the branches. He spots a lurking figure. Has he come to find

Words seem to be missing. Is this a sign of hesitation?

There's nothing visible. Or an appearance, which suggests that he is staying here. The rain is just as hard. He waits, head in shoulders, a few steps from the

bush.

But for the reader, the victim is already there, suddenly appearing in the text, lying like a sleeping beauty, with the small objects next to or on her that had already announced her arrival at the beginning of the story and that allow the reader to recognise her. The author is no longer talking about a little girl, but about a body.

The body lies flat on its stomach. From the top of his head to the tip of his toes, he measures one metre twenty. Relaxed, face buried in the grass, eyelids closed, mouth ajar, hands limp, legs bare to the thighs. Not far from the hands, a cardboard box with a lopsided lid reveals blue objects. A blue ribbon, around the neck.

It is obviously interpreted, because of the small objects that always accompany it, as the little girl we have already met wandering in the countryside, and she is described here as dead, or rather as a dead body.

There is one more thing to note. The girl's death is announced well before the violence of this death, a rape and murder, are said, not even described, we could say confessed, without ever being named, because the gradual discovery of the murder and rape is announced as a difficult confession, a slow unveiling, and even a hypothesis suggested to the reader-interpreter. A small sentence that could pass unnoticed discreetly signals the presence of a ban and its transgression.

He has no doubt clutched to his stomach the childish body he has no business using.

And what about him? He's watching," says the poet.

The man is watching, as if he were the astonished witness of a scene bigger than himself, of which he is barely aware, and of which the knife is the active protagonist. What is he looking at? We know now, and the book describes it in very violent terms: he is looking at a body that has been raped.

He's standing in the middle of the lawn, looking at the body on the ground, with a torch in his hand.

[...] The body is on its back, completely undressed, breathing peacefully. The lower abdomen is slit with a trickle of red blood coming out of the vulva as if from a punctured eye. The rain is warm.

The horror is there, between the words and the metaphors. And yet, as the poet says, "the victim will have to let himself go". A kind of peace seems to invade the body that has suffered this crime, echoing the tenderness of the one who committed it, or watched it being committed.

The hand follows the curve of an undressed body, lying on the grass, impubescent, breathing softly.

[...] He caresses her body one last time, then wraps her in the blanket and carries her out into the garden.

She was still a little girl, not even a teenager. And the man would have to use his hands and his knife to dig a rectangular grave - half a grave, it was specified - to receive the little body, which measured one metre twenty, half a body.

The knife is always present, the main actor in the story.

A knife that dominates man, constitutes him, even precedes him and controls events. An image perhaps of the unconscious of the man or the poet. A knife from the top of his forehead to the bottom of himself. A knife that also strangely expresses all the tenderness of man.

This knife, a blade so blurred, of such uncertain metal, that you wouldn't dare use it to reach, wound or slice anything. An object as soft as any flesh it can penetrate, a knife no stronger than winter.

The rape scene is not dealt with until later in the book. The little girl, curious, enters the unknown house, the manor of the moat it seems, and even spends a peaceful night there, we suppose. She thinks she will escape from the man who is chasing her, but who also attracts her, or so he thinks, to a game she does not know, but which she hopes will be more attractive than her doll's dinette.

What does she dream of?

This little girl, we are about to learn, is perhaps the fantasy of a man, or of the narrator, who dreams of a woman. The childish knives and crockery can be contemplated, then neglected. She doesn't behave like other little girls.

She's inventing someone. Not just another kid to play with. But a man, like the ones you see in the street, the ones who prowl around in the evening or come home from the fields or the city, badly dressed, dirty, tired, a strange look on his

face, his bare legs - a look that doesn't see her, but traces between her thighs - open in a chubby mount, too swollen, too high for the narrowness of her stomach - the clear slit of her vulva. That's what she's touching. These men are big, so there's no need to fear them, and she lets them, wherever her hand feels, wherever her eyes look.

But what is a little girl? A woman, a mother in the making? We can't say here.

The poet writes. "His fine, fine ear, his only ear listens to a wave coming, fine, fine, ... from a distant age and space..."

To lead, bring the victim along, who will have to let himself be led.

The victim, drawn to the scene of the crime, is also the knife man's alibi. The narrator, acting as an all-powerful demiurge, knows the little girl's thoughts and dreams, or rather what they must be for her to become the victim, the victim who will have to let herself be victimised. But isn't this also the man's fantasy, expressed by the narrator?

She doesn't want to play because she's afraid. Her heart is beating, not just because she wants to, because she has to.

[...] Downstairs, before he goes back up, he might see his visitor - who has come to wait for him, to fetch him on purpose. He thinks so.

"He believes that". Then we come to the rape scene, which is, as always, only hinted at. "He watches, ready to intervene, ready to slice, to decapitate", says the poet.

He holds his cup between his knees; he gives up drinking more and, with a lump in his throat, looks at the little girl who seems to be waiting.

[...] Useless, his naked body waiting for the sun to reveal itself. White clouds, motionless, without outline, reflect the barely yellow disc.

Full sun, warm invisible light. Nearby, in the water, a freshness.

She watches him. He approaches. They won't talk. Naked, legs straight, belly taut, penis hard, he lets himself be guessed.

His hand is getting ready.

And then his penis. And this is the moment of what is interpreted as rape and then murder.

Footsteps. She rushes into the nearby forest. But her sandals on the water's edge indicate that she has just passed by, that she is close by. She does not move.

He stares at her. He bends over. His hands rummage under the urine-scented rags that clothe her. You don't want to tame her or punish her. But to hurt her, at her most sensitive, and make her scream, by any means necessary. That would be it. Then she'd get up and run away. The door at

or the fence itself, and she'd be outside, strong and grimacing, by the time she stumbled over the corpse of the bird of prey, which would resume its flight.

The bird of prey seems to be there, an instrument of destiny, like the knife, to stop the girl's escape. We assume that the knife man can then catch up with her and carry out the planned murder.

And during this time, or afterwards, again and again, "he writes..."

In this dark room that we now learn will be, will be his voluntary prison.

It's just one room, and that's where it'll stay for ever, that's the way he wants it.

And he writes, it's his destiny, he draws indefinitely, obstinately, the scenes of the event, the rape and the murder. Did it really happen? Can it be represented? Or rather, can it be written? But nothing is certain. Sentences unravel. Paragraphs fall apart. Words seem to be lacking, hesitant, insufficient to describe, to tell.

We are witnessing the birth of poetry, more than ever in its function of exorcism through trickery.

where

it can't It can still be traced.

[...] A beach of earth, like a painting on which to lean, to draw with the tip of a knife a shape, a face, a space, a mingled desire [...] A beach of earth, like a painting on which to lean, to draw with the tip of a knife a shape, a face, a space, a mingled desire

For it is a matter of man cutting into the wagon that the overflowing Universe pushes towards him, with a knife, that which is not him, cannot be him. What he doesn't want to be. What he is, however, is a strange part of this overflowing universe.

For a moment, he becomes the cockchafer he has just caught.

In his clenched fist, he holds a cockchafer whose legs scrape and scrape.

And on the next page :

He goes from one wall to another and bumps into them.

[...] He spun around the room, banging his head, shoulders and hips against the walls blindly. His boots screech and squeak.

We are there, caught up in the emotion of the man, witnessing and participating, with the knife, in what is the poetic act in its essence. Because that's what the poet needs, to bring out of the sacrifice of this refused, rejected, perhaps unconscious part of himself, what will be his poetic creation. With the reader as accomplice.

The overflowing universe

The overflowing Universe, these are not Tony Duvert's words. And yet this overflowing universe is very present in *Portrait of a Knife Man*, an object of anguish and horror, and perhaps of attraction too. The overflowing universe is life in all its profusion, in all its élan, in all its creativity. But at the same time, it is the terrible and anguishing work of death, inescapable and intertwined with that of life, in a world where God does not exist and whose laws are opaque to man.

The limbs spread apart, the flesh, hard and muddy at first, swells and softens tenderly. The sun heats up the particles that fly away.

The work of death is never slow in coming.

Depicted here in all its horror for man. The body of the little girl, now a corpse, enters with the nature around it into a movement of disintegration that is first and foremost a de-individualisation. The body is no longer a little girl, an object of love or hate or desire, but a body that is disintegrating into rotting pieces of flesh, prey for tiny animals that feed on it to live and reproduce. What indeed is a body?

nothing

Death happens. No images: swarming, liquid. It's more like cells spreading apart, a stampede, like a flower opening, the corpse unravelling. No living witness. At rest. All flattened, happy I suppose. No desecration. No space needed. This expanding body, almost nothing now

The indefinite cycle of life and death is not foreign to Michaux's universe. Yet Tony Duvert never uses the words nature, universe or world, which he encounters in Michaux's poems. And yet, the further you read *L'homme couteau*, the more you are convinced that for these magnificent writers, life is distressing because it can only be accompanied by death, because it resolves itself in death, and that it is impregnated with death, that it feeds on death. And that is man's misfortune, to be aware of these obscure movements that he cannot control, and to have only one recourse, to exorcise them, by accomplishing his poetic work. Sacrificing something of himself to accomplish his work.

The body unfolds and expands, its cells explode and flow, it grows slowly as a foetus matures. Born in the grass, the corpse grows.

Flowers are in the world to remind us of the indefinite movement of life and death, and that is why they concentrate all the anguish of the knife man, or the narrator, on them.

Periodically, flowers continue to grow. Their petals are crumpled, their colours faded... They are always flowers, which means they are dead.

What is a flower?

We remember. The elderly man has slipped a dried flower into a book, a memento of the little girl. The word deflowering is not mentioned in the book, but it quickly comes to the mind of the reader, psychoanalyst or not. Inconsiderately? There is no doubt, however, that this flower/girl association lies at the heart of the knife man's anguish, at the heart of the story and its attempt at exorcism.

This is the most revealing text in this terrible book. A violent, almost unbearable text.

But around the house is an orchard of white flowers. He wants to tear them off, to bruise them, these naïve corollas, indented like the bodices of a peccora, placid, too cool in the sun, too smooth in the breeze, waiting limply for a draught of air to fertilise them, to kiss them, to fill them with seed, to fill them up to the neck, white females who are going to lose their petals and swell like boils, These white females will shed their petals and swell up like boils, spreading their tormented bellies over the living leaves, swelling into large, bland, juicy fruits which, bursting open, visited by insect proboscis, will crush and rot in the grass, while the tree, finally freed of these suspended blisters or

cloaca, will stand in its entire nakedness and strength...

Dull corollas, pecan bodices, white females like boils... The violence of the words, the metaphors, against women who have become females, directly associated with reproduction.

What can we add?

Summer must come to an end; autumn must cut down this swarm of lymph nodes, the pruritus of vegetation must come to an end. That's what he wants. He won't be able to go near the house if it doesn't happen. Or give in. Right now. There's no living matter, no seemingly inert matter, that isn't waiting to be fertilised, violated and executed.

We think, perhaps unwisely, that the murder of the little girl is a sacrifice of the fecundity of the Universe, and at the same time a sacrifice that is part of that very fecundity. Man is its sword. The knife the unconscious instrument. The poetic work is an exorcism by trickery. The poet does not produce his work without a sacrifice of himself.

The little girl will never become a mother, a sign of fertility and death.

From this perspective, we will think, perhaps unwisely, that love with young boys is on the contrary unfruitful, pure of any relationship to sex, alien to the universal movement of the reproduction of life, protected from the overflowing universe of life and death, pure pleasure.

Genet comes to mind. To Genet's letter to Sartre in which he spoke of the meaning of homosexuality in terms of life and death: "Unable to think of my death in clear, rational terms, I live it symbolically by refusing to

continue the world. Instinct then leads me to my own sex... The meaning of homosexuality is this: a refusal to carry on with the world (13).

Is it too much to interpret? Perhaps it is. Let's not get carried away.

That's when the accomplice bird of prey arrives...

The same bird of prey that the little girl was playing with, or the one she stumbled upon, or another, you never know.

The bird has circled the estate. It glides slowly. Its circles are narrowing. It loses altitude. It falls abruptly to the ground, where sunny grass grows, with very fine

stems, mixed with dandelions, bindweed and plantain.

The little girl, always in tune with the movement that shakes the world around her, with this universe that functions so well, or so poorly, leaving some to die, nourishing others, driven by an unconscious, irrepressible impulse that transcends each individual, she, the little girl, who accepts it without really knowing it, enjoys it by participating in it herself. Curious, she willingly plays with the overflowing universe in the great game of life and death.

The little girl [...] follows the fence and sees the dead bird on the other side. She picks up a stick to touch it gently, to turn it over, to see its open beak, its dull blue eye, the limpness of its neck and legs, the ants that are crawling all over the corpse, penetrating the eye sockets, the nostrils, getting under the feathers. The disgusting smell aroused her, and she began to push with all her might against the bird, grabbing a longer, stronger knife to tear through the wire mesh, the feathers coming off and dragging with them foul-smelling shreds of flesh.

In the water of the pond, gleaming against the soft grey background, the pair of horns, the whole head, of a lucanid beetle that a bird, having gobbled up its abdomen, had dropped there. The insect was very large. Its horns are still mobile.

She plays with the jaws of the pliers on her finger, then on the fat of her arm.

Or another bird of prey.

When she is dead, her body beginning to disintegrate and liquefy into the world around her, the bird of prey comes to feast on her already rotting flesh.

It's on the floor. The floor is varnished, cold. The moisture from her body condenses on the varnish, forming an opaque, amoeboid-like stain that contains the little girl.

The bird, perched on top, pecks at the flesh of the thighs, glancing furiously at the fireplace, where a fire is roaring.

It's the same for a bird, a little girl or a mouse. It is also part of the overflowing universe, and to live it must feed, kill without hesitation or devour living creatures that are already dead.

The bird holds a grey mouse in its talons; it methodically lacerates its fur, gobbling up blood as it goes; its beak makes narrow, twitching slits in the flesh. A ball of grey hair that he dominates with his beak. It sits on top of a pile of similar fur, forming a soft coat that would cover any bare skin sensitive to the cold.

The squeaking of the mouse can hardly be heard any more.

Is the bird of prey an accomplice of the knife man?

And/or, like the knife, the instrument of the overflowing universe that man seems to abhor, its representative? We hesitate. Because the man gouged out his eyes. Why such aggression? Was the bird of prey an embarrassing, voyeuristic witness to the rape and murder of the little girl? Is he, the eye of Cain, looking at the man and his secret? We suspect so, but the story remains a mystery. Or perhaps an image of the poet's unconscious.

The eyes are gouged out, their shells dried in the deep orbit. The blind bird of prey is perched on the back of his chair, leaning over his shoulder, waiting. Punctured with a knife, nail or fingernail.

A strange complicity develops between man and bird of prey.

He puts bits of red flesh under the bird's beak, which the bird refuses, only to start violently stinging the fat on his palm. Blood on the tip of its beak. [The scarlet palm. The wound stretches from the crease of the thumb to the wrist. It is the trace of a clean, wide cut, poorly closed, where the bird's beak searches until it finds the bloody, blue, motherly flesh of the old hand.

Man can hide away from the world, but he cannot escape the universe in which he unwillingly participates, and which determines him. So he, who rejected it, becomes a fertile, nourishing, ageing mother, an object of detestation.

His blood is decomposing, his staggering vigour has faded, his true death would be better.

For a long time he touches his body and hates himself, in the soft, supple wood, his knife remains stuck, nothing else, the same thing, everything the same.

And that's the end of the story.

Terrible, abhorrent, always vomiting out the fecundity of the universe, of which the dahlias are the representatives here, ugly, silly flowers like everything that can be associated with this apparently hated name, fecundity.

and heavy bunches of aphids, perhaps, like a black, swarming mantle, with a steel-blue sheen, encircling the stems of the dahlias - they continue to sprout from their tubers, for no one, ugly flower this stupid face of fourteen July along

the stems, and under the long green leaves, vulgar, immobile aphids, their proboscis pricked in the canals of the plant, there, on an abandoned flowerbed, hidden by dead trees, dried out on the spot, slender young trees, large phallic groves, all dead, shrivelled, old bony, rubbery, gnarled, impassive pine trees, impervious to the wind, nothing but that and lots of stones, splintered ashlar, the same thing a hundred times over, rethought, reviewed, reworked, poor madness

We've reached the end of Knife Man's choices and suffering, and nothing more can be added here. This knife man, hating himself, living

a recluse, and probably dying alone, without friends or witnesses, in a dark basement in the middle of a countryside that for him would be a frightening reminder of the overflowing universe. With two images as his companions.

the less clear-cut image of the corpse, as banal as a doll, a mannequin in a shop window, stronger, the old image, the erect body, once desired, smiling perhaps none of that is here

The little girl, who was apparently charming and attractive to the knife man, never became a mother, never participated in the fecundity of life, of the overflowing universe. That's what the battered reader thinks.

This is the end of the book, but as you can see, there is no full stop.

From this indeterminacy, from the erasure of all certainty, the poetic work would be born and blossom. This knife was the sharp, cutting pen. And the victim? Undoubtedly the poet, and with him, drawn into the turmoil, his exhausted reader.

The story of *Portrait d'homme couteau* does not end there. Tony Duvert spent two years rewriting this violent book. And under the same title, but without Michaux, without his exergue, he published a completely different book, differently constructed, in which the little girl has disappeared, and in which we read that a little boy is the victim of a rape and murder, or so the reader thinks he understands. And then we notice with astonishment that this second *Portrait of a Knife Man* has preserved unusual traces of the little girl's disappearance. The blue and gold ribbons, the strands of silky hair, preciousy kept. And also fleeting images, remnants of houses, spaces, rain, sensations. And then the flowers, always those ugly, silly, abhorred flowers. Obsessive. Just a few traces. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that have escaped a bombing raid.

The little girl in the first story has been exorcised by the very text of this

magnificent story, which has been slashed and cut with a knife. But it hasn't disappeared yet.

Lucidity is the closest wound to the sun.

René Char

NOTES

1. Henri Michaux, *Épreuves, exorcismes, 1940-1944*, Preface, Paris, nrf Poésie Gallimard, [1946], 1971, p. 7.
2. Henri Michaux, "La lettre", in *Épreuves, exorcismes, op. cit.* p. 50
3. Ibid, p. 51.
4. Henri Michaux, *op. cit.* p. 8.
5. Tony Duvert, *Portait d'homme couteau*, Paris, Minuit, 1969.
6. Henri Michaux, "Il écrit...", in *Epreuves, exorcismes, op. cit.* p. 105.
7. Tony Duvert, *L'enfant au masculin*, Paris, Minuit, p. 10.
8. Tony Duvert, "La casserole au bout de la queue", published in *Gai pied*, reprinted in *Un homme parle*, éditions bleues.
9. Tony Ouvert, *Récidive*, Paris, Minuit, 1967.
10. Tony Duvert, "Le petit garçon à la tête dure", in *Un homme parle*, *op. cit.* p. 34
11. On the Éditions de Minuit website for *Portrait d'homme couteau* and *Interdit de séjour*.
12. Henri Michaux, "Il écrit...", in *Epreuves, exorcismes, op. cit.* p. 105.
13. Jean Genet, "Lettre à Jean-Paul Sartre", in Edmund White, *Jean Genet*, Gallimard, p. 384.

Rape Fantasy Redux? Textual Victimhood In and Between Versions of Tony Duvert's *Portrait d'homme couteau* (Brian G. Kennelly, *Dalhousie French Studies number 101*, 2014)

You're only called a murderer if you're assigned a specific body.

-Tony Duvert, "Crime," *Malevolent primer*

Still only one a handful of studies of Tony Duvert, the chapter John Philipps dedicates to *Récidive* in his *Forbidden Fictions* misrepresents the late French writer's first novel. Phillipps' self-described "close reading" (151) of the work is shortsighted. To his credit, however, he is the first to consider the "homotextual" aspects of this "narrative on the loose": he points to its ongoing

construction and deconstruction of homosexuality; and he traces the mobile nature of identity in the quest for sexual experiences that Duvert's shadows' male narrator pieces together (150, 153, 154). But Phillips problematically ignores the first published version of Duvert's work out of personal

convenience. As a result, his focusing exclusively on the second version, published nine years after the 1967 version, which for him was "the only one available" (219), is exclusionary and simplistic. He overlooks the "promiscuous and abusive textuality" flaunted across both of *Récidive's* published versions (Kennelly 140). Only in reading both of them can one see that in rewriting *Récidive*, Duvert not only makes his work "more readable," as reviewer Allen Thiher suggests (249), but that he broadens its scope. In short and by design, Duvert thereby provides his novel a complex intertextual dimension that Phillips and others have overlooked for the recidivism it rehearses from cover to cover as well as between the covers of both of its published versions (Kennelly 138)

Besides overlooking the intertextual complexity of Duvert's work and thus misrepresenting it, Phillips should additionally be taken to task for failing to recognize the importance of intentional and comprehensive rewriting in Duvert's early works, what Cathy Jellenik in her study of three contemporary French female novelists deems part of an "aesthetics of reiteration," indeed a modern "obsession" (*Tripartite* 294, 32). Despite rightly lauding Duvert as original, as an "important voice in the current debate on both paedophilia" and "the influence of texts on sex" (172), by overlooking Duvert's obsessive practice of rewriting his texts Phillips mistakenly sets *Récidive* apart; he erroneously and effectively quarantines it from other early Duvertian works. While *Récidive* does have the distinction, as Phillips correctly notes, of being the author's first published work, it is not, as Phillips misleadingly claims, the only one Duvert 'considered important enough to rewrite' (152). Rather the two published versions of the novel are evidence of an aggressively revisionist tactic employed by Duvert in the 1960s and 1970s and which to date has escaped critical notice. Had Phillips more closely scrutinized Duvert's early works, he would surely have realized that in addition to *Récidive* Duvert rewrote two additional novels: *Interdit de séjour*, published first in 1969 and then in a shorter version in 1971; and *Portrait d'homme couteau*, published - as was *Interdit de séjour* - first in 1969, revisited and reworked, as noted by the author in a parenthesis on its final page, both in 1970 and again in 1974, and ultimately republished in 1978 in a shorter "version très remaniée," as Gilles Sebban describes it in his recent quasi-autobiographical study of Duvert (141).

Beyond drawing critical attention to the aggressive revisionism by Duvert

in his early novels, our focus here on *Portrait d'homme couteau* will consider the following questions: How does the 1969 version shed light on the 1978 version? What does Duvert's rewriting of the work reveal about its revision?

narrative? And how might this characteristically transgressive work help us better understand textual evolution in the author's "littérature renversante" (Duvert, "Lecture" 13)?

In a 1969 review of the novel, Andre Dalmas writes in *Le Monde* that *Portrait d'homme couteau* evokes both past and present, rape and murder:

is the transformation undergone by the notion of time in the novel. Present and past, mixed together in this story, are in reality, and at the same time, yesterday's present and today's present, yesterday's past and today's past... The book is an evocation of the rape and murder of a little girl. The book is an evocation of the rape and murder of a little girl ("Press review")

This is an apt description of the first version only. For in the second version, published after Dalmas' review, the victim in and of the text is a young boy. Besides obvious differences such as this and the fact that the second version is almost exactly half the length of the first, the way victimhood is first evoked is notably different in each. The rape-murderer is a *fait accompli* from the start of the second version only. By contrast, from the start of the first version the threat of victimhood is importantly textual and evoked only paratextually. The lexical "portrait" that is established in the work is framed by a haunting epigraph that Duvert borrows from a prose poem by Henri Michaux and from which he takes its title. As a decontextualized fragment from Michaux's "Il écrit," one of forty-two "exorcismes par ruse" (*Epreuves* 9), the epigraphic "Couteau depuis le haut du front jusqu'au fond de lui-même, il veille" which precedes Duvert's text proper proves both threatening and incomplete. Indeed, it is more threatening perhaps because it is incomplete. Here is Michaux's full text:

He writes...

The paper ceases to be paper, little by little, and becomes a long, long table on which comes, directed, he knows it, he feels it, he senses it, the as yet unknown victim, the distant victim who has devolved upon him.

He writes...

His fine, fine ear, his only ear, listens to a wave coming, fine, fine, and a following wave coming from a distant age and space to direct, to bring the victim who will have to give in.

His hand is getting ready.

And what about him? He's just watching.

With a knife from the top of his forehead to the core of his being, he keeps watch, ready to intervene, ready to slice, to decapitate what is not would not be.

not his, to slice into the wagon that the overflowing Universe is pushing towards him, ready to decapitate anything that is not 'HIS' victim...,

He writes... (Proofs 117-18)

When re-placed in context, read intertextually and as part of the Michaudian text from which it is excerpted, severed, and which, as Marianne Beguelin notes, could have as its own epigraph "De l'écriture considérée comme un assassinat" (*Henri Michaux* 84), this ominous and appropriated sentence fragment is a paratextual preview of victimhood both in and by the text. The paper in Michaux's text is transformed through writing, through the metamorphosis of creation, the "torture" of imagination (Stoltzfus, *Postmodern* 45) into the executioner's table on which decapitation is the fate to be met by anybody other than the intended victim of the unidentified male scribe. Similarly, the prose of Duvert's novel serves as a stage for and of violation-both imagined and textual.

An early theoretical text by Duvert on his craft positions him very much in allegiance with the practitioners of the *nouveau roman*. If near the beginning of the Michaudian text to which the first version of *Portrait d'homme couteau* owes its epigraph we see a writer already at work writing, near the beginning of this text, titled "La lecture introuvable," we see an iconified female writer in front of a blank page, poised to put pen to anthropomorphized paper:

A solitary woman in her thirties, almost elegant, is sitting at a pretty table; behind her is a fireplace, probably adorned with a vase of flowers; to her right is a lamp; perhaps there is a cup of coffee on the table. But the most important thing is her gaze, the dominant feature of an expressive triad: dreamy eyes, pen in hand, blank sheets of paper waiting to be written (3).

But in the same way that the writer's page in Michaux's text is transformed and its victims transposed, this idealized image, which for Duvert "[makes] literature appear as the magic of a Word that is transformed into gold" (3-4), will quickly be dismantled, distorted. What this writer will produce, what will be narrated in her text will predictably be unoriginal, repetitive and traditional. Prosaic pastiche, Balzacian balderdash, it will amount to little more than "order, coherence, decency, hierarchies, chronology and censorship [...]"

the textual replica of society and the man it engenders" (6). Like many of his contemporaries, Duvert takes issue with this idealized aesthetic mould in which brainwashed generations of readers believe

that in literature "les ratages, les incohérences, les contradictions, les blancs et les marginalia" have no place, are merey flaws, symptomatic of "fiction mal faite" (9). In the "acceptable" literary currency of the time, conformity and a strict adherence to realist norms are *de rigueur*:

the conformist novel is both conforming and restorative; it offers everyone a fictive that puts floating reality back on its feet and justifies it by showing that every man and every act has its place, its role, its meaning, its narrative [...] [This] shows how, in such a subtly policed universe, writing and reading are the same listening to order (10).

As did others whose works appeared in print under the auspices of Jérôme Lindon's Editions de Minuit, Duvert thought it essential to escape this hackneyed, sterile "littérature d'instituteur," which for him was no better than parody: "les succédanés, des ancêtres ou des fragments du grand récit bourgeois" (6). The process of freeing the novel, "pierre philosophale [qui] représente la littérature" (4) from its conformist shackles proves ultimately for Duvert to be two-pronged: unwriting, rewriting: unwriting by rewriting. For Duvert, writing will therefore ultimately be to undo by redoing:

The first liberation, and perhaps the only one that matters, is therefore to describe the forms of the subject, its body, its desire, its violence, and to rewrite what language has killed even if it were to be their non-existence. This adventurous task can liberate the word and the speaker; "sex and drugs", as the newspapers say, undoubtedly contribute to de-writing; but we can only see art re-writing. This is the twofold condition that must be met if the social real is to cease to remain within the very person who rejects it-in his desire, his perception, his jouissance, (15-16)

The "désécriture" at the heart of and cutting a definitive path through *Portrait d'homme couteau* is revealed, for example, in the myriad sequences riddling it with unexpected blank spaces, jarring syntax, sentence fragments, narrative alternatives, ironic precisions, and editorializing. In typical *nouveau roman* style, generative themes in this work are privileged over the conventional literary norms of plot, suspense, and character (Stoltfus 114). In this "rape fantasy redux," we follow-albeit difficultly-a shadowy older man as he spies upon and stalks prepubescent girls through windows, doors, and railings,

before-or is it after?-entrapping, raping and killing one-or is it several?-of them. Her (their?) mutilated body (bodies?) is (are?) left to rot in

the sun or as carrion to be devoured by a voracious raptor which in one part of the text falls dead from the sky but, through the miracle or illogic of textual recombination, is ultimately resurrected. Incoherent, hesitant, starting and stopping, such sequences reveal the "pulverization" of reality in the work (Stoltzfus, "Aesthetics" 108), as well as what Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver have demonstrated elsewhere to be the "complex intersections" of rape and representation ("Rereading" 1).

Despite their being part of an already discontinuous text, one whose logic is violated (Stoltzfus 115) through aleatory associations or subversive bricolages (Toloudis 27), and in which the rape-murderer is never actually described but inscribed yet rendered incomprehensible because the "event" is fragmented or scattered (Higgins 308), several obtuse sequences still stand out syntactically in Duvert's prose. A series of impressionistic images-wind on a knife, dampness in the nighttime air, a broken cup from a young girl's tea set, and which is one of the thematic codes symbolically representing the violation that has been suppressed from the "story" per se (Higgins 308), evidence furthermore of the work's "rhetoric of elision" (Higgins and Silver 5)-is, for example, followed by a jarring and triple staccato

clear eyes a neighbourly face they were there (76, intentional spaces).

It is set apart not only by its odd syntax and because it stands alone on the page but by the spaces between its parts and which punctuate it.

Yet no matter how disruptive, such sequences are still readable. They manage somehow to harbor sense: the face could, after all, be one of many; or the eyes could be his. By contrast, other portions of Duvert's text resemble the seemingly bombed-out manor that is haunted by the elusive "homme couteau." Mere lexical ruins, they are fragments cut off from the textual whole, floating signifiers in an already disturbed and disturbing jumble of words.

Take, for instance, the following piece which is also unusually set apart and whose incompleteness is punctuated apostrophically. It follows a series of paragraphs that appear to depict in a small garden the essence-less and empty "cardboard figure" (Stoltzfus 111) that is the novel's anti-protagonist. Whereas an apostrophe typically joins or marries vowels through the omission of one of them, here the apostrophe unwrites, indeed suspends any possibility for

marriage:

Sitting with your hands clasped between your legs, your right hand covers your left, squeezing it.

each street has disappeared and he faces the wall, rich in decoration, paintings, photographic portraits, engravings, tapestries, shelves of curious knick-knacks, etc.

while outside, the (116)

This sentence that begins with and emphasizes union-joined, covered, held hands-and ends with rupture-the definite article without the referent-is moreover followed and called into question by the fragment on the page beside it:

*where
it can't be (117)*

Is the "au-dehors" the referent for the "où"? Does the demonstrative "cela" refer to what has just been articulated? Or should we understand it in the context of-and thus contradicted by-the possibilities on the page following it, by what appears still to come, to be imagined, sketched, represented: "Cela se peut tracer, représenter encore" (118)?

Like these elusive motifs, these merely "textual" and never "referential" (Smith 348) Duvertian strands, other sentences of the narrative are suspended half-way through then taken up again a paragraph or more after being left in limbo. This sequence, for instance, in which a sentence is suspended dramatically in its middle only to be taken up again one paragraph later, follows another impressionistic and incomplete image of what may be the dessicated body of the-a?- rape-murder victim and which, like her partially decomposed body, is missing a crucial part of itself ("le lourd été lui a volé sa peau, ses membres, ses organes. Rising roads, caravans, lorries, women in straw hats who have", 142):

He took a few steps along a diagonal of the room, which was completely empty.

He walked over to the table. It was at crotch height, leaning against the wall where the window was.

He walks to the middle

*He throws the cup on the floor and it shatters; a puddle of black, syrupy liquid.
He brings one hand to the*

tap; the other hand, underneath, holds a cup. It fills with water.

of the room and sits down on the edge of the table; he stretches out his legs and supports his feet by resting them on the couch. (143)

Its fragmentary nature punctuated and rehearsed by the noun "milieu," which temporarily and spatially suspends it, this sentence is completed one paragraph later ("Il marche jusqu'au milieu" joining "de la pièce [...]").

Other sections of Duvert's novel reveal sentence fragments with neither beginnings nor apparent ends, as if suspended. Paragraphs separate them, dramatize their incompleteness and seem sometimes contradictory, sometimes corrective, sometimes conciliatory. A sequence from the novel's second-last page is a case in point:

nothing else, there is no house above it

rather, a wooden building, or one built with the meagre stones of this countryside

on the roof, meticulously interlocking slates from the Loire region along the walls, all around, tall withered trees, frayed like old beanpoles

nothing else, the same thing, just the same (189)

This ironic textual self-correction ("plutôt") in a text that is characterized by vagueness and instability proves to be a prosaic ploy that Duvert repeats multiple times. It further complicates, compounds, if not aggravates the textual self-questioning, the shifting, uncertain nature of the novelistic whole and proves to be a hallmark of his early experimental works. Indeed, criss-crossing Duvert's entire novel are scenes that are self-contradictory, rewritten as though to undo or "unwrite" what has come before. Suggesting narrative unreliability or textual instability, such scenes are juxtaposed with other sequences in which a narrative presence tries to emerge, to suggest at least the possibility-some semblance of-direction, certainty or precision in an otherwise unreliable textual wasteland.

In fact, from the very first page of the novel, narrative indeterminacy is established as a given. This is underlined in multiple ways. First, by a haphazard shifting of tenses, present to past, back to present: "il tient," "il lève," "il a fait," "il a marche," "il marche" (9). Similarly, colours are never fixed: "Il a marche vers la table, de bois blanc, ou jaunâtre" (9). Furthermore, what appears beyond repair is a few sentences further in the text presented, or represented in perfect state: "Having taken out the cup, he drops it; it breaks [...] He approaches one

hand to the tap and, underneath, the other hand, which holds the cup filling with water" (9). Moreover, a knife that cannot be stuck in the plaster of a wall is a few paragraphs even further on firmly stuck there: "He takes this knife and sticks it in the wall in front of him, the knife does not fit in the plaster, leaves a wound and falls; not to the ground, but to the table [.....] He grabs it [...] and drops it [...]" (9).

the knife and tries to pull it away from the wall. He can't do it, though he pulls on the handle with both hands (10-11). Likewise, a bathtub can at the same time be full and empty: "[] l'eau coule dans la baignoire [...] le débit du robinet augmente. The bathtub is empty []" (12). Or water can be both hot and cold: "L'eau se réchauffe (...) L'eau est froide [.....]" (12-13). By the same token, night can be day: "(...) une chute glaciale d'eau nocturne (...) Sous le soleil, plein midi [...]" (22-23). Just as illogically, a door can be missing a handle but also have a handle: "The outside handle has been removed (...) The bulb, also broken, has two dead, twisted antennae, a slightly brighter yellow than the door handle, of a very pale, hand-polished metal []" (25).

As though battling with themselves, these sequences of impossibility are further juxtaposed with sequences where reliability, stability seems at least a possibility. Peppering, as though to ground, this "narrative on the loose" (Phillips 154) are adverbial assurances, last-ditch efforts by a quasi-omniscient, but mostly absent narrator to rein things in, to reground the text by unwriting, rewriting it: "précisément" (20), "en vérité" (24), "plutôt" (25), "sans doute" (35, 150), "à dire vrai" (37), "done" (120), and "certainement" (150).

Of course, many of these techniques are neither unique to this novel nor to Duvert, who because he is "firmly rooted in the *nouveau roman*" (Benderson 8), is not, literarily speaking, any different from those of the other *nouveaux romanciers* (Robbe-Grillet, "What" 98). What makes Duvert's early novels compelling, however, is how this "unwriting," how mutilation of and in the work is further complicated by rewriting both within each and across each version of it. Marguerite Duras, his literary contemporary, for example, might compulsively rewrite, rework her texts for different genres; think, for example

of *Le Square* or *L'Amante anglaise*, which were first novels then plays, or *L'Amant*, which was a novel in which she rewrote *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique*, which itself was then adapted for film by Jean-Jacques Arnaud, then rewritten, "re-visioned," as *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* (Angelini). Whereas Duvert unwrites and then rewrites his works always for and within the same genre. Sentences and entire paragraphs are copied, transposed, moved, broken up, unwritten, reworked in being rewritten within and between both versions of the

novel.

The second version of the work, published, as we have noted, without the Michaudian epigraph, is only 94 pages in length, compared to the first, which is 190 pages. It is narrated in the first person rather than the third person. We have also observed that whereas for much of the first version the rape-murder-or murders?-is only a narrative possibility, obsessively inscribed in but also obsessively erased in the text (Higgins and Silver 2), the rape-murder-one of several?-is a *fait accompli* from the very first paragraph of the second. The novel opens with the description of a mutilated body of a little boy:

*The body of a young boy lies in the grass.
His lower abdomen looks mutilated, but the blood wetting his penis and testicles
comes from a long open wound near his navel.
It's dark and raining (7)*

Besides these obvious differences between the two versions of the novel, there are also similarities between them. Entire sections seem very nearly repeated, preserved in toto. Take, for instance, this sequence in which the mutilated, decomposing body, the corporeal deformation at the heart of the text mirrors the rhetorical and physical disfiguration (Higgins and Silver 4), the self-destructive, self-mutilatory narration contextualizing, framing, and reframing it:

*The body unfolds and expands, its cells explode and flow, it grows slowly as a
foetus matures. Birth in the grass the corpse grows (83, first published version)*

Albeit identically worded, upon closer inspection, however, this sequence that portrays the laid-out body of the-a?-victim is different in an

important regard: the way it-as text-is laid out on the printed page. Not only is this body different, presumably the body of the little boy from the opening paragraph in the second version and not that of the little girl of the first, but the way it is presented, represented, unwritten in its rewritten form on the page rehearses its difference. Preceded by the fragment "presque rien à présent" (48) on the same page and above it, the first sentence of the sequence is positioned differently. The verb "exploder" is cut in two by a hyphen as though in the second version further to dramatize visually the breaking apart of organic matter it ostensibly describes:

*The body unfolds and expands, its cells explode and flow, it grows slowly as a
foetus matures. Born in the grass, the corpse grows (48, second published*

version)

In addition to incorporating sections very nearly mirroring their original versions, in the second published version of *Portrait d'homme couteau* Duvert more obviously reproduces sections that he adjusts only slightly. A plural definite article and corresponding plural verb form and adjective, for instance, might substitute for a singular definite article and single verb form and adjective and vice-versa as in the following sequence where "Jour de sommeil. *The street is grey. Les chiens n'aboient pas [.....]*" in the second published version (35, emphasis added) takes the place of the original "Jour de sommeil. *The streets are grey. A dog doesn't bark []*" (98, emphasis added). Similarly, minor textual revision can be observed near the end of the second version of the novel. What in the first version reads as

and heavy bunches of aphids, perhaps, like a black, swarming mantle, with a steel-blue sheen, encircling the stems of the dahlias-they continue to burst from their tubers, for no one, ugly flower this stupid face of fourteen July-along the stems, and under the long, vulgar green leaves, immobile aphids, their proboscis pricked in the channels of the plant, there, on an abandoned flowerbed []
(189-90, first published version)

is still recognizable in the second:

and heavy bunches of aphids, perhaps, a

a mantle of black insects, with a purplish sheen, covering the stems of dahlias along the stems and under the large, raw-green leaves, thousands of aphids motionless, their proboscis pricked in the plant's canals, there, on a neglected bed [.....] (94, second published version)

Here the elimination of a few words, "comme," "insectes," "grouillant," "bleu d'acier," or the entire "- ils continuent à jaillir de leurs tuberculoses, pour personne, fleur laide ce niais visage du quatorze juillet-" (189) does not substantially modify the text, however.

Yet in other sections, Duvert seems substantively to rework his text. Beyond the shift in narrative perspective in the second version and the change of sex of the rape-murder victim-or victims?-, there are shifts in logic and agent that confirm the work's widely ranging and contradictory nature (Smith 347). A bathtub in the first version becomes a stream in the second. Or a bleeding hand is in the first version of the novel due to a knife cut, whereas in the second, it is due to a bird:

[He threw the knife on the ground. The knife didn't crash into the ground, but it did hit the stones, which were silent that night. The impact caused the ferrule to turn and the blade to bend towards the handle, with which it formed a sharp angle.

This pinched angle on a finger causes blood to flow [.....] (22, first published version)

becomes in the second version:

The blade of this knife can be folded into a groove in the handle; children always keep a similar one in their pocket, to cut or carve things, or to play at throwing it at a tree trunk, a door or the ground. If the joint between the handle and the blade is too loose, the knife tends to reform under impact rather than stick: it's then a bad, dangerous knife, constantly turning into an aggressive bird's beak.

This beak pinches a finger and blood flows (39-40, second published version).

In the same way that a knife is transformed into the beak of a voracious bird in the rewritten version, entire sections are transposed, such as the sequence at the start of the second, revealing the rape-murderer of the victim-one of several?-as a given. Other passages are positioned differently in the sequencing of the text, coming earlier or later in the second version. But they are broken up. Mutilated textually not only within versions but across them to come both before and after, they thereby suggest dislocation to be key within Duvert's literary project of unwriting and rewriting. Hence a scene in which the old male pedophile-murderer considers a hair in the first version of the novel is broken up and decontextualized in the second:

Among the grasses shines a strand of chestnut horses with golden highlights, very fine to caress. It is laced with a blue and gold ribbon. The hair is fresh, but its perfume is from the back of a wardrobe: mothballs, lavender flowers in a cheesecloth bag, old leather with the scent of a ball.

The wick is stained with earth from underneath. He scratches it with his fingernail, but a damp, dull stain remains. (73, first published version)

In the second version, the lock of hair is blond, not chestnut. We also learn earlier on that it is encrusted with soil. Similarly, it is not only observed by the pedophile-murderer as we see in this third-person narration, but is picked up by the first-person narrator-his own hair blowing in the wind at the same time:

[...] among the

I pick it up, but it's soiled with dirt underneath. I stand up, the wind moves a lock of my own hair against my eyes.

(15-16, second published version)

In the second version, however, Duvert transposes this description with a later one from the first. The lock of hair that in the first version has presumably been preserved from the dead victim is in the second version still on the victim-

to-be's head, still very much part of a whole. As such, it is still to be collected, and the sequence describing it is cut in two, disrupted:

The child climbed onto the high racks of the pyre.

His knees are touching the roof structure, and he's knocked by a joist where a nail is stuck upside down. He pulls on the nail and throws it away, into the rubbish strewn across the floor.

Her hair is fresh, but its perfume is from the back of a wardrobe: mothballs, lavender flowers in a cheesecloth sachet, old leather with ballroom fragrances. I've tucked them away between the pages of a book, like a dried flower-and, like a flower, I breathe them in, touch them, expose them to the sun, lace them with a blue ribbon; ribbon and hair form a quaint, singular, vaguely ridiculous object that I put away never to be seen again.

(34-5, second published version)

Leon Roudiez notes that while shaky, the relationship between text and referent is still recognizable in *Récidive*. Yet in *Portrait d'homme couteau* this tenuous relationship is more in conflict with it ("Is" 156). It is clear, though, that in *Portrait d'homme couteau* Duvert is also repeating many of the textual strategies he employs in *Récidive*. Indeed, both versions of both novels are foils for a strategy of subversion in which unwriting is a precursor for and basis for rewriting. Expanding upon techniques of the New-Novel typically applied within a single version of a work, unwriting in Duvert's novels is exemplified through rewriting across versions of a work.

But having mastered this technique in and across the versions of his early prose works, Duvert predictably tires of it and changes textual strategies in his subsequent works. Thus the homotextual violence that defines his early prose gives way to a markedly more traditional style of writing. Having observed in his review of the 1979 novel, *L'île Atlantique*, that Duvert used the narrative techniques of the *nouveau roman* to explore new realms, reminding one of what

the novels of Jean Genet might be were they rewritten by the likes of Robbe-Grillet, Thiher notes that in this later and more "readable" novel portraying the world of childhood Duvert has "reverted to fairly traditional modernist techniques." He wonders whether the novelist has somehow tired of

the "excessive experimentation" that characterizes the New Novel, whether in Duvert's earlier works he ultimately reached a limit and needed to change course ("L'île" 595). Echoing Thiher, Bruce Benderson also points to the "conventional realism" of Duvert's later novels. Beyond thematic changes, the absence of the sadistic element-raped, tortured, and murdered young victims-in Duvert's later works underscores what Edward Brongersma surmises to be the author's coming to terms with his inner pedophilic tendencies (106). This change in narrative style, from experimental to traditional, is, Brongersma suggests, a result of Duvert's having written his two unabashedly polemical works of non-fiction, *Le Bon sexe illustré* (1974), in which he exposes the repressive rhetoric of sexual education in France, and *L'Enfant au masculin* (1980), in which he argues in favour of the unfettered sexual liberty of homosexual minors:

It's as if the experience of writing non-fiction has showed him the importance of expressing his ideas as clearly as possible, and as he looked back on his experimental past as a dialogue with himself. From then on, his writings would be turned outward, more overtly political and much more accessible. (9)

Duvert addresses this shift in narratological stance in a 1979 Liberation interview with Guy Hocquenghem and Marc Voline. Embracing once more a classical style of writing rejecting marginalization through, or because of, formal experimentation-"la lecture introuvable" for "la lecture trouvable" or "retrouvable"-Duvert explains:

I'm increasingly interested in ensuring that the things I write can be heard, by which I mean demarginalised. In other words, if I'm writing things that have themselves been completely marginalised by ideology, at least their mode of expression should be such that it circulates.

More stridently, aggressively militant in his views on childhood sexuality, man-boy relationships, a militant, abusive textuality is no longer the context, the creative avenue Duvert favours in his later works. The means of expression that he invented and perfected for himself-unwriting through rewriting-and which we see showcased in his early prose works such as *Récidive* and *Portrait d'homme couteau* is no longer apt for the social criticism on which he embarks in his later years:

*I no longer believe in it for myself. I've done it, yes. But my aim has changed, it's become much more political, a search for action on others. But action as a novelist [...] if I need means that can be called traditional, it's because I'm talking about other things, they're no longer the same kinds of individuals: the same kinds of characters, the same kinds of situations. And each thing has its own means. It's impossible to stage small bourgeois families, working-class families, peasant families etc. as I did, all together in the same package, writing as I did *Interdit de séjour*, for example. It's not feasible. But I haven't burnt them, my books from before. They're there at last, so why do I need any more? There are some very good novelists who have been content to write two or three books in their lives. This is my eleventh book, and I'm starting to need some diversity. Why should I have to write duplicates? ("No" 16)*

In so moving beyond a mere duplication of the textual strategies employed, "packaged" in his early works, Duvert would appear also to be turning from rewriting of, within, and across versions of his novels. Is this third rewritten work that he chooses to mention, to represent his early literary concern, this work first written after *Récidive* and rewritten before *Portrait d'homme couteau*, really "exemplary," though? Is *Interdit de séjour* ultimately the lynchpin of a creative cul-de-sac? Or does it with the two other rewritten novels by Duvert mark a turning point for Duvert? With the author's oeuvre-in all of its "diversity"-having been defined by his death in 2008, it seems timely for critics to give these questions, and all of the brash militantism his oeuvre flaunts both textually in early years and rhetorically in later ones, the full attention they deserve.

California Polytechnic State University

WORKS CITED

- Angelini, Eileen M. "The Lover of North China: Not Just a Rewriting or Re'Vision' of *L'Amant*." *Anuario de cine y literatura en español* 2 (1996): 15-30.
- Béguelin, Marianne. *Henri Michaux: Slave and demiurge*. Lausanne: L'Age d'homme. 1974.
- Benderson, Bruce. "Introduction: The Family on Trial." *Good Sex Illustrated*. By Tony Duvert. Trans. Bruce Benderson. Los Angeles: Semiotext(c), 2007. 7-13.
- Brongersma, E. *Loving Boys: A Multidisciplinary Study of Sexual Relations Between Adult and Minor Males*. Vol. 2. Elmhurst, NY: Global Academic Publishers. 1990.
- Dalmas, André. "Press review. Rev. of *Portrait d'homme couteau*, by Tony

- Duvert. *Le Monde* 1969. Editions de Minuit website.
<http://www.leseditionsdeminuit.eu/f/index.php?sp=liv&livreJd=1615>
Abecedaire malveillant. Paris: Minuit, 1989.
 "La Lecture introuvable." *Minuit* 1 (1972): 2-21.
Portrait d'homme couteau. Paris: Minuit, 1969.
Portrait d'homme couteau (new version). Paris: Minuit, 1978.
 "Tony Duvert: No to the doll child. Interview with Guy Hocquenghem and Marc Voline. *Libération*. 10-11 April 1979. 15-16.
- Higgins, Lynn A., and Silver, Brenda R. "Introduction: Rereading Rape." *Rape and Representation*. Ed. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver. New York: Columbia UP, 1991. I-U,
- Higgins, Lynn A. "Screen/Memory: Rape and Its Alibis in *Last Year at Marienbad*." *Rape and Representation*. Ed. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver. New York: Columbia UP, 1991. 303-21.
- Jellenik, Cathy *A Tripartite Approach to Rewriting in Marguerite Duras, Annie Emaux and Marie Redonnet*. Thesis. U. of Colorado, 2005.
- Kennelly, Brian G. "Rewriting, Rereading Recidive." *Dalhousie French Studies* 67 (2004): 135-42.
- Michaux, Henri *Epreuves, Exorcismes*. Paris: Gallimard, 1946.
- Phillips, John *Forbidden Fictions: Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth-Century French Literature*. London: Pluto, 1999.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain "What Interests Me is Eroticism: An Interview with Germaine Bree." *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts / Critical Texts*. Ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks. Trans. Anne L. Martin. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1979. 87-100.
- Roudiez, Leon S. "Is There a New Novel Today? *Three Decades of the French New Novel*. Ed. Lois Oppenheim. Trans. Lois Oppenheim and Evelyne Costa de Beauregard. Urbana: U of Illinois P. 1986. 152-73.
- Sebhan, Gilles *Tony Duvert: L'enfant silencieux*. Paris: Denoël, 2010.
- Smith, Stephen "Toward a Literature of Utopia." *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts / Critical Texts*. Ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1979. 341-52.
- Stollzfiis, Ben "The Aesthetics of Nouveau Roman and Innovative Fiction." *The International Fiction Review* 10.2 (1983): 108-16.
Postmodern Poetics: Nouveau Roman and Innovative Fiction. Occasional Papers in Language, Literature and Linguistics. Series A, Number 35. March 1987.
- Thiher, Allen Rev. of *L'île atlantique*. By Tony Duvert. *World Literature Today* 54.4 (1980): 595.
 Rev. of *Recidive*. By Tony Duvert. *World Literature Today* 51.2 (1977): 249.
- Toloudis, C. "Metaphor and *Mise en abyme* in the *Nouveau Roman*." *The International Fiction Review* 10.1 (1983): 27-32.

IVrEKHIT UE SflJHR

BANNED FROM ENTERING

Interdit de séjour was published in 1969 at the same time as *Portrait d'homme couteau*. It was reworked in 1971, with pagination that eliminated the fragmentation of the text into scattered columns and blocks.

When all meaning gives way (Rosine Liénard, *L'Unebévue* n°32, November 2014)

There is only this reality. The reality of things we thought we were avoiding - but which have incomprehensibly absorbed the essence of the acts we were performing in front of them. Against our will, they will make us forever bound up with our truth in every minute that we are subjected to them, and through time, and by the sole constraint of this continuous presence of what we did not choose to make present while we were pretending to create something.

Tony Duvert, *Immediate memory* (1).

That was it. I didn't see anything, I didn't want anything, I didn't understand anything, I didn't meet anyone, I didn't want to do anything I did. It meant nothing. But I wouldn't admit that for the world. Is that clear, I hope? So let's shuffle the cards.

Tony Duvert, *Recidivism* (2).

A wandering reader

As soon as you start reading Tony Duvert's first novels (3), *Récidive*, *Portrait d'Homme Couteau* and *Interdit de séjour*, you are immediately struck by the beauty of his style, which expresses the city, the walls, the road and nature as if in a poem. We follow the wanderings of the characters, running away from the family, from the social order, running away from music, each element - nature, character, event - becoming the object of repetition, of becoming. Trying to follow a narrative, we are put under tension: who is speaking, who is watching, who is hunting, who is manipulating and playing the other, we lose the thread, suspense in the hollow of the reading. We follow a pattern, a time unfolded, then suspended, to be

taken up again from another place, by another character, with no full stop...

Subversion of our reading, of our gaze, identities undone. Readers, we find ourselves disoriented, worried, sometimes even struck by lightning, put at the heart of a writing project that 'attacks' the reader. He pursued this project right up to his last book, and never wavered from it.

It was a project he outlined in articles written at the same time as his first three novels, "La lecture Introuvable" (4), "La parole et la fiction. A propos du "Libéra" (5)" (novel by Robert Pinget), and his text accompanying the exhibition by the painter Paul Hastaire entitled "La mémoire immédiate (6)".

Her writing machine uses descriptions and tracking shots. The mirrors, or sometimes the cinema screen, serve as hinges, places where the narrative "I" shifts from one character to another, sometimes from one sex to another. His character often draws, with a knife tracing the ground: "He took a razor blade and drew a red star on my stomach, with my navel at the centre. He carefully lay down on top of me and imprinted the star on himself. He drew very skilfully on my skin [...] I'm telling the story of a suicide (7)". "Savagery, freedom, the debris of hatred": the violence can reach a crescendo, with his infinite patience and gentleness towards the little boys as a counterpoint.

Through writing, drawings, the body and violence, he explores and dismantles memory - of the narrator, of the character we follow, of the reader himself who loses the thread: "The past of memory is like the past of fiction: it is a sign-censor of this setting back of the present and of the closure it undergoes", he writes in "La lecture introuvable". And what is experienced here and now is immediately recomposed, as we read in "Immediate Memory":

"Our truly lived images begin when all meaning gives way, recedes, abolishes itself. The cement of an anonymous threshold, the flutter of a silent staircase, the angle of two walls, accentuated by an impassive light that barely contrasts with the muted greyness of a bedroom, are like the permanence or the instantaneous birth of this other memory. [...] A ray of light along a yawning door, a silhouette that disappears around the corner of a house in the evening, the deep glow of absolute black, the lines that make up the interior of the solids where we live, here, at home, where we don't look,

and which seem like so many intangible, hard signs of a solitude that we don't look at either".

Is this ray of light of the *same order of experience* as that of Freud's 'fetishist' at the moment of fixation of the symptom? This certain 'shine on the

nose', the remnant and censure of a childhood memory, a borderline experience, an unbearable reality, which is inscribed by the shift from *to glance* to *glänzt*, the suture and erotic chiselling of the young boy's language that allows him to cover and fix the unbearable vision of the female sex - it is in this order of the unthinkable that Duvert's art will unfold and attack his readers.

The visible, constantly split by "the ray of light", the space between two doors, the mirror, all openings to the timeless present, insistent and censored: "imposing this gap", "contemplating this other present, immemorial and cruel, next to ours", "there is only this real. That of the things our gaze had thought to avoid - but which incomprehensibly absorbed the essence of the acts we were performing in front of them".

So let's shuffle the cards

"Shuffling the cards" is a key to his writing. In his article "La parole et la fiction. A propos du "Libéra" (8)", he explains the work he does to ensure that the writing of the story, as it evolves from the first to the second version, produces and accentuates its effects on the reader:

"The exceptional interest of *Libéra* lies in the fact that it shows a writer who obliterates the novel by grappling with its demands, its arbitrariness, and even with its dumbing-down journalistic aspect. A writer whose narrative effort aims to destroy in minute detail the literary diktat on which the whole discourse is based. In short, a fiction that the spoken word constitutes, and, violently, that it erases; the appeal of the work lies in the perfection of this inspired, violent, controlled, tonic game (9)".

He quotes Pinget in the afterword to his book:

"I am not interested in everything that can be said or signified, but in the way it is said. And once I have chosen this way [...], which is therefore a prerequisite, it will dictate both the composition and the substance of the discourse [...].

...] The thread of speech cuts through a fiction made on purpose a thousand times over (all subservient to the need for these cuts), in two contradictory movements that coincide and interact. The counterpoint of these movements remains fairly simple in principle; but in its execution, it is rich, prolix, tangled, meticulous, revolving - similar, in its circularity, to this engraving by M. C. Escher, which depicts one hand drawing another that draws the first. But in *Le Libéra*, we have to imagine that one of the hands erases the hand that draws it; it is not possible for the hand that draws to predominate over the hand that destroys it,

or for the hand that erases to predominate over the hand that creates it. The work will be the end and the place of this logical drama.

Publishing a second version of each of his first three novels, Tony Duvert intensified his writing.

The text functions like a speeding moped, with moments of hunting, of running away with the body, a drifting body that we follow for a moment, plunging us into the reality of the event or its distortions. It's the child who enters the house, wanders through it; he is the observer/observed, the voyeur of the body, the lover of the traces of the escape, the flight, the hunt. This is the textual machinery. Is it the repetition of the elopement or the reiteration of the doubt of the reader/narrator/character(s) that becomes the very locus of the wandering, wandering from one to another, from one sign to another - the link will remain enigmatic, keeping us in suspense... and reader, we adhere to the writer's gaze as it sweeps across the rural scene, infiltrating and revealing.

In *Portrait d'homme couteau*, it is not so much the rape and murder of a child that I read as the murder of a narrative that, like an infinite ribbon, unwinds, turns, slides and loops, from the cut to the index finger, ... to the finger, ... to the thumb, by the blade of the knife that wounds the child's hand, the man's hand. Is it he who wounds himself in a persistent, insistent stroke from him to the other to us? The bird also circulates, its beak searching the wound, the open flange of the skin - we don't know who the "he" is who "threw" the knife on the ground. The knife didn't get stuck, it just hit the silent stones that night. The impact caused the ferrule to turn and the blade to bend towards the handle, with which it forms a sharp angle. This angle pinched a finger and blood flowed". 2nd version: "If the joint between the knife and the blade is too loose, the knife tends to close up under impact, rather than digging in: it's then a bad knife, dangerous, constantly turning into a bird's beak.

aggressive. This beak pinches a finger and blood flows (10)". A wound in the child's stomach, could he be dead? And then, a wound, the same one, near the umbilicus, that of the narrator... identification, a crossed mirror or a repeated gesture? Could it be that the child, now an adult, is remembering? It is no longer through the screen (of the mirror or the cinema), nor through the yawn of a door or a window well that the passage from one body to another is produced, but through the thread or the beak of a knife in its gaping or scarred incisions.

In "La lecture introuvable", he goes on to talk about the making of this blurred writing:

"To recognise oneself in these empty canvases against which rose the miserable magic of what we believed to be real, and the ashen being of flesh that is no longer incarnate. As if their appearance had only expressed this absence and tirelessly pointed to the painful inhumanity of the all-too-human that we carry within us, which is none other than death.

So, even though we might think that a murder has taken place, he describes his handwriting as scraps of paper thrown out in the wet rain:

"They look like bits of cloth torn from a shirt, a body garment, long unravelled like an unsatisfied desire... wrapping around a form that we can imagine, a body abandoned, alive or not, ancient or modern. I no longer need this leaf, which has come out of me. [...] It could fly away like any other flesh, vegetable or animal, also promised to rot, to lacerate, which also macerates in the sun, in the shade, in the rain, under the snow - since all matter is affected (11).

And to put it bluntly, it is the reader who is under attack at the same time:

"[...] a true reading - adventurous, not cathartic, it is the discovery of the first utterance of strangeness. For the language never spoken of a real never said - the body, the object, nonsense (12). [...] We could go on with this inventory of non-readings; the ones we have identified at least say the essential. Subversive art is not just about overturning the reality of the novel; it is about attacking the reader himself, and from the reality of which the traditional novel claims to be a part, it is the reader who is the target of the subversive art.

claims to be copied, it demonstrates its roots in the man who expects it to be reproduced in literature (13)".

In *Interdit de séjour* (14), the "fugue" is no longer in trains, stations, abandoned places, houses, shacks, but in the city, gardens, latrines, buildings, stations, brothels, with explosive crudity, in loops and interlockings. Loops of places, characters, interlocking scenes, windings from one to another... that are only thoughts of one, that become series of street dredges, encounters, everything is contaminated, Paris and those who are there. Duvert writes rage:

Destroying them, flaying them as if their teeth and hands were steel weapons, the edges of a bottle broken on the corner of a table", "violence was all I wanted, and those smooth, troubled moments when the others were asleep, giving up, that in-between time when you began to live, simply and savagely, free to be nothing more than a part of yourself, rough, abrupt, revealed at last" (15). [...] an obscene state, short, intense explosions, close to dreams, a few

minutes for which one lived for years in impatience and restraint, and which the rising day annihilated, leaving only an indifferent trace deep in the body, the origin of which could have been quite different: weariness of the limbs, weariness of the eyes, crushing sleep".

And the reader gets lost in the whirlwind of names:

"My eyes threw out memories I took them in flight they move away they evaporate I don't need anyone they paraded in front of the madwomen and said their name the one they had received the cry the chirping murmur that the gang invented when they saw them blurred images simple as a pantomime role titles of an imaginary court toponymy of a terroir drawn by the stains of a sheet where the bodies deposited their honey moulded their shape names pronounced in the squares the boxes and the welcoming kisses words silhouettes without which one could not identify oneself and whose madwomen marked each one like the wild beasts sprinkle their path and their food with urine and quickly designated the strangers before the darkness of the dances and the alcoves swallowed them enumerated the Joyful the Deceased the Tigress the Marvel the Icy the Scratching the Poussive the Ticklish the Murdered the Mem- Vit-en-fleur Tournedos Grêle-aux-esses Oignon-blanc Pisse-au-rond Midi-une Vermicelle Rebelote

P'tit-salé Tour-Eiffel l'Avaleuse la Rêveuse l'Enervée la Blécharde l'Envahie la Colique la Sept-ciels la Fripée la Pâlotte la Nitouche la Danseuse miss Truitonne miss Platine miss Pépettes la Serrure la Masseur la Toutou la Sucette l'Arlésienne la Gargouille la Poivrée la Molasse la Dardante l'incubée la Fendue la Gagneuse la Passoire la Chamelle la Zoizeau "

NOTES

1. Tony Duvert, "La mémoire immédiate" May 1977, in *Un homme parle*, éditions bleues.
2. Tony Duvert, *Récidive*, 1st version, Minuit, 1967 p. 36.
3. *Récidive*, 1st version-ed 1967, 200 pages. 2nd version 1974 published by Minuit, 1976, 143 pages; *Portrait d'homme couteau*, 1st version, Minuit, 1969, 190 pages. 2nd version 1970 and 1974 published in 1978, also by Minuit, 94 pages; *Interdit de séjour*, 1st version written in 1967, published in 1969 by Minuit - The 2nd version appeared with the subtitle 'nouvelle édition refondue', on 5 December 1973 - The author indicates after the full stop 'Sept. 1967 - March 1968 (revised in 1971)'.

4. Tony Duvert, "La lecture introuvable", No. 1 of the journal *Minuit*, 1972, in *Un homme parle*, éditions bleues.
5. Tony Duvert, "La parole et la fiction. A propos du "Libéra"", *Revue Critique* no. 252, May 1968, in *Un homme parle*, éditions bleues.
6. Tony Duvert, "Immediate memory", op. cit.
7. Tony Duvert, *Récidive*, 2nd version, op. cit. p. 116.
8. It first appeared in May 1968, in issue no. 252 of the review *Critique* - it was rewritten and republished in January 1984, when Pinget's novel was republished, in the form of a booklet offered with it - *Minuit* being Pinget's publisher as well as Duvert's.
9. *Ibid*, pp. 3-4.
10. Tony Duvert, *Portrait d'homme couteau*, (2nd version), op. cit, pp. 39-40.
11. *Ibid*, p. 87.
12. *Ibid*, p. 63.
13. *Ibid*, p. 69.
14. Tony Duvert, *Interdit de séjour*, op. cit.
15. *Ibid*, 2nd version, pp. 121-122.

Funereal odyssey of the homosexual bis? Rereading Tony Duvert's *Interdit de séjour* (Brian G. Kennedy, *Dalhousie French Studies* 106, 2015)

Antiliterature is (...) inseparable from the time in which it takes place; its image of the world is not the hypothesis of a future of perception and of the subject, but the adventurous rewriting of what the present suffocates and hides from itself.

Tony Duvert, "La Lecture introuvable" (The Untraceable Reading)

After being hailed as "le jeune auteur qui monte, qu'on ne va pas tarder à citer et à imiter" (Poirot-Delpech), the polemical novelist and diatribist Tony Duvert suffered from indirect, insidious censorship (Phillips 13). Having in 1973 received France's prestigious Prix Médicis for his fifth novel *Paysage de fantaisie*, lauded as a "très grand livre" (Chapsal 74), Duvert's works thereafter all but disappeared from the public eye. As a consequence, now more than a half-decade after Duvert's death, most of his dozen works of fiction as well as his two book-length essays remain unknown by the general public and overlooked by most critics. The Modern Language Association International Bibliography, for example, only lists a handful of studies on him.

Despite Duvert's short-lived critical acclaim during the twenty years of

"notoriety" he might have enjoyed as a literary figure from 1969 to 1989 (Henderson, "Politics" 5), the relative paucity of critical engagement since then with Duvert's oeuvre "clandestine" (Simonin 423), "honni ou oublié" (Gobble 30) can probably also be explained by the author's portrayal of non-mainstream sexual relations, including homosexuality, sadomasochism, and necrophilia. In the wake of the "new puritanism" encouraging chastity that had emerged with AIDS in France in the 1980s (Phillips 10). Duvert's unapologetic promotion in his "littérature renversante" ("Lecture" 13) of "pédophilie," the interest he showed for what he calls the "fruit mûr" of "garçons impubères" (*L'Enfant* 21) coupled with the nun-consensual sexual violence, the "startling" aggression and alienation" (Benderson, "Diary" 11) characterizing their troubling content was shunned. As Academic Goncourt member Francois Nourrissier posits, the themes privileged by Duvert "sent(ent) le soufre" (7). Indeed, as historian Anne Simonin suggests, Duvert's literary output was consequently "crushed by [his] opprobrium" (423).

Those who have been able to look beyond the controversial themes of the bulk of Duvert's works typically mention the formal innovation, the "technique savamment élaborée" (Daltnas) at their heart. Bruce Benderson, Duvert's American translator, for instance "roots" the author firmly in the *nouveau roman* ("Family" 8). Simonin sees Duvert first and foremost as

l'écrivain qui (en) marque la sortie" (4.17). John Phillips believes that Duvert's style reflects a "dear allegiance" to it (152). And reviewer Allen Thihex suggests that Duvert's early works resemble what the prose of the *poète maudit* Jean Genet might have become were it to have been rewritten by Alain Robbe-Grillet, the so-called "pope" of the New Novel (249).

To date Duvert's creative process in and between works has been explored only by us. Focusing on Duvert's early writing technique, we draw attention to the comprehensive, if not "obsessive" revisionism that we argue is evident in the author's novels from the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s. In our study of what we deem the "promiscuous" and "abusive" textuality flaunted across the two published versions of Duvert's first novel, *Récidive*, we claim that in rewriting the 1967 version then republishing it in 1976, Duvert not only makes the ludic and self-conscious work more "readable," as Thibet suggests in his review of it, but broadens its scope. As such, Duvert provides the first of the three novels he rewrote (with *Portrait d'homme couteau* and *Interdit de séjour*) a complex intertextual dimension for the "recidivism" it rehearses front cover to cover as well as between the covers of both of its published versions ("Rewriting" 138). In our subsequent analysis of *Portrait d'homme couteau*,

Duvert's second rewritten novel, we furthermore point to an overlooked theoretical text by the author, "un texte en forme d'éditorial sinon de manifeste" (Poirot-Delpech), as indicative of the creative process at play in and between its 1969 and 1978 versions. At the same time as Duvert belittles the "grand récit bourgeois" by which public schools in France "balzacise(nt) ou flaubertise(nt) les enfants, plus qu'elle(s) ne les alphabétise(nt)" ("Lecture" 6) and embraces "les ratages, les incohérences, les contradictions, les blancs et les marginalia de ce récit social-fiction mal faite" (9), in this contentious text he underscores the liberatory potential of "unwriting" and rewriting:

The first liberation, and perhaps the only important one, is therefore to *describe* the forms of the subject, its body, its desire, its violence, and to *rewrite what language* has to say about them, even if it were to be their non-existence. This adventurous task can liberate the word and the speaker: 'sex and drugs', as the newspapers say, undoubtedly contribute to rewriting; but we can only see art rewriting. This is the twofold condition that must be met if the social real is to cease to remain within the very person who refuses it-in his desire, his perception, his jouissance ("Lecture" 15-16, emphasis added).

As with *Récidive*, in *Portrait d'homme couteau* Duvert's distinctive process of unwriting and rewriting is revealed in the very techniques criticised by the entrenched and traditional literary establishment as out of place, unworthy of fiction (Examples include; the sequences riddling Duvert's novels within and across their published versions with unexpected blank spaces; their jarring syntax; their sentence fragments; their narrative alternatives; their ironic precisions; their editorializing; and their privileging of generative themes over more conventional literary norms of plot, suspense, and character (Stolzfus 114)). We thus note:

both versions of both novels are foils for a strategy of subversion in which unwriting is a precursor for and basis for rewriting. Expanding upon techniques of the New Novel typically applied with a single version of a work, unwriting in Duvert's novels is exemplified through rewriting across versions of a work. ("Rape," emphasis added)

Now in addition to the second versions of *Récidive* and *Portrait d'homme couteau*, Duvert published a second version of *Interdit de séjour*. (John Phillips is incorrect in asserting that Duvert's first novel was "the only one which he considered important enough to rewrite" (Forbidden 152)) Initially penned between September 1967 and March 1968, *Interdit de séjour* was first published in 1969, or at the same time as *Portrait d'homme couteau*. Although then

published in a "nouvelle édition refondue" in 1971 (11; 215) (Roman numerals in parenthetical references throughout this article indicate the published version of the novel being discussed), the work long remained inaccessible: "'forbidden for sale to minors under eighteen', for 'exhibition' and 'advertising'" (Simonin 415). It would therefore seem logical to assume that this work also fits within the same subversive parameters as those of his first two rewritten novels. As such his rewritten third novel can be understood to constitute the last piece in a set of rewritten works that the author intended to be read intertextually, or across their two published versions.

While Duvert does not abandon the aforementioned textual strategies he employs in *Récidive* and *Portrait d'homme couteau*, he adds to his creative repertoire in *Interdit de séjour* most notably through typographic and onomastic manipulation. How then do typographic and onomastic changes further exemplify and develop Duvert's trademark unwriting through rewriting across both of the published versions of *Interdit de séjour*? How, for instance, does the 1969 version of the novel, with its distinctive *mise-en-page* and

multiple sections of capitalized text, shed light on the 1971 version? How do changes within and to the extensive lists of names featured in this work, as well as the addition of text to and the cuts of text from it, help us better understand the importance of intentional and comprehensive rewriting-what Cathy Jeliemk calls the "aesthetics of reiteration" (294)-in Duvert's early works?

While warning readers of the novel's graphic detail, which he observes is "plus que scabreux et cru," reviewer Andre Dalmas also notes the originality of Duvert's mixing of time frames in the 1969 version of both *Portrait d'homme couteau* and *Interdit de séjour*:

what is completely new [...] is the transformation undergone by the notion of novelistic time. Present and past, intermingled in the narrative, are in reality, and at the same time, yesterday's present and today's present, yesterday's past and today's past. So much so that things, beings, reveal at every moment, at the same time as their nature, the stigmata of their ageing, those of ruin, decomposition and death.

In the latter portion of his review of both novels, where he refers specifically to *Interdit de séjour*, Dalmas further ties the original textual layout of Duvert's third novel to its strange content. He suggests that the mysteries of the long funereal homosexual odyssey that Duvert unveils in the work lie within its convoluted, obsessively developed typography:

Interdit de séjour is presented as the long, dark odyssey of the homosexual, who is both an individual and a crowd, but who is protected when he finds himself within that crowd. The book is read in successive stages and in several columns. And this particular typography accentuates and develops, to the point of obsession, the elusive impression given by this uninterrupted account of these nocturnal rambles where places and cities open up, before the narrator's eyes, abysses of strangeness.

If the jarring, Mallarmé-like (4) textual layout of the 1969 version of *Interdit de séjour* accentuates the random juxtaposition of the myriad sexual encounters revealed in the work and thereby differentiates it from most other literary-works, Duvert's stripping of this "experimental" (Sebhan 142) typography from his 1971 version of the novel is what strikes the reader first in the rewritten work.

(Although not a poem, the complexity of the graphic, spatial, and visual inscription in the first published version of Interdit de séjour is suggestive of Stéphane Mallarmé's "Un Coup dés," which for Johanna Drucker "remains a touchstone of both historical and aesthetic reference for all subsequent twentieth-century typographic experimental poetry" (Visible 50)

The myriad blocks of text that Duvert arranges side by side in the first version, as though in dialogue or overlapping each other, are what he most noticeably wrote out of the later "version revue" (II: 215).

First Pages

These typographical differences are already apparent from the start of both versions of Duvert's novel. In the 1969 version, seven blocks of text are juxtaposed with four blocks of text in smaller type in two fragmentary and inconsistently spaced columns. Of the blocks of text of larger type: one occupies the page from left to right but contains three irregularly spaced sequences that suggest missing parts; one takes up the right-hand side and straddles part of the left-hand side of the page; one takes up the left-hand side and straddles part of the right-hand side of the page but contains an irregularly spaced sequence that also suggests a missing part; two occupy the left-hand side with one of the two containing an irregularly spaced sequence that again suggests a missing part; and two occupy the right-hand side. Occupying either the left-hand or the right-hand side of the page only, the blocks of text of smaller type give readers the illusion, at first glance, that Duvert's text is arranged into two equally spaced columns: three occupy the right-hand side of the page; and one occupies the

left-hand side of the page. By laying out his text in such a way in the first published version of his novel, Duvert presents a work of multiple linguistic "constellations" (Shingler 65). Highlighted in the heterogeneous *mise-en-page* is the proliferation of sexual encounters, the dynamic series of many intersecting events and couplings (Bowie 142). As a result, the semantic integrity of Duvert's novel seems stripped, its narration scattered, jumbled up by a multiplicity of voices that all combine in various ways, that participate at the same time in more than one syntactic structure (Shingler). Indeed, the "semblant de narrateur" (Chapsal 74) within it all seem to compete for a say and to be read first in the same way that the cast of characters whose voices they represent all compete for the same pool of sexual partners and strive to be noticed first. With readers of the first version of *Interdit de séjour* constantly aware of the spatiality of the page, the order of

reading-like the order of sexual encounters portrayed impressionistically in and between the text's columns-is thereby 'improvised' (McHale 192), or decided on the fly.

By contrast, the text of the second version of Duvert's novel is all of the same type size and thus visually, as least, less convoluted and complicated. Although in removing the columns of text in the 1971 version Duvert seems to make reading it less improvisational, he does still manage to preserve its distinctively cacophonous and disjointed nature. Thus on the first page there remain irregularly spaced sequences in three blocks of text that suggest missing pans and that bespeak complex, multi-layered, non-linear (Shingler 67) narration; two in the first block of text; one in the fifth; and five in the sixth. These first pages of each version of the novel are duplicated side-by-side for easy comparison at the end of this article.

Now in addition to Duvert's stripping of the distinctive typography from the second version of his novel, he makes cuts to the text itself. What he chooses to preserve, for example, from the first page of the first version takes up a mere one third of the first page of the second version. The remainder of this page contains reworked text from the following page-and-a-half of the first version (Page 8 and half of Page 9). In other words, in the reworked version of his novel Duvert condenses his text by collapsing two-and-a-half pages into one.

Not only does Duvert modify the length and typography of his novel between its two published versions. He moreover makes changes to many of the sections of the text that he does choose to retain. Like the typographical changes we have already noted, these changes to the text itself are also readily

evident from the first page of both versions. Take, for instance, the very first block of text in each. They are similar from the start: both suggest desolation, ruin, and the passage of time. But they also reveal differences in number, syntax, and logic. In the change from

buildings with no shop windows, no doors and no passers-by, nobody under the hollow, deserted porches, gardens some evenings I was enraged the summer was passing, a little brighter every day

to

buildings with no windows, lights or doors, the

deserted night and foggy squares the summer passed, a little less clear each day walking for hours on end, exhausting yourself, walking endlessly, looking for more

the nouns "vitrine" and "porte" in the first line of each are pluralized, the noun "passants" is replaced with the noun "lumières," and "sans porte ni passants" is syntactically shifted to "sans lumières ni portes" in the second version. More striking, the second and half of the third line of the first version is barely recognizable in the second version of Duvert's novel. In the change from

nobody on the hollow, deserted porches, gardens some evenings I was enraged

to

deserted nights and misty squares

a sense of desertion ("les porches (...) déserts" and "la nuit déserte") is all that these sections of Duvert's text seem to have in common. As if further to underline the lack of light ("sans lumières") highlighted in its first line, in the second version the fact that the days were grossing shorter ("l'été passait, un peu moins clair chaque jour") seems, moreover, more logical than the lengthening days ("l'été passait, un peu plus clair chaque jour") that are suggested in the temporal disjointedness, the "temps sans temporalité" (Robbe-Grillet 243) of the first.

Duvert's reworking of this portion of the first block of his text renders it more logical. He furthermore cuts from his text the questions following it: "où étais-je?" and "combien d'années?". However in making the second version of the work less self-conscious, it is no less ambiguous. For at the same time as removing the first of these questions, which separates the first and third blocks of text of the novel's first version, Duvert marries them in the second version. As

a result,

*five, six eight hours without
goal, walk, be patient, wear myself out, settle for nothing, no willpower*

is incorporated-along with a shift from the first person to the third person- into the first block of text of the second version as

*walking for hours on end, getting exhausted, walking
endlessly, looking for more*

with the noun "heures," the verb "marcher," and the synonyms "m'user" and "s'épuiser" remaining as the only recognizable elements of the text. Duvert furthermore weaves pieces of the ninth and tenth sections of text from his first version into the third section of the second version:

*fifty francs lost I have
loved a little Tunisian
I lick him. long slit with a beardless cut (I've picked up these nasty habits on
bodies that are too pretty)*

from the first version thus becomes in the second version:

*I put on a little stray Arab I lick his slit a hairless cut you have to wipe
them before using them*

If Duvert's substitution of the relatively general "un petit Arabe" for the geographically more specific "un petit Tunisien" of the first makes the nationality of the sexual partner being described more ambiguous or inclusive in the second version, in revising his work Duvert also makes the sexual act itself more blatant as he consistently does throughout the revised version of his novel. The general direct object pronoun that suggests the licking of a person ("je le lèche") is therefore replaced in the second version with the specific body part that is licked ("je lèche sa fente") as well as with a comment on the relative cleanliness thereof ("il faut les torcher avant de s'en servir"). Whether this body part requires cleaning or not, the adjective describing the rear end, or the metaphorical "cut" in the body of the pre-pubescent boy from which the narrator derives his oral pleasure is, however, hairless in both versions, and the specific placement of the adjective-like the tongue of the narrator-is not an issue: "percée d'une imberbe coupure" in the first and "une coupure imberbe" in the second.

Nicknames

These differences that are already obvious from the first page of both versions of Duvert's novel anticipate the differences of varying degrees all underlined in the mobile, impermanent, anonymous, random, and illicit encounters it stages between tricks, drag queens, and gigolos, and which are played out, "constructed and deconstructed" (Phillips 150) throughout and across both versions of the novel. As we have already seen on the first page of each version of the novel, much of the shorter, 215-paged second version follows the general order of the longer, 248-paged first version. This thereby suggests that in reworking his text Duvert strove, at the macrotextual level at least, to preserve its overall sequencing. The later version of his novel is, moreover, consistently stripped of the striking columnar typography of the earlier version.

In addition to its striking columnar typography, the 1969 version of *Interdit de séjour* is also notable for its one-time incorporation of an unusual font to represent the graffiti one can read in railway bathrooms:

I was going mad to the Saint-
Lazarus with other madwomen, my
friends, some of us were bored
days despite these drawings in
toilets:

Great Pines Impaling Women Who Spread-
their Con

(unsigned)

(l: 14)

Neither this block of bathroom graffiti-with the verb "écarter" spread across two lines, as though to underline the action of the loose women to which it draws attention---nor the font meant to represent it is duplicated in the 1971 version. However, Duvert makes repeated use of a similar font to differentiate text types in the beginning sections of the novel he published in 1970, *Le Voyageur*. Warranting further study, it is as though in the 1969 version of *Interdit de séjour* the author is briefly rehearsing a technique that will also distinguish his next work from all his others.

In place of the vertically oriented and intersecting blocks of text of the 1969 version, the 1971 version privileges blocks of text that are horizontally oriented instead. A case in point that dramatically enacts this shift from the vertical to the horizontal is a funereal list of often sexually or scatologically

suggestive nicknames that can be found near the end of both versions of the novel and that conjures up a colorful cast of characters, renowned for their sexual distinctiveness. This "register of undertakers," evokes cruelty, depravity, and nobility. At times hilarious and tragic, legendary and outlandish, it is comprised of:

names that speak of their cruelty, the salacious and vicious cowardice of their acts, the faded image, blurred but simple as a pantomime role, that they had conceived of themselves, the title of a distant, brutal court, the landmarks of a region drawn in the stains of a sheet where orifices deposit their honey, the sexes mould their shape, the glands, the mouths drool with sleep-they are whispered in gardens, on thresholds, in welcoming kisses, like the urine with which dogs wet their familiar path, wild animals their food, strangers are marked with them before the darkness of dances and alcoves engulfs them [.....] (I: 236).

As though anticipating the shift between versions of this list of nicknames from the vertical to the horizontal, Duvert repeats it within the 1969 version in the pages directly preceding and following the list. The long, thin columns of text comprising Pages 234 and 235 before the list, for example, give way to the dense and exclusively horizontal text of Pages 241, 242 and 243 after it, respectively. In the second version of *Interdit de séjour*, Duvert reorganizes, condenses the 256 nicknames that in the first version stretch over nearly five pages into one-and-a-half pages of "mots silhouettes sans lesquels on ne s'identifiait pas et dont les folles marquaient chacun" (II: 202). Despite being a longer list-comprised in the 1971 version of 304 names instead of the 256 of the 1969 version, because the names are organized horizontally they ultimately occupy less space in Duvert's text. But more than merely making the revised list more compact by stringing it horizontally across the page, Duvert also alters it, therefore mirroring again at the microtextual level of his novel the unwriting and rewriting process that he amplifies at the macrotextual level throughout and between its two versions.

Besides the differing spatial arrangement and length of the two lists of nicknames, there are several additional notable differences. First, 49 names (about one-fifth) from the 1969 version of the novel are modified slightly in the 1971 version. Consider, for instance, the names from the first column (Page 236) that are duplicated in Illustration II above with their equivalents in the second version (also duplicated above, in Illustration IV) and in which the

following changes occur: "Croquederche" becomes "Croque-au-derche";

"Bouffechiottes" becomes "Bouffe-aux-chiottes"; "Chaudelance" becomes "Chaude-lance"; "La Mensongère" becomes "la Menteuse"; "La Demi-mal" becomes "la D'mi-mal"; "Burneflamme" becomes "Burn'en-flammes"; "La Viotorieuse" becomes "la Victoire"; "La Vermicelle" becomes "Vermicelle"; and "Pochette-Surprise" becomes "la Pochette." These microtextual differences duplicate punctuational or spelling changes that Duvert makes elsewhere between the published versions of his novel. Of the full 49 names in the list that have been slightly modified, all but one of them appear in a different order, or "slip" to a different position in the list in the 1971 version. Only "La Vaseline" (I: 238) / "la Vas'line" (II: 203), named after the petroleum-based product intended to enhance sexual pleasure by reducing friction, enabling one sexual organ to slip more easily into another-but which, because it does not itself move position in the list-ironically does not enact "slippage." Thus "Vit- en-fleur" follows "Cornebite" just as "Décrasse-fente" follows "Doigt-curieux" in the 1969 version (I: 237), whereas in the 1971 version "Vit-en-fleur" follows "la Mémé" (II: 202) and "la Décrasse" follows "la Gironde" (II: 203). These changes in the order of names also parallel changes in the order of blocks of text that are made elsewhere in the novel. Similarly, of the 133 names that Duvert does not change elsewhere in the 1971 version, only sixteen of them-or about one-sixteenth-appear in the same order as in the 1969 version. Thus, for example, "La Glacée" follows "la Merveille," "La Sept-ciels" follows "la Colique," and "La Scritch" follows "La Scratch" (I: 238; II: 202) in both versions of Duvert's text. This partial respect for the order of some of the names, like the changes we have just noted, is played out repeatedly in other textual sequences between versions of the novel too. Indeed, 117 of them-or nearly one-half-appear in different places in the reworked list. Thus "La Monsieur" follows "Tournelune" in the 1969 version but follows "l'Enjouée" in the 1971 version, just as "La Sons-et-parfums" follows "La Scritch" in the former but "la Colibri" in the latter (I: 238; II: 202). Also striking is that 74-or nearly one-third-of the names from the 1969 version have no apparent equivalent in the 1971 version. No matter how clever or colorful, sexually suggestive nicknames such as "Bave-en-tasse" or "Jouit-sous- clef" (I: 238) exist in the 1969 version of the novel alone. Similarly, there are 122 new names featured in the list from the 1971 version: these comprise the 74 names from the 1969 version that have no apparent equivalent in the 1971 version, the 48 additional names by which Driven extends the list, and therefore represent between one-third and one-half of the new list.

Note that in the 1971 version, the first letter of the definite article is not capitalized, whereas it is capitalized in the 1969 version. This is because the 1971 version lists the names horizontally, as though in a block of text, whereas in the 1969 version lists them vertically. It is also notable that in the second

version the names are not separated by commas and presented rather as a monolithic block.

Capitalization

Just as the scent of urine by which dogs mark their spot can with the passing of each new canine be diluted, compounded, resurrected, or intensified, in reordering, reworking this ephemeral list of onomastic "silhouettes" from the shadowy past, Duvert dramatizes the shifting, contested spaces of the dynamic homosexual underworld. Furthermore, the changes Duvert makes to the list of names between both published versions of his novel-like the changes we have already discussed between the first page of each version of the novel- rehearse myriad additional changes he makes elsewhere in *Interdit de séjour*. Played out again and again across and between both published versions of this novel-whose very title suggests both illegality and impermanence-we therefore see minor differences (in capitalization and punctuation, for example) juxtaposed with more significant differences such as the dislocation and fracture of the novel's narrative form. As in *Récidive* and *Portrait d'homme couteau*, they duplicate the novel's presentation of homosexual identity as fluid: 'constantly self-questioning, constructed from fragments of memory and fantasy'; as well as 'both criminalized by and alienated from the surrounding society' (Phillips 154).

Take capitalization, for instance. Between the two versions of his novel, Duvert preserves it in some cases but writes it out in others. Just as the capitalization of the letters "J" and "C" is respected in the nicknames "La Jumelle" and "La Capote," for example, in both versions of the list of names (I: 239; II; 203), in a sequence where Duvert uses capitalization as a strategy to highlight the pleasure experienced by one of the many random sexual partners in the novel, he preserves it. As a result, what in the 1969 version reads as

they moaned again, their voices swelling, exploding in my ears, they were going to come

*DIRE QUE TU ES UN HOMME TU ES UN VRAI HOMME TOI CHERI OH PLUS FORT
C'EST BBBBBBBB
(I: 64)*

is collapsed and transformed in the 1971 version into the more grammatically correct

*they were jerking off I was jerking them off between my teeth I was slicing them
off I was taking revenge they were no longer moaning their voices were swelling
exploding OH C'EST BON BON DONNE-LE-MOI TU BAISES BIEN CHERI DES QUE
T'AI VU TU
ENTENDS MON CHERI TU ENTENDS DES QUE
DARLING YOU I LOVE YOU YOU HEAR MY DARLING YOU
KISSES DEAR GIVE IT GIVE IT AGAIN
IT'S MINE GIVE IT BACK I'M TELLING YOU GIVE IT ALL GIVE IT IT'S MINE AH YOU
FUCK ME WELL YOU I CAN TELL YOU'RE A MAN A REAL MAN YOU
CHERI OH PLUS FORT C'EST TROP BBBBBBBBBB (II: 50)*

Yet this is not to say that this textual sequence is identical in both versions. For besides the change in the number of lines that sets up the sequence, between the 1969 and the 1971 version there are changes in syntax, spacing, and agency. Similarly, within the capitalized sequence itself-and just as we see in the changes to the list of nicknames between versions of the novel, between "Belle-Burette" and "Belles-burettes" or "La Dame-Jeanne" and "la Dam'jeanne" (I: 237; II: 203), for instance-there are subtle, easily overlooked changes between versions: accents on the capital letters "É" and "È" in the 1969 version but not in the 1971 version; a missing hyphen in the three imperatives of the 1969 version ("DONNE-LE MOI," "RENDS-LE MOI," and "DONNE-LE MOI") but which are added in the 1971 version; an exclamation mark after "TU ENTENDS" in the 1969 version; the removal of the first letter

"B" which presumably is intended to suggest the verb "baiser" after "TU" and before "JE" in the 1971 version; the addition of "MON CHERI" after "TU ENTENDS" and before "TU BAISES BIEN" in the 1971 version; the change from "C'EST A MOI C'EST A MOI C'EST LE MIEN" in the 1969 version to the more emphatic, more urgent "DONNE-LE DONNE ENCORE C'EST A MOI" in the 1971 version; the change from "JE TE DIS DE ME LE RENDRE" in the 1969 version to the more pressing, sexually greedier "JE TE DIS RENDS-LE TOUT" in the 1971 version; the change from "DONNE-LE DONNE-LE MOI" in the 1969 version to "DONNE DONNE-LE" in the 1971 version; the addition of the direct personal pronoun "me" in "TU ME BAISES BIEN" in the 1971 version; the removal of

Illustration IV - *Unauthorised entry*, 1971 version (II: 202 and 203)

"QUE" and the contraction of the subject and verb in "JE PEUX DIRE T'ES UN HOMME" in the 1971 version; the removal of "TU ES" before "UN VRAI HOMME" in the 1971 version; the change from seven letters in the "BBBBBBB," which again presumably suggests the adverb "bien" of the 1969 version, to nine letters in the more exaggerated and drawn out "BBBBBBBBB" of the 1971 version, which are also preceded by the adverb "TROP" thereby reinforcing the erogenous pleasure upon which the whole sequence insists.

Capitalization might be preserved in this sequence, but in others it is not. Just as block capitals can be used for emphasis, or to underline sexual pleasure as we see above, in another section from the 1969 version of his novel Duvert uses block capitals to highlight the frustration of the shadowy narrator as he screams to be let back inside after his mother locks him out:

*and this dirty roll in the evening
nce my mother had locked me in, turned the key to my room and taken it with
her, she went out to get drunk with my stepfather of the day, who solicited me
on the Champs-Elysées, in front of shop windows, or in a snobbish bar
I
yelled at the door,
si ça pouvait ameuter les voisins, je gueulais des heures jusqu'après minuit
VIEILLE CONNE DE PUTE DE CON DE MERDE DE FOUTUE MAQUERELLE
D'ENFOIREE DE FOUTUE CHIASSE VA TE FAIRE ENDOSSER SALOPE OUVRE-MOI
TU ENTENDS LA PORTE GARCE DE PUTAIN DE GARAGE A BITES je savais causer
mais les meilleures je ne m'en souvenais jamais d'ailleurs elle ne rentrait pas
avant quatre heures
morning, I was asleep*

(I: 102)

Despite the continued use of swear words by the frustrated narrator in the later version, because Duvert removes the block capitals in the 1971 version of the novel, this sequence reads as less stridently urgent. Although Duvert makes changes to the text itself, it is no different-typographically speaking-from the small-lettered sequences that directly precede and follow it:

*but my mother was beginning to get annoyed with me and
decided to lock me up the evening before I went to bed.
to go to work she'd push me into my room turn the key and take it away what a
brute she'd solicit any guy on the Champs-Elysées in front of shop windows or in
a snobbish bar she wouldn't come home until she'd had her cunt and wallet
stuffed the fucking bitch of a cunt I'd bang on the walls I'd try to rouse the
neighbours I'd shout half the night old cunt of a whore of a fucking cod I endorse*

you bitch of a whore of a cunt I endorse you'd bang on the walls I'd try to wake the neighbours I'd scream half the night, you old cunt, you fucking whore, you fucking cod, I'll take your word for it, you bitch, you fucking cock garage I'd look up every swear word I knew I'd run through them all in no time, I was brought up too well when she finally went to bed around four o'clock I'd fallen asleep (II: 80)

As we have already noted, besides changes in capitalization such as these, Duvert also reworks sections of text between both versions of his novel in much the same way that he does with many of the nicknames on the list discussed earlier. At the macrotextual, organizational level the two published versions of *Interdit de séjour* can be considered similar because they are both broken up into twenty-one unnamed, unnumbered and parallel sequences. The breaks occur on the following pages:

1969 version	1971 version
14, 24, 29, 38, 39, 60, 68, 74, 82, 94, 115, 128, 146, 150, 164, 168, 181, 191, 198, and 204.	11, 19, 25, 33, 40, 47, 52, 56, 65, 73, 92, 103, 121, 123, 137, 143, 155, 161, 166 and 171.

Within many of these parallel sequences, however, Duvert both adds to and excises text between the 1969 and 1971 versions of his novel, again underlining through unwriting across versions the impermanent, circulating nature of the encounters he chooses to privilege and reorder as though in an

ever-shifting "puzzle whose pieces refuse each other" (Duvert, *Récidive* 130-1).

Erection /Expansion

Representative of the ten sequences of various lengths in the 1971 version of the novel where Duvert adds new text that is not found in the 1969 version is this one in which the narrator discusses the measures to which he goes to arouse one of his sexual partners at a nightclub. The 1969 version reads:

The trouble was that he didn't get hard much any more, he became lazy with me, he needed a lot of alcohol to warm up his organs (hot air makes you horny).Tours he would make me dance in the most obscene way, then sit down and grope me until sometimes taking me to the toilet to love me straight away without these special things around him without the possibility of provoking people he didn't get excited any more he insisted that I dress in the most conspicuous way whereas at the beginning he hated it when we were called gentlemen-ladies he

was over the moon sending me a nice wink saying: my wife's nice, we make a nice couple [.....] (I: 151-2)

By contrast, the expanded, more detailed 1971 version reads this way:

The problem is that he hardly ever puts me on any more, he's getting lazy with me, he needs litres of booze to stay in shape and I don't mind him getting drunk because it's me he doesn't love any more that stops him from getting drunk , he still puts up with me, we spend evenings in the subfloor dancing of this club a cold wet cellar but the customers are young not too fucking we dance obscenely he weighs on my stomach he opens his shirt he slips his hands under my trousers and feels my buttocks he sticks a finger in my hole to feel it relax with the music and the steps are good dances when you stick together otherwise you get bored being a metre apart (they've put mirrors at the back and the guys dance in front of them all by themselves they admire themselves wriggling they get there they don't look at anyone they just wriggle in front of themselves for two or three hours they leave again) themselves for two or three hours and leave enchanted). When that happens, he sits down, drinks and, without warning, drags me to the toilet.

not the door he deculottes me pulls out his beautiful stiff cock and fucks me like a dog the boys who wash their hands come to ogle but if they enter he sends them kicks without stopping I would laugh well if I were not there real idiot clinging to the pipe of the flush to support the jerks it is necessary that he exposes us and that he provokes people if not no fucking possible he wants me to dress more and more flashy and sticky while he has to show us off and provoke people otherwise no fucking possible he wants me to dress more and more flashy and tacky whereas at the beginning we were very discreet supervised correct and if you tell us ladies and gentlemen he's over the moon he'll be happy to see you.dames he's over the moon he gives me a wink he answers Ah yes she's nice my wife ah that's a number! (II: 125)

The 10 sequences of various lengths in the 1971 version that are not found in the 1969 version are on the following pages:

1969 version	1971 version
26-28, 77, 108-109, 151-152, 170, 220, 221, 241, and 242	21-23, 58-59, 85-87, 124-125, 144-145, 188, 190-191, 191-192, 204-207, 207209.

Unlike the shorter 1969 version, which is recounted in the imperfect

tense, the longer 1971 version is recounted in the present tense, thereby rendering the action more immediate and direct. Additionally, like other sequences that Duvert alters between versions of his novel, it is more graphically provocative than the equivalent sequence in the 1969 version. The bother of a partner with difficulties getting an erection ("il ne bandait plus guère") thus becomes the bother of a partner who no longer has penetrative sexual relations with the narrator ("il ne m'enfile presque plus"). Similarly, just as the relatively vague "beaucoup d'alcool" of the first version is made slightly more specific as "des litres d'alcool" in the second version, so too are the reasons behind the erectile difficulties of the narrators partner ("c'est moi qu'il n'aime plus qui l'empêche de bander"). Whereas in the 1969 version we learn little about the interior of the nightclub, the 1971 version provides details both about its decor and clientele: the mirrors on the walls which enable the self- admiring dancing style of the patrons. In keeping with this move to greater detail between versions of the text, specific body parts are also privileged in the 1971 version: the general "me pelotait" is therefore more targeted in "me pelote les fesses" and leads directly to anal stimulation ("il m'enfonce un doigt dans le trou"). Furthermore, where in the 1969 version the narrator's partner takes him to the toilets to make love to him discreetly ("pour (l')aimer"), the 1971 version is less innocuous, more exhibitionistically jarring: indeed without

warning, the narrator is literally dragged to the toilets and penetrated like a dog. Finally, while in the first version provocation is not a possibility ("sans la possibilité de provoquer les gens") in the second version it becomes a necessity, if not a requirement for sex; "il faut qu'il nous exhibe et qu'il provoque les gens sinon pas de baiser possible".

Reduction / Disruption

If by expanding portions of the later version of his novel Duvert can lend more graphic color to it, what then does he achieve when he cuts text from it? Consider the dramatic textual repercussions of Duvert's cutting from the 1971 version the sequence found some four-fifths into the 1969 version. It involves discussion of plans for an upcoming marriage between two anonymous characters-both designated uselessly, as is the person inviting the narrator, by the capital letter "N."-and therefore seems strikingly out of place in a world where multiplicity, impermanence, and infidelity are the norm, where serial circularity and the exchange of sexual partners are favoured over the permanent, sanctified bonds of committed relationships. In the 1969 version the narrator gets invited to the wedding right after he has earned himself 20 francs masturbating yet another complete stranger;

*and as soon as I got out of the cup where I'd jerked off a guy for twenty francs, N. appeared and invited me to manage N,
What do you mean? N. is getting married? yes, to N.
ten guys jerked off in a day, if the weather's good, that's two hundred francs, and with two hundred francs you can go and get wild in three or four bars.
and who will be in charge?
there will be boys and girls, in other words everyone will be dressed up, I'll be looking for them, everyone has to be there, there won't be a single one missing, talk about a night when you're having a wild party, that counts!
What will you get yourself into?*

*I'm going to disguise myself as a man
there'll be a banquet, we'll eat, we'll roll under the table and then a monster party
(I: 208)*

No mention is made of a wedding in the 1971 version, by contrast. Instead, it privileges the orgy that in the first version will surely *follow* the marriage banquet and reads the following way:

*I'd go into the cup and ask the guy for twenty francs to jerk him off ten guys jerked off in one day if it's the holidays and the weather's nice I'd find them and I'd have two hundred francs and with two hundred francs I could go and act crazy in three or four bars or buy myself some shoesa girlfriend would go into the cup and she'd ask the guy for twenty francs to jerk him off.
invited me to a sex party I said no she said yes she did and explained who would be there and I said yes and that's just fine I haven't come yet today so save your strength she said we'd be fine twenty oh my old girl what we're going to do to each other I was happy my evening would be yes out yes and I asked her if we could cross-dress she thought so she even had a crazy idea dressing as a man I asked her how it was and she said
(II: 170)*

More striking than the fact that in the 1969 version the narrator is invited by an unnamed acquaintance to a wedding between two unnamed parties after which there will be a huge orgy, and that in the 1971 version the narrator is invited to an orgy only with no mention of a wedding, is that starting on Page 211—reminiscent of the long list of sexually suggestive nicknames we discussed earlier and stretching some nine pages across the columns of text and in different font size in the 1969 version alone are the names of the thousands of wedding guests.

In many instances, invitees share the same name. Examples of the "tas de types en double triple et plus" are: " les sept Lucien, " " les dix-huit Marcel, " " les trente-huit Paul, " " les quarante-neuf François, " " les cent- quatre Michel, " " (l)es neuf cents Jean, " and " (l)es deux mille Éléonore." (I : 212). The first four blocks of names are duplicated by way of example below:

*are you sure they'll be there? yes, there'll be Basile Rigobert Lucien Guillaume
Arcadius Felix Marcel Antoine Sébastien Vincent Raymond Timothée Paul
François Ignace Blaise Gilbert
and Romuald Vaientin Theo- dule Gabin Sylvain Pépin Gérard Mathias Nestor
Montan Casimir Adrien Thomas Jean Grégoire Zacharie Cyriaque Cyrille Joseph
Victorien Emmanuel Gontran*

*and Jonas Amédée Hughes Ro- chard Isidore Célestin Albert Christian Macaire
Léon Jules*

*Anicet Parfait Théodore Georges Gaston Marc Marcellin Frédéric Robert Ludovic
Atha- nase Auguste Stanislas Désiré Grégoire Mamert Servais Pa- come Honoré
Pascal (I: 211-12)*

Of course, having unwritten the wedding from the 1971 version of his novel there is no longer any need for a list of wedding guests. Not only does the anonymity of the orgy therefore take centre stage in the later version of the novel, but in writing the wedding and list of invitees out of his work in favor of the orgy alone Duvert further underscores the randomness and juxtapositions, "l'embarras du choix" (I: 212) by which sexual interactions at orgies are characterized. More importantly, by completely cutting the names of guests invited to celebrate and sanctify permanence, by writing them entirely out of the second version of his novel-and thereby not just reordering or modifying them as he does with the list of nicknames-Duvert also "cuts loose" the subsequent pages in his text. He thus rehearses textually the various

combinations and recombinations that one might imagine sexually at a party whose very goal is the circulation and repetition of no-strings-attached pleasure. For while the 1971 version of Duvert's text more or less respects the order of the 1969 version up to this point, with Duvert's cutting of the wedding from it and the showcasing of the orgy alone, it becomes increasingly difficult for readers to determine the logic behind what sections of his text Duvert chose to preserve, to "marry" with others, and why. Here, for example, and in order is how the text from the 1969 version plays out-with varied modifications of content in each case-in the 1971 version:

- two lines, starting a new section of text from the 1969 version (I: 204) are found half-way down the page that also starts a new section of text in the 1971 version (II: 169);
- nine lines further down the same page of the 1969 version (I: 204) are found at the bottom of the same page of the 1971 version and extending-this time as seven and not nine lines-onto the page thereafter (II: 169-170);
- the three segments of text in small font from the left-hand column that we have cited above and which come four pages later in the 1969 version (I: 208) directly follow the seven lines already mentioned and appear in a compact segment of fourteen lines in the 1971 version (II: 170);
- six lines that come six lines later in the 1969 version (I: 209) directly follow the fourteen lines of the 1971 version but are now five lines;
- a more than half-page section directly following the six lines in the 1969 version is found in the 1971 version some two pages later than the five lines and extends over two pages;
- the short section directly following the more than half-page section in the 1969 version (I: 209) is found nearly a page after the preceding section from the 1971 version (II: 174);
- two segments of text-one from the right-hand and one from the left-hand column-in the 1969 version and that come more than three pages after the short section just mentioned in the 1969 version (I: 213) is found in a compact textual dump in the 1971 version nearly three pages before the section just mentioned in that same version (II: 171);
- a half-page section spread out across two columns in the 1969 version and that directly follows the section we have just described (I: 213) comes more than a half-page after the compact textual clump and stretches over two pages (II: 171-172).

In other words, text is moved both forward and backward with no apparent rhyme or reason between the 1969 and 1971 versions of his novel just as participants at an orgy' might move from partner to partner or from body part, to body part with no particular rationale other than unbridled, insatiable desire.

Shifts in Text Between Versions of *Interdit de séjour*

<i>1969 version</i>	<i>1971 version</i>
Page 204	Page 169
Page 204	Page 169-170
Page 208	Page 170
Page 209	Page 170

Page 209	Page 172-173
Page 209	Page 174
Page 213	Page 171
Page 213	Page 171-172

Further underlining the textual disruptiveness triggered by the author's removal of any mention of matrimony from the 1971 version of the novel are the nearly fourteen new pages of text that follow and that have no recognizable equivalent in the 1969 version. Just as writing the wedding out of the second version of his novel privileges the orgy and writing the names of the attendees out of the text respects the anonymity of all the attendees, this entire rewritten section of Duvert's novel—following the sections highlighting random textual recombinations—is essentially as unrecognizable as the three characters all labeled uselessly as "N." in the 1969 version. Stability and permanence are thereby again trumped in this underworld whose *raison d'être* is sexual exchange by multiplicity and novelty in the same way as entire sections of text from the 1969 version of the novel are in the 1971 version reconfigured or written out of it.

Having amply expanded the techniques of the New Novel that are typically applied within a single version of a work by exemplifying rewriting across both published versions of *Interdit de séjour* as well as through his "fiction mal faite" ("Lecture" 9) in and across the two published versions of both *Portrait d'homme couteau* and *Récidive*, Duvert predictably tires of textual

experimentation. Although typography still plays a part in his next novel, *Le Voyageur*, and his subsequent novels, *Paysage de fantaisie* and *Journal d'un innocent*, are written in a non-traditional style, each of these works is notably published in a single version only. Moreover, Duvert ultimately reverts in his later novels to "fairly traditional modernist techniques" (Thiher, *L'île* 595) and in his aggressively militant extended essays on childhood sexuality and man-boy relationships to "expressing his ideas as clearly as possible" (Brongersma 9). Indeed, the author admits:

If I need means that can be called traditional, it's because I'm talking about other things. These are no longer the same kinds of individuals, the same kinds of characters, the same kinds of situations. And each thing has its own means. It's impossible to stage small bourgeois families, working-class families, peasant families and so on, all together in the same package, writing as I did in Interdit de séjour, for example. It's not feasible. ("No" 16)

The innovation and experimentation showcased in Duvert's early prose works, played out in the "desécriture" between their versions and most strikingly obvious in *Interdit de séjour* through typography, onomastics, capitalization, and textual recombination, ultimately lends itself to them alone and the contexts that only they privilege. The rewriting Duvert thrice flaunts within and across versions of a text can be understood therefore to be only passingly "recidivist," confined to, contained within and between versions of his first three novels alone. Beyond this textual triad, rewriting, unwriting, unwilling through rewriting proves to be an outgrown subversive strategy. Out of place, written out as an option from the start in Duvert's later works, it too is, for all intents and purposes, "interdit de séjour."

California Polytechnic State University

the awakening of an old ailment. something as painful as a memory, that could x meet, from time to time: the coincidence* never ceases to "multiply, for those who remain in the place where they K give career, and it is no longer cM chance, my* a" combination" of events researched" whose sum is sensitive to me because. one by one, I weighed each term, and nothing ended, every face, every form constantly exceeded the cold measure my memory had taken of it, and, rediscovered, pulled me back. To begin again a known path, and less hated for the pain one dreams a. derisory. All in all, only for the gradual drying out, the merciless tightening of the flesh, the hardening of the brain, the alteration of speech that this laborious shuttle journey imposed on me, from one year or one day to the next.

nothing unpredictable: nothing even uncertain - nothing fair - but all truth out there, to my great fatigue

there were all those moments that K summed up in a few mechanical clues, easy to list, as if, by naming or numbering them, you were learning to let go of them. It was as if, by naming or numbering them, we were learning to let a ccretiMI - mats all this was rather tearing at my skin, that's what I called the barrier that surrounded me, helping to make me invisible, barely weighing on the pavement of the streets, barely touching the bodies next to me. suddenly struck by this certainty: that if perpetual motion existed, no one would be able to even perceive it, that nomadism was an absence, the silkuni never ceased to be sought, from which Von escaped so that he could keep his name by kur future they escaped me, whether this future took them away from me, or even brought them closer, in any case they altered, seemed to me to be all the less saists-ubks as k the passing of time defined them better.

204

ib had boundless enthusiasm for the spoken word, provided that ci h was ritucl, that every opportunity to open their mouths kur allowed them to intone once again h invariable litany of kur own identity, each in his tmmuu- Ne procession of words as in a garment of skin - for pleasure, for love, a mirror of vocables patiently and obstinately reconstitutes, tcmblabk A this totem endowed with feet, hands, a face, a sex and scattered muscles that in front of them, their erections made rise, for a contact, a heat, an adoration with infinite facets, where their "small exploded images" shone with familiar and curious gleams which fascinated them until kur head heavy with sleep extinguished each lamp and dissipated each belief.

and then, on a daily basis, the annoyance, the simple annoyance of leaving the adventures undertaken open-ended, of putting a question mark over the nature of tomorrow as well as over the certainty of tomorrow, for want of a goal, a way out, a completion, the beginnings* themselves" slipping away, like births that are exhausted in a few breaths, wearing out, digesting life. They give it the bitterness of things that don't get done, that are entirely consumed in la tentative decision to take up a momentum for which they don't have that much strength left.

I was, I, someone, embittered by the caprice of these jolts, whose repetitiveness" sc became slowness, a certain form of slowness, which is that of confusion, of the indeterminate, here no one has ever committed to anything

they were fed up with staying ahead - they wanted to make their move - this desire put you in a state of urgency, of alarm, which forced you to make small, brief gestures, simple nervous contractions, that's what made the slowness. this whirling trampling, the haste, the impatience to get there, and like ks dogs you x rub the trees and sniff the urine" with the k joy of escaping, thanks to this" tickle, from the actions from which you never return. those that succeed every present thing is only an approximation of what it could be if there were only a 'cite: mais je dis del choses. j "hélic A préciser la nature des êtres qui subsistent cette loi: il faudrait bizarrement ks nommer au passé

(I suppose, in a way, I'm escaping ■

205

Out of bounds, 1969 version (I: 204-205)

epidermis touches his and especially as soon as my sex seeks us ass. recites your desperate prayers that one addresses to the gods only when one can no longer stand knowing ks - each - unique, invisible", incomprehensible" and ubiq united. So much so that you lose yourself in devotions to every pissoir on the boulevard, lest, by neglecting one of them, you offend the parcel of divinity that you have chosen as your oratory, and that only seems to desert you the moment you enter -■ for as soon as you leave, the place once again exerts its terrifying magic of a forbidden sanctuary.

Is N. getting married? yes, with N.

du t'ya brûlés dam U fournée l'A Ui beau "U fait deux .oui franc" et me dw "eau franc" on peut aller faire la folle dans trois ou quatre bars

and who's going to be at comment the wedding? there'll be boys and girls, it's* A-different if everyone dresses up, I'm looking for them, everyone has to be an IA, there won't be one missing. you're talking about a night when you're celebrating your crazy girl life, that counts!

ou quoi tu te moques? mais je vais me travestir en homme

il y aura un banquet on mangera on roulera sous la table et puis une parieuse monstre

208

and N. you don't know where he is? I saw him over there with his fiancée what, his fiancée? yes, a girl, a fill-ether you know he was a gigolo for the money but he was a man as long as you put him on? a fiancée I'm telling you and it's been a year since he's been rabbiting injiv-k all the same with his tonnasse

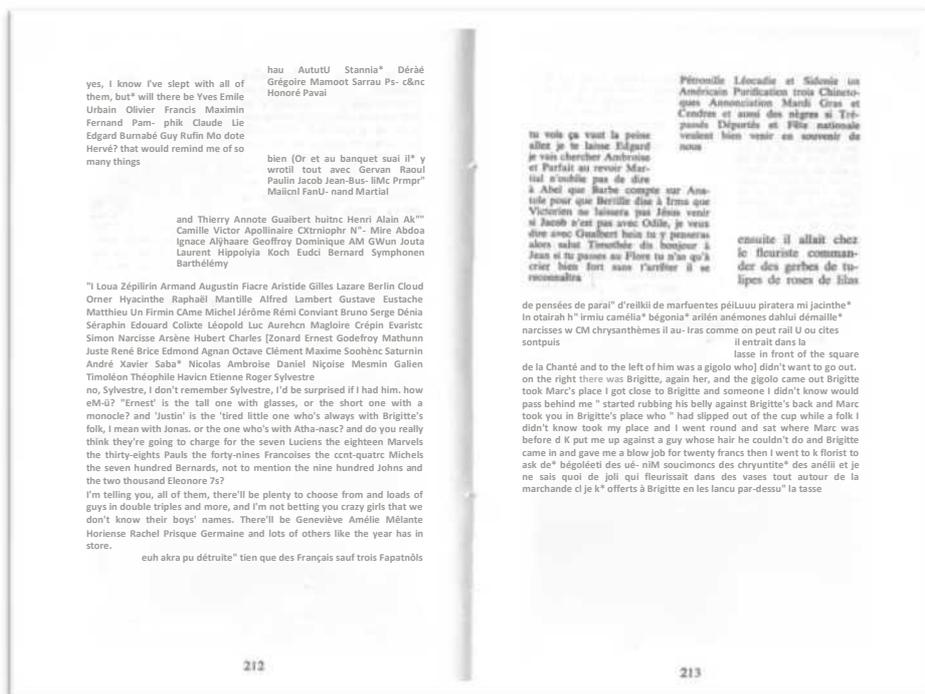
(c'est "l A Fort", pu très polie A couve do voiture", de* d'êtritus, ci puis il y would go beaucoup L'gras, mais on prendait U moto et se une heure on y était y depuis la place d'hall

she was right behind me and holding me by your waist U n'y would pu de rent pu de wtel ma" il foutit lound j'avais retiré ma chemise, it excited the guys to see me so naked but she didn't lie down and spread her legs and wanted to have a fuck so I took mine and jerked off against a tree like a pistol", she "was aae au wtel clic picking daisies" around her feet", te v "M "eoauni se" folle" bouc. In brune" te "eut frais qui lui darçait vos nichons sien au moment où fai deflaqué j'r'ai ri" d'homme qui ra'écouait en disant tu a" un bd corps mais je Fai vue elle qui était nue sur ma moto la moto moto a démarré le handlebar était bloqué la moto est tombée dans l'étang ta mare A moustiques qui est per U et elle s'eu mue k nager et je Fai regardé et je lui fait un enfant il s'en mis A pteurow il fallait qu'on rentre fa van renda-voui avec te type qui sc put KlIKH dans

it was nice of you to go -" P") with clk A Saint-Ckrmam-dcs Near she found your boys very well dressed, I explained to her* your clothes and what they cost clk saw a lot of gentlemen who didn't look at her and said to you I'm a little peccore your gentlemen don't look at me so die took N's arm but at that moment N. crossed N. they looked at you they remembered and N. moved away elk asked who the guy was he said it's

209

Out of bounds, 1969 version (I: 208-209)



Out of bounds, 1969 version (I: 212-213)

interrupted or mocked: people hurried their steps and looked away as soon as they* understood (if they hadn't simply assumed that one of us was a girl in trousers, they would have been stunned* by the perception to the contrary) for me Paris had been reduced to a dark, disproportionate pond, punctuated by bright spots, vespasiennes and public gardens*, and where some* hated and unavoidable premises stood, hotels* or police stations, depending on the* evening* k the rest was an incomprehensible, unusable, almost frightening chaos - until two or three in the morning, when b vilk blossomed : your* lawful occupants were asleep, its cops* were no longer watching anything, and in your uneven lights my path was no longer an incessant flight from one hiding place to another, I could see at last)

hours of familiarity, no tension, no threat fil n'y a même plus de pédés dehors, ou de putain, pré* du métro les clochards ont le sommeil bourgeois, nuit sam attrait pour eux qui vivaient de b présence des autres*, alors que nous vivions dans l'absence et par elk)

these naively dangerous kisses, these disinterested* walks helped me to be less clandestine - I was not adapted to my state, I did not yet accept living as a stranger, these cheats worked towards hpnrobnbk* rapprochements - which I would* soon give up, before I* hated him

168

(from the afternoon to the middle of the night, the boulevards were gradually deserted, and by the time k* cars had spaced out, pedestrians* had disappeared, and the cafés had switched off, k the colourful bustle of the midnight sun had passed.

gigolos en place client* satisfaits pèdes du samedi soir rentrés cher eux nu accablés b rue est vide le ciel est noir je suis ridicule pria entre k* deux l'espace que j'habite)

my bed my booze my laundry sak around I light my stove I sur- veilk me* noodle* I would like to nothing

(Awakening from an old ache, a thing more painful than a ■nuvenir, like b meeting a kid and that chasm back)

I thought about the messes f'd made I didn't have any more* emk I went down the stairs I went up foscattier I delayed the evening falling the day rising k setting k sun shining the* clouds* passing I saw what you see at a window I was there for that and I was content with it

the setting sun gleamed empurpled on the sheet metal (A cup freshly repainted green

(I went downstairs and stood on the threshold in front of the pissoir, hoping to get in this evening, then I spotted an easy-going boy in obscene blue jeans, I followed him with a hard-on, my evening was set, my indecisions resolved for a few hours, when a bile ordered me to celebrate)

nothing would end every face every body would go beyond b the cold measure my memory had taken of it and offer itself to be rediscovered would force me to start again on a path known and hated less for the la pain that Alt resembled there than for your drying out, k hardening, the

Out of bounds, 1971 version (II: 168-169)

nudity that ix travels by imputal shuttle day after day)
I'd go into the cup and ask the guy for twenty francs to wank him off in a day if it's the holidays and the weather's fine I'd find them and make two hundred francs and with two hundred francs I could go and act crazy at three or four balls or buy myself some shoes a girlfriend would go into the cup she'd invite me to a party I'd say no die she'd say but what if and explain to me who'd be there and I'd say yes and it's a good thing I haven't come yet today so save your strength die she'd say we'd be twenty oh my old girl what we're going to do to each other I was happy, explained who would be there and I said yes and That's good, I haven't come yet today So save your strength die said we'd be twenty oh my old girl what we're going to do to each other I was happy my evening would be yes yes yes cl I asked her if we could H cross-dress she thought so she even had a crazy idea dressing as a man I asked her how it was and she said

there was a little forest that wasn't very pretty because of the rubbish and the canopies and the railway and the tanks and the factories, but we used to take the motorbike and go there in an hour from Paris, it was a bitter midday on days when there was no honey.

(thousands of moments that came down to mechanical operations, with no possible surprise other than a malfunction, a failure worse than the correct course of action* planned*, but of the same kind as them

repeated over and over, told with every new chat between us, defied like the soft, confidential matter of an excretion

but I wasn't really getting rid of it - I could have ripped off my skin - the envelope that surrounded me, helped to make me invisible, inviting, barely weighing on the pavement of the streets, barely touching the bodies against me, changed into perpetual movement and creating fixed points around me, elsewhere same cerne recherche* that I passed so that they kept their name!

-k
said to Mum Don't forget my herbal tea I could do with a mint this evening when I get back it's hot and I'll be coming home all worn out from this business* dinner you can't complain I was going out I'd worn a smaller pair of pants than usual they were Saturday's I hid them from Mum I washed them myself I was too serious a man to wear

170

which, by the way, doesn't support my stomach and cuts my buttocks* in two

May* I must have felt these pants under my trousers when I was flirting, it cheered me up I thought I was dressed in someone else's clothes a very young man with his bum in the air I remembered that it was Mum's birthday tomorrow and I went to a florist to order "sprays" of tulips roses lilacs pansies poppies* carnations* daisies* petunias peonies irises hyacinths* gladiolus* lilies* hydrangeas camellias* begonias azaleas* anemones dahlias* clematis* daffodils marigolds chrysanthemums and others as you can see I see where they are then majestic slow hasty I trotted to the Tuleries at night I hoped* to finally meet the ideal friend a lover of imposing gentlemen* young mats still there are and deep down I needed above all to put my big head on your little shoulder and be consoled

why as a man?
because at home he's afraid of vovvns if there are girls they'll keep to themselves and so the* boys* will be with the boys you understand* it'll keep Fair correct

so I'm going* as a guy to get* off* guys* links
oh well, I'm glad you warned me, aumi, you're a real team player when I think I'd* have ended up alone or in a madhouse* in petticoats
I'm actually* looking for him girlfriends don't you want to help me no I haven't got a penny* I'll be rabbiting for another hour or so

two
(from* the moment I met them*, we already belonged to each other's memories*, as if having confined ourselves that evening to a particular face, a particular person, implied that we must immediately pa**et over - after "having performed on this body some* ritual gesture" such as one performs when one has knocked over a saltcellar or crossed a black sh**).

side by side we lived a future which separated us in advance, and which would be filled with the same indifference towards those* strangers of tomorrow to whom cm sacrificed the boy of today)

I went* into the blade in front of the square and to the left of me there was a gigolo I didn't know while to the right there was a madwoman I did know*** and the gigolo went out and the madwoman put herself in M place where one k wet less the*.

171

Out of bounds, 1971 version (II: 170-172)

and someone I didn't know* came in, went behind me and rubbed his belly against the dus of the madwoman who came out and an old man took her place while a madwoman I didn't know* took mine as I went for a walk outside and came back to settle U where the gigolo had been earlier and on my left I had the old man who had taken* the place of the madwoman I didn't know who had been hit on by the guy I didn't know who had rubbed up against the madwoman I knew and a den of madwomen I didn't know, the old man who had taken* the place of the crazy girl I didn't know who had been hit on by the guy I didn't know who had rubbed up against the crazy girl I knew and another crazy girl* took the old man's old place who was leaving because he was disgusted by a crazy girl on his left and a crazy girl on his right and the gigolo I didn't know came in, and I offered him me* twenty francs and the other madwoman had nothing to offer and I gave him a blowjob and his hair smelled of bile but his bile smelled of nothing he had enormous* rusts that sowed rust and a lot of cum that I spat out for fear of illness* and it was getting dark so I I'd go to the florist and ask for "hegôle* de* "ténia* de* soucoucinos des chrysanrite* des anéli* et je ne sala quoi de joli qui fleurissait dam des vases tout autour de la marchande et je les emporterais pour la folle qui nous invitait ce soir la démente je savait qui s'enfilait toujours les biles par deux d'ou arm goût pour le* meeting*.

she'd sit him on 1a motorbike behind me and take me by the waist there were no clouds no sun we'd be getting married soon as soon as I didn't* have to play the hustler any more that is to say when I'd* found a job thanks to a riché I'd choose them as old as possible I'd tell them about my fiancée and her natural daughter i.e. when I had* found a job thanks to a riché I chose them more and more HT* old I told them about my fiancée and her natural daughter It was heavy I had* taken off my shirt and we were driving very fast It excited Je* homme* * the hotel to see me bare-chested I was aware of it I had my eyes in my pocket they were crazy about it* they sucked my tits and the* underarm but she didn't care about my torso she likes it better when there's volume than when it's and in the forest I had my swimming costume on all my jeans and I took off my jeans and I got a hard-on because I thought she was going to see me get hard *if I got a hard-on* she didn't lay you down on the floor she didn't spread her thighs she didn't lick my dick she didn't suck my dick she didn't suck my dick she didn't lick my dick she didn't spread her thighs she didn't lick my arse or offer me hers and I wanted a beautiful goree and a cock it was the heat and the bike that made me arch so I took my cock and I went to wank against a tree as if I was peeing she sat on the grass she

172

was picking daisies the wind was shaking her big dull curls the wind was Irais her big dull curls the wind Irais which hardened her tits and caressed my glands akus at the time of unloading I did not dream any more with a type which enclash me by saying to me with the ear that I am a beautiful small guy but I Fai saw it which was risked on my motor bike the motor bike started the handlebar was blocked la marc s mosquitoes that we had in front of us and they sank together and I came I sent everything against the tree fai VU de* punaises cl de* fourms which climbed already lick that and It was going to rain It was stormy d lallait que je rentrer d'ailleurs j'ava** rendez-vous-you with an old guy, a big joker who puts carnations* on his* arse*.

and he'll be there non T sûrement paa je l'ai vu qui partait a moto avec n girlfriend tu sa** il veut vraiment se marier but he's so fond of being put on se marier je le dis cl on k verra plu* écoute je voudra* bien le grimper un dernier coup on peut l'inviter avec u conname 7 no no no giri-other-than-us but you know this guy who sleeps with him on Monday 7

(un rot hou liasme sans limite* pour la parole, à condition qu'elle sorti rituelle, arrangée à leur usage, ne débordant pas certains sujets, et qu'elle n'exprime d'eux qu'une étroite surface qu'il voulait dessiner, flatteuse cl parlante elle-même chaque objet, chaque ge *e, Every object, every ge *e, every adventure was transformed, with the incantation that designated it, into a password, a sign that its existence depended on the one who wagered on it, a proof that this object or this privileged boy* did indeed belong to one of* the small, precious categories. It was a proof that this object or this privileged boy* belonged to one of the categories, small, precious, only estimable* understandable*, where the gods and beliefs with which they* adorned their lives were ranked. Their* night*, their chatter and their desires* for nothing they* dared had beauty or truth: it was enough for a thing, a being to conform* exactly to the* images that their words could evoke were to deny themselves, and which reigned to intone the invariable litany of their identity - each aurt dam this unchanging procession of words as dam a church habit, priestess like her idol - totem endowed with a setc. face, hands, muscles* sponge, which the officiant revered in an adoration of infinite facets in which you

173

Out of bounds, 1971 version (II: 172-173)

buildings without windows, doors or passers-by, no one on the
hollow, deserted porches. gardens some evenings I was enraged the
summer was passing, a little lighter every day

where was I?

five, six, eight hours
without a goal, walking,
being patient, wearing
myself out, only idea, no
willpower

those nights when I shamefully
had to cry over my money - lost,
stolen, given away

how many years?

over the years I was going
neighbourhood - fear of being this
lost, body of fog i progressed body-
ment of being invisible

a very hard core was forming
inside me, concerned only with
my image

I chased after all and sundry without even daring to fall in love

cinquante francs perdus j'ai aimé un petit
Tunisien

cheap, after all, I watched my
meagre nest egg melt crumb by
crumb in their placid hands

I lick him, long slit pierced
by a hairless cut (I've
picked up these nasty
habits on bodies that are
too pretty)

7

Interdit de séjour, first page of the
original version, 1969 (I: 07)

buildings with no shop windows, no lights or doors, deserted
nights and foggy squares the summer passed, a little less clear
every day walking for hours on end, exhausting yourself, walking
endlessly, searching some more

I'd go home and

sleep in a dirty room, they'd lend me this, there was water . . . f

I put on a little stray Arab I lick his slit a beardless
cut you have to wipe them before using them . . .

I used to lock myself away for days on end, lying on my
bed, alone, jerking off, slowly dying, stinking, sniffing myself,
cutting up porn, getting a bit drunk

hairless armpits disgust me I make him lower his arms (he smiles
sideways when you fuck him and frowns if the blows are too
hard - then he fucks in turn and discharges in the light ecstasy of
a fart)

sleep and
darkness emptied the streets, every evening a new city arose,
uninhabited, where cops, hoodlums, tramps and aunts prowled:
this crippled universe was ours on the boulevards we still came
across young silhouettes, supple and lively, solidly embodied I
would take refuge in a public garden, I would sit and wait, my
pocket empty, I had a hard-on for impossible bestiality, old joys
where images and a secret came back to life, that must have
thrown me there, into the night where I no longer recognised
anything, running from pissrooms to gardens, to hotels, paying,
humiliating oneself, lying to oneself, nothing but a fog where I
one navigates with closed eyes, nobody existed (one mimics
harshness, one invents tactics of withdrawal, protection,
safeguard, changing one's being or one's body)

far from here, in the half-light, the call of a pleasure no longer
desired, glimpsed in the distance.

7

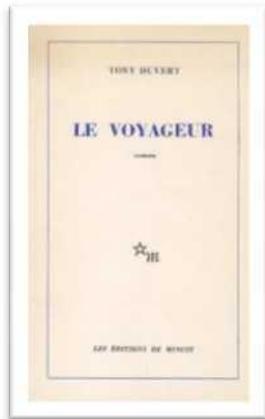
Interdit de séjour, first page of
the new revised edition, 1971 (II: 07)

WORKS CITED

- Benderson, Bruce "Innocence on Trial: The Politics of Tony Duvert. *Diary of an Innocent*. By Tony Duvert. Trans. Bruce Benderson. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010. 5-13.
- Benderson, Bruce "Introduction: The Family on Trial. *Good Sex Illustrated*. By Tony Duvert. Trans. Bruce Benderson. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007.7-13.
- Bowie, Malcolm *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978.
- Brongersma, Edward *Loving Boys: A Multidisciplinary Study of Sexual Relations Between Adult and Minor Males*. Vol. 2. Elmhurst, NY: Global Academic Publishers, 1990.
- Chapsal, Madeleine
Dalmas, André "La fête cruelle de Tony Duvert". L'Express, 1973. 74-5.
"Portrait d'homme couteau," "Interdit de séjour" by Tony Duvert. Rev. of *Portrait d'homme couteau & Interdit de séjour*, by Tony Duvert. Le Monde. 30 August 1969.
- Drucker, Johanna *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909- 1923*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Duvert, Tony *L'Enfant au masculin* Paris: Minuit, 1980.
Duvert, Tony *Interdit de séjour*. Paris: Minuit. 1969.
Duvert, Tony *Interdit de séjour (new revised edition)*. Paris: Minuit, 1971.
- Duvert, Tony "La Lecture introuvable." *Minuit 1* (1972): 2-21.
Duvert, Tony *Récidive*. Paris; Minuit, 1967.
Duvert, Tony "Tony Duvert: no to the doll child. Interview with Guy Hocquengheim and Marc Voline. Libération. 10-11 April 1979. 15-16.
- Gobbille, Boris "Mai-Juin 68: Crise du consentement et ruptures d'allégeance. *Mai-Juin 68*, Paris: Editions de l'Atelier, 2008. 15-31.
- Kennelly, Brian "Rape Fantasy Redux? Textual Victimhood In and Between Versions of Tony Duvert's *Portrait of a Knife Man*." *Dalhousie French Studies* 101 (2014): 93-103.
- Kennelly, Brian "Rewriting, Rereading *Recidive*." *Dalhousie French Studies* 67 (2004): 135-42.
- Jellenik, Cathy A Tripartite Approach to Rewriting in Marguerite Duras, Annie Emaux, and Marie Redonnet. Thesis. University of Colorado, 2005.
- McHale, Brian *Postmodernist Fiction*. New York- Methuen. 1987.
Nourrissier, François "Preface." *The Allantic Island*. By Tony Duvert. Paris: Minuit, 1979. 7-9.
- Phillips, John *Forbidden Fictions Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth-Century French Literature*. London : Pluto

- Press, 1999.
- Poirot-Delpech, B. *Paysage de fantaisie*, by Tony Duvert. *Le Monde*. 18 January 1973.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain "The problematic exercise of Literature." *The Traveller: texts, talks and interviews (1947-2001)*. Ed. Olivier Corpet. Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2001. 237-45.
- Sebhan, Gilles. *Tony Duvert. L'enfant silencieux*. Paris: Denoël, 2010.
- Shingler, Katherine "Framing the Text: Mallarme's *Un coup de dés* and the Arts of the Book." *Framed! Essays in French Studies*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. 53-72.
- Simonin, Anne "The writer, the publisher and bad morals. *May-June 68*. Paris: Editions de l'Atelier/Editions Ouvrières. 2008. 411-25.
- Stoltzfus, Ben "The Aesthetics of Nouveau Roman and Innovative Fiction." *The International Fiction Review* 10.2 (1983): 108-16.
- Thiher, Allen Rev. of *The Atlantic Island*. By Tony Duvert. *World Literature Today* 54.4 (1980): 595.
- Thiher, Allen Rev. of *Récidive*. By Tony Duvert. *World Literature Today* 51.2 (1977): 249.

THE TRAVELLER



Antoine Brea (<http://antoinebrea.blogspot.fr>): There's a book by Tony Duvert that's hard to talk about. I'm thinking of *Le Voyageur**, written in 1968 and published in 1970. Here's the presentation given by Editions de Minuit on their website:

"This traveller is not alone: the hunt for memories that he undertakes from one town to the next is a hunt for boys - an erotic quest in which the children and adolescents he has made his exclusive prey come and go; and they too seek and love each other before his eyes. For everything here is the movement of bodies towards one another, in the image of a cruel desire that ranges from the rage to destroy those he chooses to their ritual staging - under the auspices of Grammar, Music and Lust. The language, poetry and desire that make up this erotic art towards which this book is also a journey, the itinerary of a novelist who gives way to the powers of the flesh and perversion, until the entire work is transformed into the body, into sex, in all its scandalous nakedness. And the aim is achieved, as is shown by the audacity of this work, which surpasses in crudity anything written to date in the homosexual field - and even gives way, at the end, to the most violent station graffiti, as if true eroticism were not in the mind of a writer, but in the body of every man."

Everything in what we've just read is true, but I defy anyone who has had the book between their paws to recognise, behind this sales digest, what went through their minds.

Le Voyageur is nothing other than an experiment. Formally, it consists of an accumulation of collages, quotations and fragments in the author's own hand, not to mention the reproduction of "the writing of a wise kid (...) with a sergeant-major's pen" ** that pepper the book and are mixed with the worst scenarios, the worst obscenities and the worst cruelties. All this

was not entirely new, even at the time, but brought to incandescence in his athanor by Duvert: everything explodes. The book represents the acme of this laboratory literature into which the writer was throwing his rage, at the turn of the seventies, before the big break, before turning, some ten years later, towards this 'simple' style that could reach everyone, towards *L'île atlantique*,

towards this *'language of Guy Des Cars'* in which he had to make himself understood in order to be read by as many people as possible.

Basically, it's Gilles Sebhan ** (him again) who seems to me to sum things up best when it comes to elucidating the *Voyageur* problem:

"A big book with no punctuation that tells stories of children, of chasing torment, of station graffiti. It just doesn't stop. And it's always more sexual, always more violent, always more experimental. It's as if he [Tony Duvert] wanted to subvert fiction at all costs, to shatter the narrative, but not as an author of the moment, more as if it were all a joke, as if he were also taking the piss out of his own publisher. It's as if he's writing a book that's unpublishable and unreadable, so that it can be published anyway, in a language of such beauty that you have to put your nose into it and there's nothing else you can do, as if he wanted to fascinate us with a zip that snaps, a mackintosh that's opened on the fly. He goes all out and Jérôme Lindon follows. It's undoubtedly expensive, and for very little. Because obviously, even if the small German-Pratin world starts making noises about it, even if some of the press reacts, it doesn't sell.

As you may have gathered (or not, it's hard to say), I'm more than a little hesitant about this *Voyageur*, not sure whether I love it or not. The fact remains that, when I think of Tony Duvert, it's often passages or characters from this book that come to mind first, like the butcher in love and then dead:

"I asked her where her husband was she said he was in Melun looking for two calves I asked her if she couldn't close the shop for an hour or two we'd take care of another shop she said ah ah and again ah ah when I unzipped my fly it was the good old days when the butcher had his wife, a beautiful woman.

blond and fat, a cheerful face what a pity, this cancer, we never thought she would die of it so quickly what beautiful days when I went to see her in the summer we could hear the schoolchildren on holiday shouting in the street or in the garden and her little muzzle of Dédé who was already walking and chirping things between our legs we'd go to the conjugal room, as we call it, pour ourselves a glass of chilled rosé ah the good wine and she'd say ah ah laughing out loud and shaking her blonde curls or hhhooooiinnn at other times because she had a funny voice and wanted to say mmmmmmmmm that is to say ah dis-donc tui.e. ah dis-donc tu baisser bien mon poulet I was still a pretty boy more pretty in any case than her husband we took the door at the back of the shop to the left of the cold room we climbed a staircase made of fir that creaked

atrociously and then it was the dessus-I'd spread her thighs with both hands, like opening a potato sack, and I'd see beautiful, cracking, pink flesh, beaded with sweat and soft against my cock and cheeks, a fat lump of butter, the butcher's fine lump, yes, a fine lump. I don't remember what it was like back then, small rooms with low ceilings, narrow corridors, rotten windows that let the rain in at the joints (...) she didn't bother with the housework and both of them were as stingy as each other, but she was the cheerful type, he on his gold, he grumbled, she on her gold, she fucked the parquet floors swollen with savings buried under their slats, a fortune to be found like Easter eggs in the lawns and flowers. She was a beautiful woman like a handsome boy with well-defined arms and a lump as big as a small arse ah I put some in her parting thinking of a he (...) she didn't close the curtains she didn't open her bodice I slid my hand underneath because she asked for it saying mm mm piteously she didn't have a bra it was too hot I scratched the cancer on her left breast and she clucked with pleasure turning her head over like a drinking hen, I felt sorry for her I thought that's how she'll die those were good summers Dédé would bang on the door he'd cry he'd ask to pee she'd shout shit your trousers my sweet we'll wash you afterwards ah ah her husband would come home around seven o'clock with the van he'd drive the calves into the back yard and hit them with a the butcher gave him a spanking to teach him how to get his shoes dirty. He was a big, brutal man who fucked hard and deep, and every Sunday evening (...) he didn't even lift his wife's shirt, he climbed on top of her, bit her on the arse and slammed his cock against her belly... he didn't even lift his wife's shirt, he just climbed on top of her, bit her on the ass and slammed his cock against her belly, that was the signal".

Or like this long dreamlike moment, half flesh, half fish, half funny, half magnificent:

"Othon was a marvellous boy, elegant and racy, handsome as a god his hair was blond his lips purplish his eyes blue his teeth white his nose straight his body slim and tanned a magnificent musculature an angelic smile The ravishing and shy Oscar had subtly made his conquest three days before touching his hand with a mysterious air he had whispered Come dear Othon could I talk to you we're going for a walk in the park How beautiful the countryside is on this bright autumn afternoon Has anyone ever told you that you have beautiful eyes? and suddenly the handsome blond was won over: he embraced the other, who pretended to protest, then gave in to Othon's languorous kiss and suddenly the wonderful boy's penis penetrated him it was long, hard and enormous, measuring no more than twenty-four centimetres. four centimetres Oscar said

Oh with a distraught sigh and murmured Chéri je me pâme (Darling, I'm swooning) and suddenly he felt the marvellous sensation of feeling a sentimental feeling because he was sensitive with a sensitive sensibility And he remembered their stay on the Côte d'Azur when he had already admired Othon on the beach contemplating his marvellous skin his graceful, virile musculature, his racy gait, his elegant gestures, his eyes as blue as the sea and his short, clingy swimming costume that revealed all the secret details of his virility. In the distance, he could hear the rumours of the dance hall and see the fireworks bursting out in multicoloured sprays over the brilliantly illuminated bay. And suddenly the marvellous young man with the angelic face, the muscles of iron, the racy teeth, the elegant eyes, the purplish voice, the beautiful child of the Gods, a marvellous apparition who fulfilled all Oscar's dreams of happiness, let himself be seduced Oscar said to him Has anyone ever told you that you have beautiful ears? and suddenly he felt the

And he remembered the long walk they'd taken under the palm trees down to the shore where the waves of the Pacific Ocean were dying He looked discreetly at the marvellous musculature of the blond boy with his graceful, virile feet and his purplish knees and his white voice his blue nose his straight eyes his slim, tanned teeth his twenty-four centimetre smile his angelic penis four centimetres his angelic penis And in the distance the sun was slowly setting in a torrent of fire an unforgettable and magical sight Oscar had never seen anything so beautiful and skilfully he touched the hand of the handsome Aryan who said Hands off you dirty aunt No he put his hand on the shoulder of the handsome Othon and said Has anyone ever told you that you have beautiful sheets? and suddenly Othon, captivated, placed his lips on Oscar's and covered him with his naked body How infinite was the voluptuousness of that kiss! and suddenly a marvellous penis penetrated Oscar who groaned with voluptuous and infinite abandon And he remembered the day of their first kiss, there on the purplish shore, in the radiant blaze of an apocalyptic sunset He had admired the marvellous Othon for a long time and had said to him Did anyone ever tell you that you had a beautiful arse? Yours is beautiful too," replied the handsome Viking, blushing Uh! And suddenly he felt the powerful organ of the blond epebe penetrating him like an extraordinary burn that quenched his unquenchable hunger for infinite voluptuousness. And he remembered the playtime when, after they had met in the school yard, Othon had taken his hand and whispered How much does your father earn? No, Oscar had said Did anyone tell you you have nice pimples? Our friendship is inextinguishable and purpurine," Othon retorted, "and my cock is much longer than yours. No," he said, "dare I make a humble request at your beloved feet? And Oscar, delighted

and confused, replied It is I who am begging you to condescend to give me an order, O my friendly friend Then Othon whispered from the height of his resplendent blondness I would like to see you this evening after dinner And he still remembered the long walk they had taken in the college gardens while twilight Othon had carved an elegant, racy heart into the bark of a tree under which he had written A KIKI POUR LA VIE and the wonderful teenager in the blond shirt, the graceful, virile trousers, the thin, tanned braces and the purplish socks had tenderly embraced Oscar And suddenly he felt Oscar's gigantic sex. The night had fallen and a marvellous moonlight illuminated the two lovers lying on the grass whose freshness was equalled only by the burning fervour of their youthful love.No, he said in an elegant, racy voice I am yours, O you whom I love even more than my mother And suddenly the sperm of the marvellous Othon spurted out like the burning milk flowing from the cows' breasts on the radiant mountain pastures of the homicidal Alps".

FANTASY LANDSCAPE

Roman, 1973.



Introduction to *Paysage de fantaisie* (1973) by Tony Duvert, on the back cover of the first edition of the novel

Like all my novels, this one contains previous books, homosexual obscenities, and the violence, and even amusing passages: so many things that inspire legitimate disgust. However, if we skip these painful places, we find here and there a few lines capable of holding the interest of honest people a little; the novelistic form, quite singular, will perhaps also excite their curiosity.

The characters in *Paysage de fantaisie* - the title comes from a strangely sadistic painting by Francesco Guardi - are children, in other words, a dying adult, since childhood does not exist.

Because children don't name childhood; their very games deny it, pulling it towards an uninhabitable elsewhere: the adult world, "reality".

In this respect, childhood and writing use an identical imaginary: they recklessly create reality, tearing it to pieces, reshaping it, indulging in the illusion and duplication of play, where we pretend for good.

This is why a fiction - and a perversion - dedicated to childhood can only play with this illusion, be twice fictional - divided between the belief it has in the mythical universe it stages, and the certainty that it is pure fantasy, an unbearable lie, too real to be true, like any object of desire, memory or culture.

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech (*Le Monde*, 1973): The rumour on the Left Bank is clear: Tony Duvert is the up-and-coming young writer who will soon be quoted and imitated. The proof was in the *Minuit* review launched in November by the publishing house of the same name: of all the house writers listed in the first summary - Beckett, Pinget, Robbe-Grillet - it was Duvert who made the opening, with a text in the form of an editorial, if not a manifesto, 'La Lecture introuvable'.

The younger generation who dream of an uncompromising counter-culture are merely reproducing the consumer ideal in a harsher form, and prefer the image arts, which are so much more soothing. The only real subversion leading to a liberated world would therefore involve the risk, shared by authors and readers alike, of destroying the vestiges of the ideology in place, right down to our bodies.

To achieve this undermining - others say de-construction - Tony Duvert relies in particular on pornography, considered less bourgeois, less recuperative than eroticism, and on behaviour deemed abnormal: homosexuality, sadomasochism, necrophilia. These themes are developed to the point of obsession in *Paysage de fantaisie*.



Jean-François Josselin, (*Le Nouvel Obs*, 5 February 1973) : A novelist of desire. Tony Duvert: "As children play Indians, I play at being an executioner. PAYSAGE DE FANTASIE, by Tony Duvert, ed. de Minuit, 230 p., 40F.

Jérôme Lindon, director of Editions de Minuit, felt that Tony Duvert could finally see the light of day. This time, Mr Lindon did not stand in the way, he did not refuse press services, he did not confuse information, he did not deny legends. In short, Tony Duvert, mysterious author of untraceable novels reputed to be scandalous, situated and quoted between Jean Genet and Pierre

Guyotat, Tony Duvert, a seemingly quiet young man (there are his eyes, black, piercing, 'wicked', but that's not so unusual after all), exists, talks, walks, drinks whisky, looks. Just like everyone else. He just happens to be a great writer.

Caresses and torture

"Paysage de fantaisie", his fifth book, is unexpected proof of this. Unexpected, because talent is usually accompanied by surprise. Tony Duvert's four previous books (*Récidive*, *Le Voyageur*, *Interdit de séjour*, *Portrait de l'homme au couteau* (sic)) and the reputation that worldly gossip has given him hardly prepared readers for this *Paysage*. It was said to be harsh, abstruse and terrifying. But this is an essentially voluptuous book, a literature seen as one of those much-talked-about "machines of desire", a novel about communicating pleasure. A work of caresses and tortures (both suffered and inflicted) that would charm children if the business of sex

(not the education of the latter, but rather the learning of its possibilities) were officially forbidden to them.

Childhood and writing," explains Tony Duvert at the back of his book, "use an authentic imagination: they shout (sic) unconsciously at the real, they tear it to pieces, they reform it, they indulge in that illusion and duplication typical of play, where we pretend for good." These different elements - the imaginary, illusion, the real, childhood and writing - are the walls on which the reader of *Paysage de fantaisie* bounces.

What's going on? Some children are playing around (an adult is among them, *inside them?*). Their dreams and games are ferocious, funny and, of course, perverse. They are having fun being executioners or victims, they are both. Imagination becomes immediate and provisional reality through the torn senses. The voluptuous presence of the body, the importance of its place in the story, disturbs and disorganises the narrative, destroying the notion of time and upsetting space. The language of desire and its stereotypes give rise to the sexual (or, if you like, pornographic) fantasies of fiction.

A legend shattered

It is likely that the population of this *landscape* is divided into two bands. The battles are raging and fun. It's a bit like *La Guerre des boutons*, stripped of Jura folklore and French Gallicism. With the added bonus of long, gliding lines, words running free without punctuation but not without phrases: "The waves lapped and the brown-black sand of the shore shone when the wave receded, then absorbed the last film of water and became matt again, as if swollen, smooth and rounded. The footprints were no longer clear, the edges blunt, the water had cooked them... "

Twenty-eight-year-old Tony Duvert, who tiptoed into the library business five years ago, is now exploding. In a new magazine, *Minuit*, which he co-edits with the painter Michel Longuet, he tears apart the world and business of publishing, the relationships and interpenetrations between the publishing industry, the bourgeois public and the author.

In the corridors of his publisher's office, he blasted the legendary Duvert: Genet? Genet horrifies him, he's an "author who flowers his behind"... The Nouveau Roman (which saw the light of day, flourished and aged well at *Minuit*)? He feels

a "great aversion" to the art of Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor. The protection

of anonymity orchestrated by Jérôme Lindon around his first four books? He says it was mainly due to his shyness in the face of sexual works. He, Tony Duvert, has no such reticence.

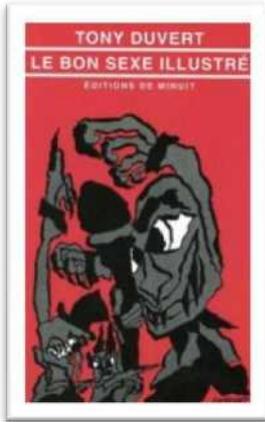
He calls himself a "writer": "*The best social state for a homosexual*". He hates traditional fiction (in fact, during the discussion, he only saves Proust, Céline and Beckett) because it "refuses the body". *What exists,*" he continues, *"is discourse. But discourse itself is nothing, it is at the service of the body. Writing is an integral part of the love life. It encourages us to go further. And writing is infinite freedom: like children who play at being Indians, I play at being an executioner.*

Claude Mauriac (*Le Figaro*, 1973): The author of *Paysage de fantaisie* reveals to us, in this continuous passage from the abominable to the delicious and from the execrable to the exquisite, gifts and an art that the word talent does not suffice to express. Therein lies the miracle of this scandalous book, in which, from the most vertiginous perversion, mysteriously emerges the word that would horrify Tony Duvert, but it was his turn: innocence.

Madeleine Chapsal (*L'Express*, 1973): Tony Duvert, whose readership continues to grow, is twenty-seven years old, and *Paysage de fantaisie* is his fifth book. A great book. At times, unbearable. A book in which difficult reading regains its all too often lost dimension of subversive activity. A semblance of a narrator who may be an adult may be having dreams about children. But these dreams are sure to awaken: they are the kind of dreams that morality condemns, that society rejects, that justice punishes, that the conscious mind represses and that the honest and now very official sexual discourse has never heard of. But sexuality, if you want to talk about it, if you want to write about it, if you want to know more about it, about its reality and its fantasies, you have to admit that this is what Tony Duvert is writing about. Fierce, but also extremely funny.

THE GOOD SEX ILLUSTRATES

Essays,



Isabelle (*Charlie Hebdo*, 1974): Tony Duvert, who writes quickly, pleasantly and often amusingly, bought the ultimate in information on the subject from Hachette: the *Encyclopédie de la vie sexuelle*, written by doctors, sociologists, psychotherapists, all sexually fulfilled people as we know it. He didn't like it. And he explains to us, Duvert, what

ideology found in the *Encyclopaedia*. The kind of ideology that is going to be taught to our kids at school even better than it was taught at home until now.

Dominique Rolin (*Le Point*, 1974): From here we can hear the outcry of indignation that this monumentally funny pagan book is bound to raise. And why do we laugh from beginning to end? Because Duvert, who hates the castrating hypocrisy of adults, is really addressing children, the young people he considers frustrated. Using crystal-clear language, marked by humour and ferocity, he unwittingly constructs a kind of thesis novel in which he is the all-purpose young hero.

Roland Jaccard (*Le Monde*, 1974): In *Le Bon sexe illustré*, Tony Duvert, a wicked, subversive, marginal and lucid wit, amuses himself and us at the same time by dismantling a sex education textbook, apparently liberal and progressive (it's the *Encyclopédie* Hachette), but in fact inspired by a repressive, natalist ideology. The demonstration is not lacking in piquancy and, as Tony Duvert has a particular flair for 'lifting' moral presuppositions - and a very personal way of tearing them to shreds - there is never a dull moment in his company.

Jean-François Josselin (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 1974): Tony Duvert's book is not only (insanely) funny and (diabolically) corrosive, it's also important: beneath the progressive appearances of *educators*, it foils the traps of conformism and, more seriously, the subtle brainwashing of the Sexual Order. A generous pamphlet, *Le Bon Sexe illustré* destroys repressive notions of vice and virtue. Rather than condemning erotomanic practices or sexual peculiarities as perverse, it looks for the causes, not only psychological but also, and above all, social. And it's not a question of bourgeois pity but of intelligence, of a taste for



happiness and freedom.

Jean-Yves Alt (*Culture and debate* blog, 9 February 2016):

Tony Duvert's essays, novels and stories always bear witness to an inexorable aspiration towards total freedom, i.e. when man is free of all constraints, external or internal, physical or moral - when he is constrained neither by law nor by necessity.

Sigmund Freud concluded at the end of his life that civilisation cannot be built without the regulation of sexuality, and that this regulation requires a more or less extensive repression of sexual tendencies. But if the price of civilisation has to be collective neurosis, disease, psychiatric treatment, wars that let off steam, and the expansion of the death instinct, then the time has come to reconsider the relationship between Eros and civilisation, to ask ourselves whether we should not now reduce the sacrifices that civilisation has imposed on human instincts, this time in the interests of civilisation itself.

The decisive question is this:

"Will we succeed, and to what extent, in reducing the burden imposed on men by the sacrifice of instincts, in reconciling men with the sacrifices that will

remain necessary, and in compensating them for these sacrifices? (Freud, The Future of an Illusion, p. 10).

This is the question that Tony Duvert's books address.

When *Le bon sexe illustré* came off the presses, it was like a paving stone in the pond. Tony Duvert was dismantling the mechanism of the sex education books that had just been developed for minors. These luxurious, hygienic, tolerant and liberal albums were intended to introduce children and teenagers, in age groups, to the mysteries of sexual life. The right-wing press vilified this *Encyclopaedia*, published in 1973 by Hachette. Tony Duvert analysed the anti-ideological content of this breviary of the 'good sex', replacing the notion of sin with hygienism, the idea of the good with normality, and the litany of vices that the clergy used to spell out in Latin with psycho-medical categories. The absolute rule of industrial societies is: all expenditure must produce. Sexual expenditure therefore becomes the most severely restricted, since it is unproductive. The codification, normalisation and familialist confinement of sexuality, under various masks, is one of the means used by the moral order to force people to work. Tony Duvert's project was threefold:

1. demystifying the idea of sex education, by debunking its ideology.
2. to write the innocent language of polymorphous perverse desire.
3. produce a liberating desublimation of sexuality.

His weapon was sometimes humour, ferocious, lively, caustic, sometimes a novelistic style worthy of Burroughs or Selby, sometimes a direct narrative in the style of the sexual graffiti that runs across the walls of underground trains or toilets. Throughout his books, we see the emergence of a writer whose sole concern is to express the body, childhood, homosexuality and pleasure. True sex education, Duvert shows, is not to be found in the *Hachette Encyclopaedia*, but in the politics of experience.

No writer is clearer than Tony Duvert. There is no question of sacrificing one's body to the trials and tribulations of production, output, power and ownership. In the meantime, Tony Duvert is obliged to write books; obliged financially, psychologically? Clever minds will trap him there,

or think they are trapping him, telling him that he too produces, sublimates, inscribes, saves, retains, wields power, plays the game of representation.

Fellatio, sodomy, orgasms, coitus, licking, cunnilingus, anilingus and other unpredictable gaudrioles - don't we need to put some order into all that so that

the industrial machine runs smoothly, incoercibly, producing more and more? The restrained body is the Machine in power. And all the pieces fit together marvellously well: education-castration, adulthood, marriage, procreation, production/consumption, familialism, civic-mindedness, and perhaps the Legion of Honour at the end of one's career.

What about homosexual, paedophilic, fetishistic, voyeuristic, masochistic, zoophilic, lesbian or pataphysical desire? In the *Encyclopédie Hachette*, everything was labelled, hygienised, moralised and sanitised: "The waste of desire is swallowed up by a family/marital machine of endless production-consumption - of which the child is, by definition, the stake and the victim. This is what I shall now try to illustrate". (Tony Duvert, "Le Bon Sexe Illustré" p. 18)

Tony Duvert's alert, joyful approach is guided by the same zephyr of freedom that Hocquenghem, Schérer and a few others sniffed out with their noses to the wind.

Tony Duvert, if he were still alive today, would really be the man to shoot. It would seem that Mr Duvert is unattractive because he refused to play the game of fashion, the media, the star system and entertainment. Yet Tony Duvert, this pamphleteer, was also an excellent writer, praised by Poirot-Delpech of *Le Monde*, Dominique Rolin of *Le Point* and Claude Mauriac of *Le Figaro*. Whether he adopted a 'normal' prosody or a fragmented style, he knew how to surprise on every page. Judge for yourself:

"There was a time of Lent in the city and I began to write. It's winter in a world without seasons; my friends desert me; life is heavier. The sunny days pass and we don't celebrate any of them. Then, at dusk, life can resume. The eaters are already occupying the benches of the open-air gargotes, and receiving the bowls in which the chickpea soup is poured [...] A widow and her daughter are sitting on my left, almost on the ground, on a flowery straw mat. The two women lean against the edge of a similar bed; on stools, the eldest sons complete the circle. A low table is in the middle of us. The mother has put the pot of soup next to her,

in the corner of the wall. Her legs waisted, her dress and apron pulled up to her knees, her breasts large, her face flat and square, her skin creamy white, her mouth and eyes narrow, she sucks her soup from a small wooden ladle and gives me brief glances, a little wary, a little disdainful, a little kind. I feel like one of those stiff old dogs that women give a cuddle to because it's their gossip's

protégé. [...] She lets me admire the two boys in the family, sitting on rag cushions at the bottom of a bare wall. They're wearing worn-out tracksuits with no holes or stains, which are also their pyjamas; they're not eating, they're staring at us in silence. I hardly know them. He has curls, a long face with a heavy chin, girlish eyes, and wicked tints in his cheeks and lips. He often grabs my shoulders and kisses me to flatter me, but I push him away. I like the other one, with his round head of short hair, his nose blunt or wrinkled. He doesn't speak and has only touched me once, to bite my hand while we were being photographed. He's nine or ten years old. Between gulps of soup, the matron asked me which one I liked best. I chose the little bear. People were surprised, joked about it, swore it wasn't pretty, asked the question again and I answered without variation. There's a moment of scandal and, beneath the laughter, a hatred that I don't understand. The visitors have always adored the youngest and despised the other, as their mother demands. (First pages of Journal d'un Innocent).

In 1973, Madeleine Chapsal wrote in *L'Express* about *Paysage de fantaisie*:

"[...] these dreams are sure to awaken: they are the kind of dreams that morality condemns, that society repudiates, that justice punishes, that the conscious mind represses and that the honest and now very official sexual discourse has never heard of".

The childish sexuality that exploded in this book led to it being consigned to the "hell" of municipal libraries, as the erotica section of this public service is known.

Tony Duvert has dipped his pen into his 'moods', his 'bodily expressions': sperm, tears, urine, sweat, saliva and so on. He has gambled on a broken logic, connected to a broken sexuality. He gambled on the scandal of perverse innocence in a normal, guilt-ridden world, on the song of the body, on ejaculation without reason rather than jaculatory oration. Has he won his bet? It's been a long time since industrial societies pre-digested all 'subversion' through text. They know how to manage, reduce, commercialise, recuperate and transform into exchangeable signs any cry, even the one uttered by Tony Duvert.

JOURNAL OF AN INNOCENT Narrative, 1976.



René Scherer (*Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, number 2519, Thursday 12 February 1976):

THE CHILD OR THE THIRD SEX?

Halfway between Paysage de fantaisie and Le bon sexe illustré, these are the (incriminating) pieces of his life

Tony Duvert delivers this daily account in his recent Journal d'un innocent (Diary of an Innocent), while he 'updates' his first novel Récidive. René Schérer, author of L'Emile perversi (Laffont, 1974), has taken a particular interest in paedophilia, arguing that the paradox of a paedophile doing more good for children than all the philanthropists put together...

Le Journal d'un innocent (Diary of an Innocent) opens the doors to the closed place where Paysage de fantaisie (Fantasy Landscape) seemed to indulge too much in forging a childhood "in oneself", on the verge of dreaming. The dream becomes reality; the encounter is an awakening, a new birth, for both child and adult. Le Journal d'un innocent sweeps away with its stern, sovereign style the nonsense that the child, in the hands of the paedophile, is nothing more than an object, subject to the whims of the pervert.

On the contrary, the encounter, the love, for once makes him a subject, enjoying his free and communicating being - if we can still use this adulterated terminology - reveals the rich individuality of his body, sets in motion unsuspected initiatives, and tears him away from anonymity. These Franciscos, Andreseses, Pablos and Pedro, street children, secondary school pupils or working children, escape the infantilizing and enslaving status of childhood through the enchantment of the paedophile. This is a diary of the secret customs that have always been the leaven of life, beneath the arsenal of laws and collective representations.

It is true that their country, where the narrator, escaping the "hideousness" of our social relations, settles, is not ours. It's an unnamed country, but one that's easy to locate, where, especially among the working classes, nothing resembles

the acrimonious rivalry of our closed families, where children enjoy real

freedom of movement, of contact, frequent the streets without being the objects of constant surveillance, as little subject as possible to "educational oppression" and the anguish it engenders, where they have the opportunity to work or beg without scorn, to form multiple and independent relationships, where the body is experienced without shame, without our cogs and armour - at least they have not yet mutilated that of the children. Not that this society has an ideology as strict, a religion as full of prohibitions as ours, but it has had the wisdom not to get caught up in the language and does not yet feel its insidious castrating effect: *"Love between boys is forbidden, but popular mores support some vestiges of it. Boys don't see themselves as different from men, they're not taught innocence: you're not afraid of being a fag, you're afraid of bearing the name"* and, as a last resort, *"you're always free to deny your actions"*.

BODY OF LOST LOVE

Nothing is known or understood about the child until the body comes into play. And nothing is known about the body as long as it remains confined within the codes of heterosexual society. So homosexuality, and particularly pederasty, is not simply a supplement to the sexual - in every sense of the word supplement - or simply a difference, but the way to the body. Without it, the body remains condensed into a fragment of itself, for which reproduction is, at least in theory, the bleak destiny. To ideological and repressive heterosexuality, homosexuality opposes the recognition of the multiple sexes of which sex is formed:

"It starts at the anus and ends at the end of the knot, with a small hole on one side and a large hole on the other. Every imaginable connection (muscular, nervous, spatial) links the rectal cavity to the penis, making it its own interior. The root of the member and the orifice of the cavity are a single place, the anus. Thus nature, more malicious than those who claim to impose their own order of things, has given boys two sexes in one.

So homosexuality should be taught. But paedophilia is not educational: Tony Duvert does not fall into this trap, even though paedophiles undoubtedly do more 'good' for children than philanthropists put together. The paedophile doesn't have to justify himself or disguise himself; the bodies, between them,

speaking for themselves. His book is intended to be and is "pornographic": admirable descriptions of asses, cocks, skins, their colour, their grain, embraces, copulations, suckings, collections of photos that fix bodies in their unchanging

childhood. But because it's about pornography - which has nothing to do with the pornography of heterosexuals - crossing all registers, overturning codes. It's a moralist's pornography, where morality is merely a dictatorship of hypocrisy and mutilation, teaching the sinister division of ages and forced renunciations.

The language of the *Diary* reaches the classicism of the greatest models; some sentences sound like those of the *Essays*: "*I have the taste, I have the need to link myself to all the ages of my life, past or future. From my childhood to the present day, I don't see these breaks, these famous stages that every normal man goes through, each time denying and forgetting the age before. I glide along inside myself like a river that can go downstream or upstream, I find myself and tune into myself everywhere*".

Will we persist for much longer, if not out of antiphrasis or bravado on the part of those who display it, in calling perversion that point of lucidity where the acceptance of childhood in ourselves, our depth, and the desire for the child outside ourselves meet and complete each other? The child, that "*body of lost love*" as another - Lewinter - refers to Grodek - or, as Duvert writes in his diatribe against the hero-sexual order, with a touch of humour appropriate to such a serious emotion, the age of man when "*the pinnacle of perfections*" is found.

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech (*Le Monde*, 1976): Born in 1945, he was not subjected to the sexual morality that permeated even secular education until after the war, nor to the shame that survives. His liberation is unencumbered by diktats and transgressed rituals. Despite his age, the author resembles his great Socratic predecessors more than he does the hippies, whose "libertarian namby-pamby" and pettiness he loathes beneath their hair and trinkets. He also rejects the rigorism of China, where sexuality is "outdated", and the duplicity of the intellectuals who marvel at it without admitting their attachment to the hidden vices of the West.

Colette Piquet (L'Innocent du Journal, L'Unebévúe no. 33, June 2015)

Tours, 14 March. [1979]

Dear René Schérer,

It is rather for me to thank you for your letter, of course, but also for the articles you kindly devoted to my last books [Note], which gave me such happiness that, if it hadn't been for my bear-like character, or rather for the absolute self-enclosure I imposed on myself, I would already have expressed my gratitude. There are few men by whom I wish my books to be loved: but you are one of the very first, and your disapproval would dismay me. Even though you read, perhaps, too little literature - I mean, too abstractly - for my taste and my works, I swear to you that my books are not romantic pamphlets, and that I write them for their own sake! As soon as they are put to the test in a novel, my strongest convictions are challenged: 'fiction' reintroduces a reality that my ideas could do without! - But what an ideal form of self-criticism. And it shows me that truly committed literature can only say: I don't know. And, if this 'message' - which I don't like in this case, no novels: I'll do essays - these places of omniscience. Tactically very useful. And fen prepares. But there are so many infirmities in these certainties that will have to be defended.

Tony Duvert, Letter to René Scherer

[Note] "L'enfant ou le troisième sexe", in *Nouvelles littéraires* no. 2519 (12/2/76) on *Journal d'un Innocent* (Ed. note).

This exchange of correspondence and Tony Duvert's extraordinary remark - "My strongest convictions, as soon as they are put to the test in a novel, are challenged: 'fiction' reintroduces a reality that my ideas did very well without!" - were motivated by an article by René Scherer on *Le Journal d'un Innocent*.

This story is one of Tony Duvert's masterpieces, and indeed it could have been mistaken for an autobiography, or a subversive moral statement for those addicted to conventional thinking, or a revolutionary political pamphlet...

I'm going to take Tony Duvert at his word and show that *Diary of an Innocent Man* is none of these things, that its *raison d'être* is, as its author claims, entirely literary. Which is not to say that this beautiful and difficult book cannot also be seen as a political pamphlet.

But perhaps in general it's easier for the reader to comment on essays and theoretical texts, as René Scherer does: you follow the author's thinking, you expose and discuss, it's more intellectual, and therefore safer. Reading fiction, a narrative, a novel, a short story, is no easy task. Readers run the risk of being in the same position as the author, i.e. of finding themselves "faced with a reality that their ideas could do without". But isn't that also an opportunity, the chance to enter the magical world of literature?

So let's take the risk and seize the opportunity.

One question, though: what is this real that Tony Duvert talks about?

It sounds simple and obvious when you put it like that. Everyone who reads it exclaims, AMAZING! But such a remark is not self-evident. How can fiction be more real than everyday reality, or even abstract ideas, philosophical or political reflection? And what is this REAL that Tony Duvert talks about? The Lacanian real as opposed to reality? That would be too simple, and there's nothing to say that Tony Duvert was referring to Lacan when he wrote that.

Similar remarks are often made by great writers. Let's get back to reality," Balzac wrote to Jules Sandeau, "let's talk about Eugénie Grandet. Balzac was no doubt implying that *Eugénie Grandet* was a fiction, a *virtuality* to use Gilles Châtelet's expression, in all its power, and therefore had more consistency, opened the door to more reality than everyday reality. Gide spoke of the characters in his *Faux monnayeurs* who overwhelmed him on all sides and began to live a life over which the writer had no control. And so did Henry James, for whom ghosts

of "The Turn of the Screw", who are an example of *fiction*, were much more real than the other characters in the story, or even the people we meet in everyday life.

Why not have a chat with Gilles Châtelet about mathematics?

On the subject of mathematics, I came across an analysis that struck me in a text by Gilles Châtelet, "L'enchantement du virtuel", an extremely subtle and interesting shift from the *virtual* to the *real*. In a nutshell, he says that the *virtual* is more *real* than everyday reality, which we believe to be real. He writes things like, "Politicians are the typical real (in the sense of reality), the proof is that they change all the time! (1) The virtual is something else for Gilles Châtelet, "there is an irreversible power in the virtual".

We have the impression, rarely questioned, that what we call *reality* is irreversible, and in fact "it's the most reversible thing there is", he adds. Things that were thought to be real at one point have become completely unrealistic and absurd - that the earth is flat, for example, or that the sun revolves around the earth - whereas the virtual, with its fragile nature, is one of the most decisive and implacable things there is. The virtual is, in short, more real, more powerful, than what we call reality, the hard as iron, dumb reality that St Thomas invoked, which is made up of nothing but illusions of the senses,

pretences, prejudices, rumours and gossip.

All this at Châtelet is based on a reflection on mathematics, on mathematical invention, and therefore on Leibniz and his infinitesimal calculus. For example, he says, if I draw a triangle. "A triangle is not a figure in itself that falls from the sky of ideas, as in Plato! A triangle is something I produce. A triangle that can move a little, that can move a tiny bit, infinitesimally little. So what is this a little, a tiny bit, infinitely little, if not that the triangle only exists because there are virtual triangles around it, an infinity of triangles. And that's what reality is.

It is with these thoughts - and because mathematical creation and literary creation are of the same essence - that I approach this novel, *Diary of an Innocent*, perhaps Tony Duvert's masterpiece.

THE DIARY OF AN INNOCENT MAN

You open this book. You stop at the first sentence.

I wanted to talk about birds, but now it's too late.

It's a sentence that seems extraordinary, that leaves the reader charmed, that is, in the etymological sense, in a state of awe. You wake up and think, this must be a great writer. And you wonder why. Then you remember the most famous first sentences of the great novels, like the very famous and also so full of charm,

For a long time I went to bed early.

It has often been said that this is a strange sentence, bordering on incorrectness, one of those that made Gide's skin crawl and caused him to reject the manuscript of *In Search of Lost Time*. Proust could have written, "In my childhood I went to bed early", or, "Yesterday I went to bed early", and his sentence would have been more grammatically correct. But we wouldn't have the same effect of strangeness, of charm, achieved by this almost inappropriate use of "longtemps", this drop-out of spoken French, of childish language. Or if he had written, "In my childhood, evenings didn't last long. We went to bed early...", it was the same idea, but it was long and embarrassing. So yes, "For a long time I went to bed early" concentrates a whole stream of thoughts in a small, clumsy sentence, a sentence that comes to us from a distant childhood, and it captures us in its spell from the very beginning of the book. And so...

I wanted to talk about birds, but now it's too late.

Tony Duvert also offers us a strange sentence, not the same grammatical strangeness as Proust's, but rather a signifying strangeness. We're surprised, we don't quite understand why it's no longer time to talk about birds... So, with this stroke of genius, the author shifts the reader's interest away from the sphere of meaning, towards these few words, an unsatisfied desire, a negation that sounds like a refusal or a regret for who knows what, something like a failure. And this lends a nostalgic, almost desperate accent to the beginning of the story.

So we read on.

In spring we saw storks; they were grey and thin, like the dead branches of the nests they build on certain ramparts, far to the south. Later, they stretched their sad wings and, slowly, with the sound of an old, disjointed fan, they took to the skies.

Of course, it's easy to understand the "it's no longer time": the birds have left for their annual migration. The storks, according to the narrator, thin and sad - but why, since they always look like that, gangly, a bit plucked, with their collars almost always bent - have flown off to undoubtedly more beautiful skies. So it will soon be winter. The tone is set: sadness, nostalgia and suffering will be the companions of the writing. And that is enough to carry the reader from evocation to evocation.

We then race to the end of the book, to its final sentences.

I can still see him after a break of several weeks. He was alone, very badly dressed, with a dry, dark face, a cold voice and a shaven head. He denies that the police picked him up. His dog is dead.

A new denial, not quite the same, coming from the child with the dry, dark face and shaven head. Unplucked like the storks. The same sadness, irremediable it seems, since death is on the agenda, with this short sentence, "His dog is dead", on which the story closes. So we have a suspicion. Are the young boys in *Diary of an Innocent* the birds the narrator talks about at the beginning of the *Diary*? Yes, they could be. A beautiful metonymy.

As you can see, the story will constantly shift from birds to children, and from children to children.

Picking a little boy out of a tree, high up in the late afternoon sun: freedom from another world, I wasn't comparing my climber to a bird, you'd be mistaken. Because, while people see birds as cute and cuddly, I find them hard and fleeting. As for the children, I don't know a thing - except for Pedro, pig-headed, cow-skinned, clinging to his tree like a peasant to a restive donkey (2).

This shift from birds to children is repeated throughout the book,

The narrator writes about birds several times. First there is a very long, magnificent passage about the birds that visit him in his bedroom. The narrator begins by talking about a boy who is playing the birdman, trapping small passerines with glue. Later, he narrates, again lightly slipping from the birds to the children.

My windows were left open; under the table there was a used raffia mat where crumbs from my meals fell: but I always found it clean. The birds flew so fast that I only caught them once, when they thought I was dead. From the balcony, they had a two-note cry, joyless, graceful, coloured like the whistle of a group of hooligans. From the balcony they darted under the table, I ran to close the window; they were faster than me, except for one.

I approach it, vaguely wanting to bully it. Animals are like green boys to me: as soon as I'm alone with one, even a naughty one, I get ideas. It would be thrilling to catch that bird, hold it in my hand and, with the other hand, wank to wet its beak. But I'm not naughty, I'm not vicious (3).

It's not easy to catch a bird that only thinks about spinning, a bird that observes you with its cold, intense black eye, an eye that comes from its reptile ancestors. So how can he capture a child, a game he would like to play, but which no child will allow him?

It screams, a full, violent scream. It perches on the sideboard, crawls under the bed and comes flying back to crash against the ice. [...] It flies again, screams in my face, hits the glass again, but doesn't shit. I open the window: the sky comes in and the bird flies out. In a piaffe's skull, it's proof that you can fly through mirrors. Afterwards, other birds came to peck at the crumbs. I took refuge in the bedroom to leave them in peace.

Then, slipping in very furtively, the narrator refers not to the birds, but to the cats that roam freely around the city. He talks about them with curiosity and, what holds us back, with the same words. Outside a cinema, he meets a slender young cat delicately munching a cockroach.

it seems. Proud and quiet, the cats lead their lives like wild animals, like street children.

The cats here are happy, for cats. They're proliferating. The old town is overrun with them. You can see them at night in the deserted alleyways, in quiet troops, looking for food among the rubbish that is emptied from place to place in front of the houses, and that the dustmen remove at dawn. [...] Hardy and savage, they hardly allow themselves to be touched, but they like to be watched (4).

The narrator then adds, in case the reader hasn't quite understood.

I didn't want to talk about cats, but it just came to me, and yet I have to protect myself from animals, from mankind, from general ideas: I'm writing a pornographic book, and all it needs is cocks.

I wanted to talk about birds, but it's no longer the time. I only want to talk about children and cocks, and the reader begins to hear this insistent little music. But is this a pornographic book, as the narrator suggests? It is doubtful.

And again, more explicitly but quite subtly, not to say a little perversely, just as the story begins to take a turn, the narrator talks about his "kids",

Just as I found them, so different, so preferable, in the street - schoolchildren or beggars, almost always fatherless (the others are watched more closely, and have less reason to seek adventure). It was by meditating on these bird passages that I gave up trying to tame any of them.

He adds the following, which he could have dispensed with, but which emphasises his literary project.

Here come the birds again: I seem to have writer's tics.

We think it's a very clever remark. The narrator asks us to excuse him for this hackneyed device, a real writer's tic. And

yet he doesn't cross it out, which he should have done if he wasn't satisfied with his sentence. But no, he lets the birds linger in his story, interfering with it. And we're sure of it now: the wandering children, the beggars, the orphans, they're the birds he wanted to talk about at the beginning of the book, about whom he can no longer talk, perhaps because they've flown away, but about whom he's going to talk all the same, because they are his love and his suffering. At the same time, he admits that he can only start writing when the birds have gone,

leaving him alone with his regrets and his pain. And when you read "The Birds", you can be sure that he is talking about what he loves most of all, and which will be the heart of his book: children.

We go back to reading the beginning of this story.

There was a time of Lent in the city and I began to write. It's winter in a world without seasons; my friends desert me; life is heavier.

Writing, as always, only comes with the difficulty of living, which Lent and winter and the desertion of friends discreetly express. And then the narrator moves on to a more concrete account of an evening with a family, we don't know which one, or in which country. Nor do we know why he is there, invited perhaps, in their midst, but like a slightly suspicious stranger whom his mother is watching out of the corner of her eye.

The sunny days go by and none of them are celebrated. Then, at dusk, life can resume. The eaters are already occupying the benches of the open-air gargotes, and receiving the bowls in which the chickpea soup is poured. [...] I'm in a house that intimidates me. A widow and her daughter are sitting on my left, almost on the floor. [...] The mother has put the pot of soup next to her, in the corner of the wall. Waisted-legged, her dress and apron pulled up to her knees, her breasts large, her face flat and square, her skin creamy white, her mouth and eyes narrow, she sucks her soup from a small wooden ladle and gives me brief glances, a little wary, a little disdainful, a little kind.

We find out more, very brutally, about the narrator's relationship with this family.

She may know that I'm making love with one of her grown-up sons, and the conventional smiles that draw wrinkles and dimples into the fat of her face make her hard little eyes seem colder.

Of course, we might wonder what makes this mother he talks about, in this country he doesn't name, different from the mothers in our own countries, whom he says are so possessive, those in *L'île atlantique*, for example, or Barbara in *Quand mourut Jonathan*. He occasionally talks about them, without identifying the country where he is staying or the society that welcomes him, described as fairly permissive.

In the streets, cafés, cinemas and shops, children are treated as equals. They go unaccompanied, and sit where they please, just like everyone else. They enjoy

their moments of idleness together, meeting up, laughing, running around, squabbling, telling each other their business, studying together, having fun with everything and nothing, and never having to retreat into places reserved for young people: they live freely outside, and there is no adult to supervise them, "animate" them or control their pleasures, their leisure activities, their friendships or their bodies. They have no fear of strangers, go out in the evening alone or in groups, are as curious as cats, love to chat, to wonder, to provoke events that are funny, voluptuous or flattering, and, as their early start at work brings them into adult life, they spread their vivacity, their nonchalance, their mischief, making lights shine and laughter burst forth in the worst artisans' dens (6).

And a little further on,

Family life and community interpenetrate; we share and circulate between the two to the benefit of the latter, and from the earliest age. We repair on one side what we suffer on the other, and a balance of pleasures and pains results. In this way, the disdain to which children are subjected does not harm them or curtail their freedom; they are not excluded from community life; their misdeeds, or what is deemed to be misdeeds, are punished, but their autonomy is accepted and provided for everywhere; and the violence to which they are subjected at least has the advantage of reducing to a few brutal events the educational oppression which, in our country, adults extend to all their relations with childhood.

But we don't want to get into a political reading of this book.

But not just yet. Its presentation by Editions de Minuit might suggest as much. It states that "Homosexuality, which meets the same requirements as official sexuality, is considered scandalous insofar as it calls into question political power, in the broadest sense of the term. The author has fun describing terribly shocking situations that would be acceptable if they didn't involve homosexuals, and very young ones at that. But the same situations are accepted in certain poor societies, where the economic and cultural conditions do not allow those in power to institutionalise sexuality in a relationship of production". If Tony Duvert's language is political, "it is not because the author advocates this or that existing regime - all condemn sexual freedom, either by labelling it pornography or by repressing it by force - but primarily because its lack of ambiguity seems unbearable to the rhetoricians of official language".

Isn't there a risk of getting bogged down in this political reading that

makes us forget literature? Didn't Tony Duvert criticise René Scherer for this? We may come back to the political question later, but we're not going to fall into that trap now. Because then we would be sure to fall into another trap, that of the autobiography: Tony Duvert would tell in a masked way about his stay in Morocco after the Médicis prize. This stay would have been an escape from the capital, from the small world of publishing, from the German-Pratin group of French writers, so full of himself. Everything he hated.

Gilles Sebhan, *L'enfant silencieux*, "Départ" (Departure)

This is what Gilles Sebhan wrote about this moment in Tony Duvert's life: "As soon as Tony had three pennies in his pocket, a few weeks after winning the prize, he decided to leave. Jérôme had paid his Médicis monthly, so he could finally leave this city, which he hated because it was too much city and not enough forest, too French and not free enough, too worldly and not deep enough for his great character. He deliberately went into exile. And so much the better if it's for a long time. Why not forever?"

And then Gilles Sebhan evokes Tony Duvert's Moroccan ancestry and his grandfather's first name, Tony. And why shouldn't we think of the little nicknames that were given in grandpa's North Africa?

always to parents, friends and children. There was Tony, and also Pierrot, Riri, Chariot, Dédé, Gigi, Louisou, Lulu, Bébert, everyone had their own, it was friendly and funny, the music group that made the beach dance every summer was called Little Popaul Jazz! A somewhat colonial atmosphere that Tony Duvert would have tried to recapture.

Gilles Sebhan continues: "Tony's departure also meant breaking up. Leaving once and for all a life that was shaping up to be full of relationships he didn't want. It was a response to the threat of journalists, crackling flashbulbs and champagne in glasses. This departure is an escape. [...] So it was March 74. In the Guéliz district. At 8 rue Ouadi-El- Makhazine. El-Hartsis residence. [...] The boys like to come here; they eat, smoke, drink cool, sit on the balcony, take baths, chat and sleep. Tony was still in the enthusiasm of his early days, constantly making comparisons with the society he had just left, which he felt was sick to death.

Writing comes with unhappiness, with the difficulty of living.

"There was a happy time, but it wasn't a time for writing. During the months when he lived normally, Tony blackened and tore up a lot of paper. Only

the first few sentences were left standing, and he stubbornly destroyed the rest. And it was only when his life found itself stripped bare, suspended, that he was able to keep his texts and link them to that beginning without continuation, those first miraculous sentences. [...] Desperate first sentences, because that's how literature had to come about for Tony, in this reverse side of night and insomnia".

And there's no denying that Tony Duvert's life in Marrakech is very similar to what the book is about.

Is *Diary of an Innocent* an autobiography?

The answer is no, because for Tony Duvert it's always about fiction and writing. To turn *Diary of an Innocent Man* into an autobiographical account is to miss the point of literature.

Gilles Sebhan will admit it: "It was during these dark months that he sent Jérôme Lindon the chapters of his story. Lindon composed the text as he received them. The text is very coherent. And what

What is most striking is the permanent transposition, the erasure of local colour, the absolute refusal of the picturesque. Tony speaks of Lent instead of Ramadan, of church instead of mosque, and he erases all the little peculiarities that could confine the reader and prevent him from reaching the naked experience".

Gilles Sebhan adds: "He's thinking of calling his story *Diary of a Pornographer*, but not, says Lindon, who sees it more as a testament to a certain purity. [...] He's probably thinking of the young fool who, at the end of the book, blindly taps the keys of a typewriter. The typewriter on which the story has just been written.

Diary of an Innocent. Jérôme Lindon has made no mistake. Literature enters through the exit door, with the innocent boy at the end of the story who gives the novel its title.

We'll argue that literature makes its entrance from the very beginning of the book,

With a strange reference that might go unnoticed by a reader in too much of a hurry. After recounting the dinner with this family from who knows where, and confessing his sexual relationship with the eldest son of the house, as well

as his preference for another young boy in the family, the narrator decides to give these children nicknames, to mask both their identity and the country where he is staying, as if this were really an autobiography. But he doesn't call them Peter, Paul or James, any more than he calls them Karim, John, Karl or David.

I'd better baptise some of the boys. I'm going to take the names from a novel by Quevedo, I don't have many books here and that might work. All I have to do is follow the order of the first chapter: I'll read Francesco, the author's first name, then Pablos, Pedro, Diego, Andrès and a few others. I only need the first two for now. Francesco, for example, will be the teenager who introduced me to his family, and Pablos the little brother I liked best.

And on the next page, again.

The Quevedo book I carry around with me is *The Life of the Adventurer Don Pablos de Segovia*, exemplary vagabond and mirror of the rogues. I like this novel very much, although I haven't read it.

The child I called Pablos is no trickster, not even a rascal. But he showed all the joy of life when we talked together.

Why is Quevedo summoned by the narrator in this way?

HISTORIA
DE LA VIDA
DEL BUSCON. LLAMADO
DON PABLOS; EJEMPLO de
Vagamundos, y espejo de Tacanos.

Por don Frncijco de Quevedo l'illegas, Ca'allcro
de la Ordende Santiago ,y [edor de
inan ^Abad.



CON LICENCIA,

Ençoragocv Por Pedro Verges, a los Seul;
ICS. AUQI'G,

It's as if it went without saying that Duvert borrowed the nicknames of his characters from a novel by Quevedo, which Duvert, or rather his narrator, admits he hasn't read, but which he always carries around with him, although we don't know why! What we do know is that this novel, *El Buscon*, is part of the great Spanish literature of the 17th century, and that it is a picaresque novel. A picaro being a trickster, a rascal.

We can't just say that this reference is innocent, of little importance, that we need only set it aside. Nothing, no word, no reference should be overlooked in Tony Duvert's work. There never is. Especially when they embarrass us.

Who was Quevedo? One entry reads: "Born in Madrid on 26 September 1580, Quevedo remains one of the most prolific and virulent writers of the Golden Age. A pupil of the Jesuits, with a degree in arts from the University of Alcala, a versatile and ambitious scholar, but also a secret agent, he experienced the honours of the Court as well as the hardships of the dungeon. Alone and ill, almost blind, he died on 8 September 1645, overcome by an irreducible misanthropy. The acerbic humour of this polygraph of genius - poet, essayist and philosopher - makes him a merciless moralist".

It's amusing to note that people generally talk about Tony Duvert in the same terms, about his many and rich works, his acerbic humour, his black humour, his misanthropy, his voluntary solitude at the end of his life.

So we're going to formulate a hypothesis.

We sense that Quevedo's novel will provide us with the keys to the *Diary of an Innocent*, and that Duvert is telling us, as if in passing, that his story can only be read in conjunction with this picaresque novel. Doesn't the narrator admit this, in the ironic form of a denial?

The child I called Pablos is not a scoundrel, not even a rascal. But he had all the joy of life.

We thought the narrator hadn't read *El Buscon*! What a liar he is! This side-step, sketched out by a cunning narrator who, like a true picaresque, remains silent about his identity and intentions, is the unusual element that takes us to the side of literature, the world that is Tony Duvert's, against all odds. We are not surprised by this cryptic way of locking up his work and, at the same time, surreptitiously providing a key to access it for those who deserve it. Tony Duvert always asks his readers to make a special effort to enter his world. For example, as we have seen, *Portrait d'homme couteau*, in its magnificent first version, can only be read in conjunction with Michaux and his poem "J'écris" (7).

THE PICARESQUE NOVEL BY FRANCISCO DE QUEVEDO

Francisco de Quevedo
El Buscon

La Vie de l'aventurier Don Pablos de Ségovie,
vagabond exemplaire et miroir des filous

Translation by Rétif de la Bretonne
Editions Sillage

Quevedo's novel was published at the beginning of the 16th century, shortly after Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and Kundera tells us that this was the time of the birth of the contemporary novel. It is the only novel by Quevedo, who published many other works, including banter, moral and satirical stories, hagiographies, philosophical treatises, pamphlets and works of political reflection. As for his novel, *El Buscon*, it is part of the ironic and pessimistic picaresque tradition already launched by *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormès*.

The copy that the narrator of the *Diary* always carries with him is Rétif de la Bretonne's translation of this novel, if we are to believe the title he uses

has made available to us. The biographical preface to this edition states: "1626: Publication of the *Vida del Buscon*, written between 1605 and 1622, in a redacted version, as the manuscript versions that had circulated revealed a more corrosive text. However, these precautions were not enough to prevent it being denounced to the Inquisition in 1631. Quevedo was therefore a sulphurous writer, at odds with the Inquisition, the all-powerful institution in Spain in the 16th century. Quevedo's life was a difficult one. He went from honour to disgrace, went to prison, to solitary confinement, to retirement in a

monastery. How could Tony Duvert not have liked him?

Quevedo's novel comprises 23 chapters, from the first, *Who I am and who my parents were*, to the last, *What happened to me in Seville until I embarked for India*. In chapter 6, entitled, *Rapineries de la gouvernante et espiègeries que je faites*, we read:

"Do as you will", says the proverb, and it says very well. By dint of reflecting on this advice, I managed to resolve to be a scoundrel with scoundrels, and to be even more so than all the others, if I could. I don't know whether I have succeeded, but I can protest that I have spared nothing of what depended on me.

A good programme for a lifestyle choice. The narrator of the *Diary*, as we gradually discover, also lives on the fringes of society, whether by choice or necessity, we don't know. So is he a *picaro*?

A *picaro* is a rascal, a trickster, a scoundrel,

We could also say a loustic or a fripon. *Coquin* seems to us a good translation of *picaro*, very ironic, because of its double reference to skulduggery, theft and, why not, sexual naughtiness. The narrator of *Journal d'un innocent* also speaks of *polisson*.

In *El Buscon*, in the middle of an adventure, we find a *picaro*, a sexual rascal.

They called him the Pimp of the Bad Places. He said that he was in prison for wind things, which made me suspect that it could be for bellows, oboes or fans. When asked if it was for any of these things, he replied that

no, but for sins of the back; so I thought he meant past and ancient faults.

He was, of course, a "sodomite"! Let's not forget that Duvert's novel was originally entitled *Journal d'un pornographe (Diary of a Pornographer)*. And when it comes to what we might, at first uncritically, call 'pornography', we're in for a real treat. The novel, in all its innocence and shamelessness, is overflowing with cocks, balls and arseholes.

And yet, like Jérôme Lindon, we reject the term pornography, because throughout the book we have the language of childhood, so simply transcribed. The language of innocence?

The other face of Pablos; less innocent than his shamelessness in sleep would lead one to believe: but more naive than I hope when, pinching them through his breeches to show what he is saying, he calls his pine and his balls *my dry bread* and the *grapes*.

So if we play a bit of trickery with the double meaning of the word *coquin* in French, we can say that the narrator of the *Diary* is a **picaro**, and...

That *Diary of an Innocent Man* can only be a picaresque novel.

In its writing and in its form. In its highly subversive aim too.

And indeed, the classic characteristics of the picaresque novel are perfectly suited to *Diary of an Innocent*. According to *El Buscon's* current presentation: "The picaresque novel is directly related to much older models. Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, the most famous example, is also made up of an extreme variety of episodes, often linked together by slight or arbitrary connections. The main character goes through a series of adventures, which no human existence could have experienced in reality; and there is even more of a gratuitous narrative introduced by an episodic character." The multiple successive encounters of the *Diary's* narrator perhaps also go beyond anything a sexual adventurer could boast of. In any case, we're not going to ask whether all the sexual adventures described in great detail can be attributed to Tony Duvert; that would be a false question.

Because this novel is a false autobiography, like Quevedo's novel, like any picaresque novel. The narrator acts as if he were identical to the author, and is even a writer like him. Don Pablos, the narrator of *El Buscon*, is also an occasional "plumitif", taking part for a chapter in a troupe of travelling actors and skilfully writing the plays that are performed.

So if *Diary of an Innocent Man* is a picaresque novel,
it follows that the narrator of the *Diary* is a picaro.

The *picaro* in Quevedo's novel is an anti-hero, the opposite of a knight in his time. He cannot adopt the codes of honour. His greatest asset is his freedom; his misfortune is his marginality, his solitude and his destiny, which is to flee constantly. This is also the case with the narrator of the *Diary*, and we discover him little by little. We don't know his past or his social standing. But it is clear that he has chosen to live on the fringes of society, its codes and norms, having resolutely adopted sexual mores that the world around him does not

always approve of, and even sanctions severely, increasingly severely since the 1970s.

As for the teenagers and children he meets and makes friends with, they are of very modest social standing, running after money like their parents, begging for it from the rich, often pilfering it, acting in every way like Quevedo's picaros. It is logical that the narrator should choose to name them after them, Francesco, Pablos or Pedro. They too are the *picaros* of the *Diary*.

The situations described are so realistic.

There is never any censorship or sugar-coating. As in any picaresque novel, the narrator's adventures are described simply and ironically. This is one of Tony Duvert's most crudely and joyously sexual stories, with a kind of naive realism, a refusal of all idealisation and euphemism. There's no point in choosing a passage - it's all quotable, and not very easily, because we're a little trapped by the prevailing morality. Yet we choose one, so astonishing. The narrator develops here, to our great delight, a fragment of fantastic anatomy, worthy of children's imaginations, also worthy of the picaresque spirit.

When the grapes look good, it's because the vine is being watered. In other words: if you've got a lot in front of you, you've got a lot behind you. This way of blowing the noses of pretentious over-men is a nice one, but it also reminds us of something we've been taught not to exploit: the unity of the pine and the arse. This region, as we all know, is a single unit; the cock is not an isolated piece of flesh sticking out, but a long pipe that we straddle; it starts at the anus and ends at the end of the knot, it has a small hole on one side, a large hole on the other. Every imaginable connection (muscular, nervous, spatial) links the rectal cavity to the penis, making it its own interior. The root of the member and the orifice of the cavity are a single member, the anus. Thus nature, more malicious than those who claim to impose their own order of things, has given boys two sexes in one (8).

THE JOYS AND MISFORTUNES OF TONY OPEN'S *PICARO*

I lived in an ordinary place, two furnished rooms in a small garden building in the new district, where foreigners find accommodation more easily than in the huge old town. It was expensive, bright, hollow and modern. The boys liked to come there; they ate, smoked, drank cool, sat on the balcony, took baths, chatted, slept, I seemed easy to them, my twenty-nine years didn't put them off. So I happily let them have their way.

The story, in the form of an autobiography, recounts the many adventures of the *picaro* narrator, his encounters with the teenagers he loves and seeks out, his often joyous adventures, his sexual romps, his close observations of the lives of youngsters. All of this is done with great freedom of tone and, it has to be said, innocence, almost naivety. So much so that this book should be read without prejudice, without the prejudices inculcated in us by the invisible Inquisition that suppresses our feelings and thoughts. An Inquisition that has gagged our own childhood and is forcing us to forget it, to forget our budding, joyful and free sexuality. In this story,

Each page has its own charm, which always comes from childhood.

Of a childhood that we rediscover with wonder. These pages are brimming with such joy, such freedom of tone. We smile at every turn of the story.

He giggles as he undresses. When we brush against each other under the sheet (we had to cover up and turn off the light), he hiccups into the pillow, into his shoulder. And the laughter of an irritated little girl being tickled, a mannish kid with an unkempt suppleness and a hollow voice, means he's dead ashamed. Kiss me? He grabs my neck gently, but laughs at my mouth. Let himself be fucked? He feels me up, tries me out, pretends I'm too cumbersome. I grab his cock, hard and straight as a chair leg, long enough to put two hands on it or more - but shaking with hilarity, belly and ribs with it. Nobody knows how to protect their modesty so affably. We calm down, we congratulate each other, we part, we sleep (9).

Taboos are disappearing, we're doing "madame cinq" every day, on every street corner, alone, in twos or in a group (for the uninformed reader, madame cinq is the cute name that children give to masturbation by scientists and sexologists). And even sexual practices with animals are part of children's daily lives. Dogs, bitches, goats - and why not an ox? - are happily tried out, because they provide an easy, uninhibited introduction to sexuality, without the fearful modesty of animals getting in the way. Francesco is a master at this, and even an ox doesn't scare him.

The ox didn't even deign to feel the sting, but Francesco was caught by a man, and beaten for having seasoned the meat for the feast alive.

The same Francesco "took revenge for [the parish priest's] ill-treatment by decimating the old priest's barnyard with his cock: chickens, pigeons, ducks

and even a goose". Love between boys was certainly forbidden, "but popular mores tolerated some vestiges of it: we mated a little without girls or women". Sexuality is part of life from early childhood - Freud said so, didn't he? - and the little picaros do what they can to practise it, bypassing the laws, boys or girls, it doesn't matter.

Love between boys is forbidden, but popular mores support some vestiges of it: we mate a little without girls or

without women. As for boys, they don't see themselves as different from men, they are not taught innocence, they like adults' bodies and, if they are mischievous, they want to make love like anyone else; even impubes seem to find it quite natural to be interested in their little penises, of which they are not half-glorious.

And the meetings follow one another, numerous and endless.

It's like a picaresque novel, with its itinerant structure, which always runs the risk of creating a never-ending novel. The *picaro* narrator is a tireless observer of children, always benevolent, often critical. They talk to each other without false modesty, caressing, kissing, sucking, fucking each other, in every position, on every page, as they meet. We go from one to the other without taboos. But we always respect refusals and modesty. And these joyous encounters and sexual adventures could go on indefinitely, like a true picaresque novel.

There is Francesco, of course, a jealous, possessive young man with a vamp's face and impatient orgasms, with whom the narrator has long and complacently described sexual relations.

There's Pedro, who draws with such conviction and whom the narrator, who is very attentive, encourages.

And then there's the little favourite, Pablos, who sleeps like an angel and is a great questioner. He's not looking for a sexual relationship yet, but he's looking for an educational relationship, which the narrator offers him with infinite pleasure.

And then there's Andrès, a pussycat like the street cats, perhaps a bit of a prostitute, who complacently tells her about his homosexual daydreams, but will never admit to being gay.

Once again, Francesco disappoints the narrator because, behind his adorable adolescent face, he gradually reveals himself to be a cowardly, arrogant cheat who is jealous of his brothers.

And Francesco's friend, a charming and tolerant straight man, who laughs out loud when he's mistaken for a gay man, just because he's talking to the narrator in the street.

And let's not forget Diego, the most beautiful of them all, flanked at first by a *monster* who serves as a foil and whom the narrator finds hard to get rid of.

But then, when he manages to isolate her from the monster, it's heaven. Diego is picture perfect, as handsome as a magazine photo.

His erections themselves have a photographic fixity. [...] When he lets go of his cum, he has time to set the table and cook an omelette before his cock has dozed off.

And then there are the other kids, all different and charming in their own way.

He observes all these kids, shares moments of happiness with them, and encourages them as a guide or teacher might. Above all, he loves them.

The ten thousandth kid whose pants come off before my eyes will upset me as much as the first. [...] The ten millionth garment fly that I see twisted by the cock it crushes, like a kid's cheek deformed by the candy he jams into it, will continue to seem like the best thing worth opening my eyes to (10).

Of course, there's also the money. Sex tourism, you might say. But there's something in it for everyone. The kids can buy the girls cinemas, cafés, country walks and English cigarettes. And they can be sure that they are not homosexuals, that morality is safe for them, that society can get on with things, that their little adventures with the narrator have no consequences, and are even rather pleasant and instructive in their lives as teenagers in the throes of learning.

So adventure follows adventure, and we're even beginning to wonder just how far this insatiable *picaro* will take us. We'll soon get bored.

So what will be the end or the moral of the story? Will this *picaro* fail like all *picaros*, and ultimately be punished for breaking social norms?

It's clear that the *picaro*'s adventures are a parenthesis,

Which society quickly closes. The *picaro* narrator recounts the joys and misfortunes of the pederast who cannot and will not give up his pederasty, who

lives it as a destiny.

The *picaro* in Quevedo's novel tries to improve his social status. But each of his adventures is an exemplary case of aberrant behaviour, systematically punished. He fails at every attempt and will always remain a *picaro*, that is his fate. And that's why the structure of the picaresque novel is open-ended. The adventures recounted could go on indefinitely, always at a dead end, always starting over.

As with the *picaro* in *El Buscon*, we can speak of the narrator's failure at the end of the day, of pessimism, of a black mood and, above all, of absolute determinism. Society clings to its values, and the children themselves are unable or unwilling to oppose them.

When they were alone, many of the boys were cordial, sensual, light-hearted and tender, very free with their bodies [...]. When they returned to communal life, they found their heads and the laws. They disavowed the strange pleasures their bodies had sought; as for me, I was rejected because I had been fulfilled. Without the freedom to renounce his actions, no boy would have come to my house...

Picaro's failure is his punishment, a hundred times dreaded, a hundred times repeated. What lesson will he learn from it?

The ironic intent of the *picaro* suddenly becomes apparent.

The itinerant structure of Quevedo's novel takes the *picaro* into the various strata of society, which is always a pretext for criticising them. The picaresque novel originally had a satirical, critical intent, which the court of the Inquisition was not unaware of.

As for the narrator of the *Diary*, the determinism of his condition as a pederast could also give rise to an interminable novel, with one adventure following another, if, two thirds of the way through the story, a long development in the form of a negative and ironic utopia did not begin, inviting us once again, but in a different way, to a moral and political reverie. We prefer to say a reverie rather than a reflection, because this is not a theoretical text, despite appearances to the contrary.

The satirical intention is obvious in this utopian reverie, which differs in its construction from Tony Duvert's usual theoretical texts. It should therefore be considered first and foremost in terms of its literary aim, which is to introduce a

"moral" into the story, as would be the case in a fable or tale. From there, the story takes on a philosophical dimension, as well as a political one, leading to a definitively pessimistic vision of society, of all society.

The *Diary of an Innocent Man* is first and foremost a philosophical tale, like any picaresque novel.

How is *picaro* taking this long-awaited turn?

The third chapter (there are four in the book, unnamed and unnumbered), after recounting a disappointing encounter with three teenagers and a child who she really likes, ends with a note of regret.

I can't console myself for never seeing that child again.

After that, the tone of the book changes. The narrator talks about his move from the new town, where he could easily receive the children but where he didn't really participate in the life of the community, to the old town, where he thinks he will be better integrated into the society that welcomes him. So, at great expense, he set up home in the middle of a maze of streets, in an old house where he rented three upstairs rooms with windows opening onto the large interior patio. The owners live on the ground floor, which also overlooks the patio. All the narrator's energy seems to be directed towards standardising his life, as if he were trying to penetrate and blend in with the society around him. He spends a lot of time and money making himself very comfortable, almost luxurious, like the bourgeois he never was.

But he doesn't really respond to the advances of the family who rent him the flat.

I was invited to take part in family life, they would do my housework and laundry, there would be a place for me at the table, I would have television in the evening and coffee in the morning.

sacrificing streets, squares, fountains and sociability to this tender world of soap operas and plates.

What was he looking for, what was he hoping for? *Picaro* it was, *picaro* it will remain. Especially as its owners were no doubt not uninterested: they had two daughters to marry off, one of whom was passing in and out of the patio, smiling at him.

Once again, the *picaro* loses his illusions.

The tone of the book becomes very painful, often grating, infinitely ironic. The narrator seems to realise that he made a mistake, that he wanted to live in this country, in this society that he had chosen, as a fully-fledged member of it, but that was impossible.

What should we do with this strange refuge, this piece of the ancien régime, where we could imagine outdated, sophisticated, sadistic beings, vampires from horror stories, exiles, the living dead? [...] Among the crude intentions I had when I moved in was that of taking in some kids. [...] To let one or a few of them live near me. I didn't want to capture them, but to be a place where they could pass through and be welcomed. This was materially, financially and socially impossible. A preposterous idea, an ill-chosen place, a freedom that no one has any use for. My home was nothing more than a retreat, perhaps even a prison: in the evenings, the boys and young men who accompanied me were as cautious, whispering, furtive and attentive as convicts escaping from a fortress: but it was to get into my home.

Where we discover that children, like birds, have flown away.

They sometimes come back to his place, but in a different mood, hiding, sneaking into his flat, and for a short time. Their family and friends live in the old town, not far from his flat. The narrator admits his mistake. And this mistake first of all concerns the children's real desire.

So I won't be a children's host - any more than I could be a father, mother or teacher. You don't look after children when you avoid, or when you avoid, the society to which they want to belong.

passionately belong. This is not an obstacle that stops procreators, and the last of the pariahs makes his brats like the others. But I don't procreate the children to whom I mate: I am, therefore, bound by respects that parents don't care about. The demand for order and education, for standards and butchery, comes from the children themselves, wherever they come from. Because they want to become as human as us monsters.

This is one of the rare occasions, if not the only one, when Tony Duvert, not to say the *picaro* narrator, recognises in the children a desire that he did not suspect, the passionate desire to belong to society as it is, to this society which makes him suffer and which he disapproves of, and which, according to all his previous accusations, does not allow the children to develop happily, and even

destroys them, he writes violently. They want to be something other than *picaros*.

They want to become as human as us monsters.

This is the beginning of a very long and beautiful meditation that develops like a negative and ironic utopia, leading to an admission of failure, a renunciation of the struggle, a disillusioned moral, as in picaresque literature. It is one of the most beautiful and pessimistic texts ever written by Tony Duvert, unlike anything else in his work.

This moral reverie develops in two stages.

THE UTOPIAN DREAM OF THE *PICARO* NARRATOR

First stage. The *picaro* invents a way to normalise a child.

What is at stake is the child's present and future happiness. Who could disagree with such an objective? Yet the text that follows is shatteringly ironic. It begins, in the most terrible way possible, with a kind of caricatured parody of society as it is, in its current reality. The narrator pretends to invent what already exists, by appearing to take on the role of a father. But with a slight difference at the start:

I'll take a prisoner and play father to him.

And what's more, he would make love to him. This position of a father towards his son may seem strange: it's because their relationship isn't based on a relationship of love.

biological filiation, as in ordinary families, nor on an emotional bond, what we call filial or paternal love, but on an imposed decision and a non-consensual relationship.

It is at this point that the reader, obviously scandalised, begins to become suspicious. This father of parody will do everything in his power to create a son who is as well adapted as possible to the society of his peers. First of all, he will prevent him from becoming like him. That is, from becoming a *picaro* like him, a being who is not made for society as it is and who refuses to be. But isn't that precisely the aim of real parents, to have a normal son?

First of all, I will favour anything that makes the child average and ordinary. Let him have the most common tastes, the flattest hobbies, the most common

reactions; let him learn to read by deciphering magazine adverts; let him think little and think nothing.

From a very early age, I'll sit him in front of the television. [...] I'll make him a more normal, more average man than any normal, average father could make of his children.

The child can only become a normal, adapted, average human being, and no doubt, we suspect, of little intelligence, open-mindedness or creativity, but this is not the aim.

He will become the child of my neighbours, of my concierge, of the policeman at the crossroads; the child of radio broadcasts, ditties and mass newspapers; the child of doctors and teachers, of grannies and the state; the child of other children.

And the *picaro* is sure that he has everything to succeed in this project, much better than ordinary parents who are unaware of the pitfalls of overconfident and careless parenting.

I need to have my pederasty absolved, and that will be by demonstrating that it can transmit and teach standards better than paternity itself.

Because normal people are so convinced of the universality of their worldview that they sometimes do too little to infect their offspring with it. And so it was with my own parents.

That's when the *picaro* talks about his own childhood,

The failure of his upbringing, the neglect of his parents, everything that led him to this destiny that brings him nothing but misfortune. A *picaro's* destiny.

There were too many gaps, too many uncontrolled hours; I knew too well how to take an interest in myself; and [...] I, the unsuspecting, the beardless, the impubescent, only jerked off on days when I wasn't going to fuck.

How could he not resent the parents who let him become this indecent *picaro*, this sexual retard who can no longer think in any other way than that of a wayward child, this wanderer who has irretrievably strayed into the wrong paths, and who above all doesn't want to change them. We wonder with amusement why he would want to turn his child away.

What can I do with myself now? Even my adult reasoning confirms the choices that the child I was made for his own use. However, his age deprived him of all discernment, so he could only be wrong. If I think like him, it's because he has distorted my brain. He has turned me into a maniac who reproduces his gestures and appetites: a sexual retard, a man who doesn't marry, who prefers to fondle brats rather than procreate them, a blind man who has never known the beauty of breasts, beards, homelands, factories.

Could we be more pessimistic? This educational failure has led to a great misfortune: "This is the monster we let become me". And that's why, as a father, he would do things differently.

That's why, if I were educating a kid, I wouldn't try to lock him up, but to spread him around; not to coerce him, but to give him every freedom, as long as he exercised them, of course, among his more conformist peers.

But that "provided that" is the whole point. You can see it coming, that cunning *picaro*. What if the son he is responsible for raising turns out to be less docile than his father would like?

And what if this son turned out to be a rascal, a scoundrel, a scoundrel, perhaps even a pervert?

But also, we think mischievously, intelligent, creative, perhaps brilliant? In short, a *picaro* like his father?

And if I saw in him, from who knows where (no doubt a precocious mania), the strength to oppose others, I'd drown him straight away. It's because we're talking about the most serious thing of all: his chances of being happy.

[...] When someone is suffering from an incurable disease, it is right, if he so desires, to give him death.

We've been wondering for a while where this ironic *picaro* is taking us. He reaches the end of a long line of reasoning that reveals a strange flaw. After fooling his reader for so long, he expresses his doubts, but his reader has also had doubts for some time.

A false mind like mine can, of course, see strange undertones in this truth. If a man who is different from others is rejected by them, it is because well-rounded men who look like everyone else like to persecute those who do not. Strange proof of self-fulfilment. We have to deduce that the primary element of happiness is to crush others.

In the end, the *picaro* has re-created society as it already exists, with all its cruelty, intolerance and sadism. The *picaro* deduces that,

This is what separates the happy majority from the minority: the former only suffers from the existence of the latter, while the latter suffer from themselves.

This is the misfortune of the *picaro*, this certainty that he is part of normality while others, intolerant, label him an irredeemable pervert.

I rather have the distressing impression that among my perversities I cultivate that of imagining myself normal, and that, if I don't correct myself, it's because I'm sincerely convinced that I already look like anyone else. But why am I so often the only one of this opinion? It will be many years before I understand.

Everything is relative. Where is normality? Can't reasoning be turned on its head? Who is right, society or the *picaro*? Why should the majority be right?

When the very shaken reader adds her grain of salt...

During a trip to Israel, one episode shocked me:
Question from a French journalist to one of the Israeli settlers who had set up yet another colony on Palestinian territory: Can't you see that the whole world is against you?

The Israeli settler's response: And why shouldn't the whole world be wrong and I alone be right?

Then I remembered that Monique Wittig's *Journey Without End* ends in the same way as the interview between the Israeli settler and the journalist, with the question of madness thrown in:

PANZA: But can't you see that all this will end badly and that you want to be right against everyone?

QUICHOTTE: Why not?

PANZA: Quixote, can't you see that they think you're crazy? QUICHOTTE: Even if the whole world thinks I'm crazy, and not just those backward people in the village who have never seen anything, I'd say the whole world is crazy and I'm the one who's right.

The political and the psychopathological are often intertwined. *Le Voyage sans fin* is a play about the difficulties and suffering of a minority position.

That the narrator of the *Diary* insists on being a *picaro* who thinks he's right.

My bad morals, to speak of them alone, seem infinitely commonplace to me, and I can easily imagine a society where they would be imposed in the name of the average values and majority ideas that condemn them in our society.

A *picaro* proud of it, who in true Don Quixote fashion is now determined to invent a society of intelligent, creative *picaros*. This brings us to the second logical stage of his demonstration.

Second stage. Where we imagine a homosexual society.

A society of *picaros*, middle-class, petit-bourgeois. Such a society would be justified by reasoning whose logic is infallible, if a little crazy.

If man is superior to animals, he must free himself from the instinct that drives him to fornicate between the sexes like animals. [...] Those who equate pleasure with the sole situation where one engenders are therefore idiots or madmen.

Man must free himself from his animality. But why not also decide not to eat or drink, not to breathe, not to sleep? What makes us smile is that the *picaro* argument has already been imagined by Bataille, and we are reminded of Pascal's adage: "he who wishes to be an angel makes a beast". Good. It's clear that the *picaro* is mocking his own argument. And yet he is going to push this premise to its logical conclusion. As in mathematics, you can deduce very interesting things from crazy premises.

Mass homosexuality must be imposed. Legislation based on these principles will therefore punish the crime of bestiality, i.e. heterosexual acts.

Readers soon realise that the clever *picaro* is going to reinvent our society as it is, with all its intolerance and cruelty. The only important word, the word that runs throughout this upside-down utopia, is the word "impose", with its fearsome associate "repression". Let's add that as man frees himself from his animality, he will also free himself from the family, its natural corollary.

This is why adults who engage in the crime of family reconstitution are considered murderers (and such a child is worth even less than a corpse). Once this civilisation is firmly in place, it accepts that a minority, incapable of rising to the level of pederasty, will be able to freely seek heterosexual pleasures between adults, without it being a criminal offence. Of course, they'll have to hide it. But straight people are easy to recognise: you can feel it.

The result is the most heterophobic speech imaginable, inventive, caustic and modelled on everyday homophobic speech. The *picaro* takes ironic revenge for the abuse he has suffered by turning the usual situation on its head. He starts by attacking the doctors who investigate abnormalities, track down perversions and perverts - in short, the *picaro* bashers.

It is, say these researchers, a kind of plunge into the earth's distant past, before homo sapiens - for prehistory has been rectified somewhat and it is explained that the appearance of the human race must be dated from the day our ancestors gave up the family and coitus between the sexes. [...] Science shows that the awful existence in which perverts indulge is a clear sign of their abnormality. Some writers write exciting and hideous books about them. Theories are constructed to explain how you become a heteromaniac: and the truth is that you don't become one, you stay one. It seems to be a fixation with an infantile stage of sexuality, which means that these patients do not rise above what is dictated by mammalian instinct...

Where the *picaro* can only admit his cunning.

And the paradox, the implausibility of such a utopia in reverse.

Permissive and nomadic, homosexuality (with the exception of petty bourgeois queers, conditioned to caricature heterosexual norms) cannot become a source of collective prohibitions. This society would therefore not be 'homosexual'.

Heterosexuality claims to be based on biological, instinctive and natural laws. So it's hardly surprising that it needs such an arsenal of

controls, repression, censorship, oppression and constraints to establish its supremacy.

There is a profusion of warnings, medical check-ups, psychological advice, couple rekindlers, family sulkers, child castrators, manuals, surveys, magazines, compensatory markets, ersatz products, compromises, cements, necklaces, ointments, to maintain or repair this need that nature inspires in us. Has so much ever been done to force us to sleep or eat?

And let's not forget that heterosexuality itself has its tricksters and rascals,

Debauched heteros, sodomite heteros, suckers, gropers, voyeurs, pornophile heteros, paedophiles, zoophiles, coprophiles, partying heteros, sado-

masochists, flirts, pleasure-seekers, fuckers...

So we can only come to one conclusion: good-natured heterosexuality is achieved, "like the political unanimity of totalitarian countries", at the price of massive oppression and alienation inflicted from childhood. "It is nothing but malfeasance, deceit and dictatorship, and it will die of it.

This journey into the land of utopia leaves you stunned. The narrator is well aware of his powers of persuasion and seduction; he knows himself to be a *picaro*, in other words a trickster, a rogue, a cunning man. Nevertheless, he has given us a brilliant and implacable demonstration that gives this story the political dimension of a picaresque novel, in other words, a philosophical tale.

And what is the philosophy of history? That every society is on the brink of fascism, with uniformity as its only social bond and coercion and repression as its regulatory tools? That all we have to do is accept it, or shoot ourselves, or start a revolution, or play the role of picaros roaming the fringes of every system?

"Now I'm turning into a speaker. Curdled milk shaking in a bowl".

Only those who can point a gun at a man can speak for him. I would never put myself in that position. I would

So come back to my nonsense, which is more in keeping with my character.

The *picaro* narrator remembers that he is there to tell a story about *picaros*, not to polemicise. He adds: "The *curd* is Lewis Carroll's, I forgot. I still haven't read *The Life of Don Pablos*. The text I was reading while scratching my anus, at the beginning of the third chapter, was by Diderot, and is called *Suite de l'entretien précédent*. Just to show that he knows how to read, that he's well educated, and that maybe he's even read *El Buscon*, despite his insistent denials.

In any case, after regaling us with his utopia that has turned our heads upside down but our eyes to the front, the *picaro* knows and we know that he will continue on his *picaro* path, because perhaps - and this is the moral of the story - it is he who is right against all odds. But what can the reason of a minority do? Should he plead guilty or innocent? He admits to being nothing more than a *picaro* bruised by society.

IN THE END, THE MANY ENCOUNTERS OF THE DISILLUSIONED *PICARO*

Picaro is, *picaro* remains. It's his destiny and it's his choice. So in the story of his final adventures, which take on a different tone, no longer anxious but fatalistic, there are always Francesco, Pablos, Diego and the others. Then there are a few other children who are not named in the same way, i.e. according to Quevedo's novel, but according to a characteristic that follows them throughout the finale: for example, "the child with the dog" and "the innocent", who will give the novel its title thanks to Jérôme Lindon's decision.

The encounters are always told in an extremely and innocently raw way.

First comes the child with the dog.

We were approached by a boy, ten or eleven years old, holding a six-week-old dog in his arms. No doubt to attract alms: but we hardly like dogs better than these kids. Francesco said that this one was very good and should be given something. I obeyed.

Months later, I invite this child into my home. He's not shy, but his decency is impregnable. I won't invite him again, he's one of those boys who's out of place in the loves I cultivate. [...] I often find the boy with the dog. As soon as he sees me, he gallops off and jumps on my neck.

And then there's always Pedro, and then Pablos, and then the others.

Pedro's cock, Diego's little brother. [...]

Pablos got a dog. I was curious to see them together, as the child had complete freedom over the animal. He treated the baby dog as he treated me. He didn't beat it, he let it beat him. [...]

We go to the cinema every week. [...] Once, Pablos didn't turn up for the cinema. The hour passed. Worried, I went to their house. Some women were there, moaning; the mother was crying; the brothers looked haggard. The eldest is manhandling Pablos. [...] They explain to me that the boy didn't come home at midday: he's gone to a nearby garden to learn his lessons with another child, because he's not at ease at home. But the mother, who tightens the family order according to her glands, and who had produced an alcoholic brute, two idiots and a gigolo before wanting model sons, had forbidden Pablos to go out. Pablos spat at his mother's feet and left. At midday, the old lady got her grown-up son to warm up. When Pablos returned, his mother's vengeance was ready. [...] I'm not leaving until nightfall. I warned the older boy that if he touches the younger one again I'll break his bones.

And then the *picaro* meets again...

A shorn little thug...

A wise schoolboy...

A beautiful child that I will only see once...

I feel happiness there that no one has ever told me about.

And at last the innocent appears

A handsome but ugly teenager. Straight and awkward at the same time. With a melodious voice, but also silly. He loves making love and is very interested in the typewriter. And also fans and cameras. He taps his index finger on the machine and makes all the devices work at the same time, generating a strange music that accompanies his writing.

I've finally discovered that my teenager is not only lame, he's retarded. But normal people notice this straight away.

The teenager he was going to call *innocent* typed non-stop, from left to right and top to bottom. He covers entire pages, for hours on end. And it's like spellbinding music.

The innocent, music-loving boy clicks his fingers. [...] On the sheet of paper he types, there is indeed something to read.

And then the innocent man leaves, leaving him bundles of typed sheets. Weeks go by without the narrator being able to find him again. And when he meets him again, the innocent man is ragged, not even wearing shoes.

The narrator has kept all the pages filled with signs. What seemingly incomprehensible story was written there?

And I read them, I read her finger, her face, her pleasure, her passage. I shudder when I bend my gaze to the law of these signs. Is there a really different law in the sequence of words I have traced?

It is indeed the *Innocent* of the *Journal*.

The narrator thinks of Borges's typing monkey, who types eternally on a machine keyboard, and according to a probability calculation will in time, in a year, in a hundred years or in a thousand years, repeat all the masterpieces of the world, even his own. We can therefore hope that the innocent will be able

to produce a masterpiece, either centuries from now or immediately. And the reader, overwhelmed, thinks: it will probably be the one I'm reading, the *Diary of an Innocent Man*. Could the narrator have written it without meeting this innocent person who seemed to change the course of events for him, perhaps whispering this *Diary* in his ear? More modestly, the narrator admits:

Unlike the monkey of probabilities, I am not eternal and I have a bed, a belly that the air of time does not fill. So I have to

This may prevent me from writing masterpieces, but I'll still have a chance that my typing will feed me better if I publish it than if I burn it.

Things can only close in on this searing testimony. What more could he say? We know that Jérôme Lindon, his publisher, is going to encourage Tony Duvert to co-write this book with the innocent teenager who helped him transform his life as a *picaro* into literature, in other words, to "reintroduce a reality that his ideas could do without".

So, to finish off, the child with the dog again.

I saw the child with the dog again. His head was shaved. He had a new dog.

And those few magnificent and terrible sentences, already quoted.

I can still see him after a break of several weeks. He was alone, very badly dressed, with a dry, dark face, a cold voice and a shaven head. He denies that the police picked him up. His dog is dead.

Should we not now turn to the ironic finale of *El Buscon*?

Annoyed nonetheless to have been so long in the lurch, and to see that fortune never ceased to persecute me, I determined, not so much from a principle of wisdom, for I am not so prudent, as from weariness, like an obstinate sinner, to leave the country, I decided, after conferring with my Grajalís, to go to India, hoping that my lot would be better in another world. But I was wrong. It was even worse, because it is not enough for a man to transplant himself for his condition to improve; he must also change his life and morals when they are depraved, and change is almost impossible for a man who is familiar with crime and who has hardened himself to it.

Francisco de Quevedo, The life of the adventurer Don Pablos de Segovia, exemplary vagabond and mirror of the rogues.

NOTES

1. At the time I wrote a parody article, 'Un rêve mathématique', in *L'Unebévüe N°29, Lacan devant Spinoza.Création/dissolution*, l'unebévüe-éditeur, 2012.
2. *Diary of an Innocent, op. cit.* p. 21
3. *Ibid*, p. 16.
4. *Ibid*, p. 75.
5. *Ibid*, p. 203.
6. *Ibid*, p. 70.
7. From the collection *Épreuves exorcismes, 1940-1944*. Cf. my article, "Texte couteau", in *L'Unebévüe N°32, Inéchangeable et chaosmose*, l'unebévüe-éditeur, 2014.
8. *Diary of an Innocent, op. cit.* p. 94.
9. *Ibid*, p.19.
10. *Ibid*, p.117.
11. *Ibid*, p.253.

Owen Heathcote (Gay signatures, Gay and Lesbian Theory, Fiction and Film in France, 1945-1995, *French Studies*, 1998)

Jobs for the Boys? Or: What's New About the Male Hunter in Duvert, Guibert and Jourdan?

The self is a practical convenience; promoted to the status of an ethical ideal, it is a sanction for violence. (1)

Roman had nothing to say in reply, he could not say now that everything that was sexual violence came from a lack of love. (2)

I

The relations between sexual violence and representation are an increasingly important subject of study. From the films of Quentin Tarantino to the reporting of the trial of Rosemary West, sexual violence is being repeatedly emphasized, interrogated and judged. In the field of French literature, it is not therefore surprising that male authors such as the Marquis de Sade, Octave Mirbeau and Georges Bataille are currently being studied for their presentation of sexual violence, (3) or that women writers such as Rachilde, Alina Reyes, and Monique Wittig and homosexual writers such as Jean Genet and Pierre Guyotat should be being examined for possibly alternative perspectives. (4) One aspect

of such literature, and of the criticism devoted to it, is, moreover, an interrogation of the very categories of male, female and homosexual writing and identifications. The sexual violence articulated in texts by the French authors cited above can, for example, be seen as symptomatic of stigmatization or marginalization; while the foregrounding of sexual violence is one of the ways of highlighting - to borrow Judith Butler's phrase - 'gender trouble'. (5)

As is evidenced by the terrifying sequestrations instigated by the *libertines* in *Cent Vingt Journées de Sodome (One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom)* through to Abel Tiffauges's 'photographic hunts' ('chasses photographiques') in Tournier's *Le Roi des Aulnes (The Erl-King)*, (6) a favoured trope for the representation of human violence - and, notably, of male sexual violence - is that of the hunter or predator. In his fascinating survey *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature Throughout History*, Matt Cartmill demonstrates the intimate association that exists between hunting and a humankind seen as a discrete species, separate from the rest of nature. Commenting on Dart's hypothesis for 'the origin of the species', Cartmill writes: 'It was a taste for blood, not the rigors of life in the Transvaal, that made us human.' (7) Paradoxically, Cartmill reveals, human beings acquired human nature by separating from, and frequently destroying, the rest of nature, as is indicated by the widespread anthropological and popular belief that 'man' became 'man' when he began to hunt and kill. In the very process of becoming uniquely and preciously human, man acquired the bloodlust that would later be attributed to the 'Nature, red in tooth and claw' of the animals. (8) According to this prevalent but underexamined perception, by becoming distinctly and distinctively bestial, man became human and humanity became male. Whilst Cartmill cites few French examples to illustrate his thesis, it is incontestably the case that the literary and cultural references to the hunt and the chase contained in texts by Sade, Tournier *et al.* raise issues not only of sexual violence but of a sexual violence deeply embedded in notions of the human, nature, subjecthood and identity.

Social, cultural and anthropological references to the killer ape are also deeply embedded in concepts of masculinity. As Cartmill confirms: '[The] fundamental social pattern was the nuclear family, consisting of a male provider, a female nurturer, and a string of more or less incompetent, slow-maturing offspring'. (9) When the hunt is used as a metaphor for a lover's pursuit of the beloved, it is often also used as a metaphor for the male rape of woman and/or of nature. If not an actual woman or nymph, allegories of the erotic hunt or the amorous chase frequently have as their target the sobbing

(10) More recently, with the popularity of the Bambi myth, it is the innocent, vulnerable fawn that is the potential victim of wanton male aggression.

In all such cases, the thematics of the hunt can be used either to criticize or to condone established hierarchies. Generally, however, the very recourse to the metaphor of the hunt tends to reinforce, if regretfully, the *naturalness* of such hierarchy. Since the victim - doe, fawn, forest or woman - is *naturally* vulnerable, and since the huntsman-sportsman is *naturally* aggressive, narratives of the hunt, whether pro-hunter or pro-hunted, tend to endorse - even if they mourn it - the status quo. Whether these various natures are deplored or celebrated, the bloodletting of the hunt narrative is a natural vehicle for what Leo Bersani terms 'the redemption of violence' (12).

The aim of this chapter is to examine three texts or groups of texts that, in different but complementary ways, offer alternative perspectives on (sexual) violence. If notions of nature, subjecthood, identity and masculinity are embedded in narratives of the hunt, then stories with a gay signature, as well as a hunt theme, may unsettle some or all of these categories. Since, as Richard Dyer has argued, what is at stake in gay/lesbian authorship is a *decentring* of authorship and identity, (13) it will be interesting to see (i) whether the homotext replaces the conventional heterosexual predator with a simple equivalent in a potentially homosexual relationship, and (ii) whether the potential or actual violence of the homosexual predator simply replicates that of his heterosexual counterpart, or whether the violence between singlesex male protagonists can be used to question not only stereotypical male violence but also stereotypical male homosexuality as an orientation and as an identification. In order to address these issues, a first section will examine *Journal d'un innocent* (1976) by Tony Duvert. Here, the apparent identification of author and main character as a self-proclaimed 'paedhomophile' makes it possible for Duvert to use his 'boy hunts' to interrogate male-to-male identities.

A second section will turn to Herve Guibert's *Vous m'avez fait former des fantômes* (You Made Me Create Ghosts) (1987), where the intertextual references to such as Sade, from whom the title is taken, self-consciously parody and possibly subvert male-to-male violence. A third and final section will study Eric Jourdan's three linked novels, *Charité* (1991a), *Révolte* (1991b) and *Sang* (1992), to assess the cumulative effect of three male hunt novels, showing male-to-male cruelty perverting and inspiring a whole society. The aim

of the chapter is, therefore, to see whether the novels under discussion are simply gay novels with more than a hint of conventional homophobic violence,

or, indeed, texts that use that violence in order to marginalize homosexuality as orientation or identification and thereby posit a much more generalized fusion of the homosocial and the homoerotic.

II

In one of his two recent books on homosexuality in French literature, Lawrence Schehr draws attention to the possible shared identity of Renaud Camus and Tony Duvert. (14) Whether Camus and Duvert are one, or two, writers, it is certainly tempting to associate works like Camus's *Tricks* and Duvert's *Journal d'un innocent*. Both volumes are highly personalized, self-consciously provocative accounts of a series of relatively short-lived male-to-male affairs. Although Duvert differs from Camus in choosing partners much younger than himself, they both describe essentially physical relationships with an intimacy and a passion that make it difficult to dissociate fiction and autobiography. Since, moreover, Duvert's reputation, indeed notoriety, derives largely from his defences of pederasty, in works such as *L'Enfant au masculin* (1980), it is easy to overlook the fact that *Journal d'un innocent* is a *récit*, and that author and narrator may not overlap and coincide. It is easy to forget, too, that Duvert's reputation as a writer of fiction was confirmed with a revealingly entitled work, *Paysage de fantaisie*, a private fantasy passing itself off in part as experience. What characterizes Duvert is a confusion of genres and narrative points of view: the first person is not a guarantee of 'authenticity' but one of a number of perspectives adopted by a highly self-conscious writer in what becomes a series of spatial, temporal and narrative loops, layerings or *reprises* - that is, a series of *mises en abyme* - where sexuality and textuality are provocatively intertwined. (15) As Duvert writes in *Journal d'un innocent*: 'I always write totally naked and I don't wash beforehand' ('J'écris tout nu, et je ne me lave pas avant'). (16) When this self-consciousness is combined with the adoption of literary names for his boys - 'I'd better find a name for some of the boys. I'll use names from a Quevedo novel, I've hardly any books here and that'll do' (p. 10) ('Il vaut mieux que je baptise certains garçons. I'll use names from a Quevedo novel, I have hardly any books here and that'll do') - another layer is added to the *mises en abyme*. Indeed, the series of conquests recounted by Duvert/narrator is itself a kind of horizontal layering throughout the *narrative*, the amorous chase constituting a kind of sexual/textual *mise en abyme*.

What is, perhaps, most notable about this narrative self-consciousness and narrative uncertainty is that it also reflects and reinforces a sexual uncertainty, and, in particular, an uncertainty about maleness and masculinity. In *Tricks* and *Journal d'un innocent*, the narrator is, in many ways, a recluse who

lives for *drag*. As Duvert writes in the *Journal*: 'I need the cities for the boys. The only reason I get civilized is for them, I gear my days to seeking them out and taking them in [. . .] For puritans, the pleasure of love is a desiccated fruit [. . .] for me it's my social life and my sustenance'. (17) Thus, after a brief period in a *hotel de passe* and a longer stay in a new apartment block, Duvert's narrator moves into spacious but cloistered maisonette in the old quarter of his city. For this is where the boys themselves live, where they can visit freely and yet where he can withdraw in Sadian seclusion: 'With its sturdy partitions, its solid luxury, its windows pierced high in the walls like those of a dungeon but offering plenty of light, this abode has a gentle, powerful atmosphere, which takes control, ensconces and encloses.' (18)

Although Duvert sees the double doors in his apartment as '[a] filter for children' ('[un] filtre à enfants') and his bed as its altar (p. 200), he is nonetheless particular about whom he invites. In accordance, no doubt, with his earlier habit - 'I prefer to go out to hunt rather than be picked up at home' (p. 174) ('[J]e préfère sortir chasser que d'être dragué à domicile') - he declines the persistent offers of boys who try to sell themselves at his door or who pursue him elsewhere on their bicycles. Indeed, although he has the reputation of being 'an unrepentant hunter' ('un dragueur impénitent'), he is, in fact, faithful to three or four boys, 'without playing the field and only taking a tiny proportion of those who offer, unwilling as I am' (p. 173). Even among the three or four boys he *is* faithful to, he rejects one, Diego, because, as Christopher Robinson has pointed out, he is 'readily assimilable to a picture, and therefore too readily objectifiable, as though he were no more than an image in a pornographic magazine'. (19) He also finally rejects the homosexual Francesco, because, with his 'look of a besotted star putting on theotics' ('face de star gâteuse qui joue les érotiques'), he, too becomes objectified as 'a leftover from Hollywood' (p. 92) ('un débris d'Hollywood').

This unrepentant boy-hunter is, therefore, neither quite the hunter nor quite so unrepentant as he might appear - despite the uncompromising stance of other works such as *L'Enfant au masculin* and *Le Bon sexe illustré* (1974). (20) As he writes in the *Journal*: 'I will not take in children, any more

than I could be a father, mother or teacher' (p. 203). If he 'adopts' a boy, it will be neither to love nor to sequester him, but to teach him a new kind of *normality*: 'I will encourage him to denigrate me, to spit on the tiniest thing that I touch or admire. And since I will be for him a living embodiment of the unpleasantness and the problems of indiscipline, I will turn him into a more normal, more average kind of man than any normal or average father can make

of his children.' (21)

Clearly, then, the representation of masculinity, pederasty, and male-to-male relations in *Journal d'un innocent* is neither as monolithic nor as stereotypical as even Duvert himself seems at times to pretend. As Robinson has pointed out, there is 'no fixing of roles according to age - the narrator of *Journal d'un innocent* is as likely to be penetrated by his young partners as to penetrate them - and their tendency to construct a hierarchy among themselves based on machismo is a subject for critique, a set of pretensions to be dismantled within the privacy of the bedroom'. (22) Indeed, the pederastic hunter of the *Journal* seems to favour the passive role, perhaps because he is less well endowed than some of his younger partners and even, on at least one occasion, 'impotent' (p. 172) ('impuissant'). (23) If, as Leo Bersani has pointed out in '*Is the Rectum a Grave?*', '[t]o be penetrated is to abdicate power' (an idea also proposed by Michel Foucault in relation to ancient Athens), (24) then *Journal d'un innocent* is less a narrative of conquest than of increased withdrawal and isolation. Although the narrator exploits the uninhibited, polymorphous sexuality of the boys, who move effortlessly between homosexual and heterosexual and back again, it is the boys, rather than the narrator, who can luxuriate in this freedom, in the same way as it is they who profit from his money. Despite his claims for freedom and equality, the narrator realizes that, however dependent or disadvantaged, ultimately his boys neither need nor want him (p. 125). Nor, as has been seen, does he want them, whether they are homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, or uninterested in these categories. The narrator is neither at home in France (p. 124) nor in the supposedly freer cities of, one supposes, North Africa. The narrator is finally alone, either with or without his male harem. Like a number of earlier sexual tourist narratives (for example, those of Flaubert and Gide), *Journal d'un innocent* does, therefore, recount what Joseph Boone has called 'the story of a crisis in male subjectivity - the crisis that by definition is occidental masculinity itself. (25) In addition, what *Journal d'un innocent* perhaps more interestingly shows, is that even gender trouble, in the form of exchangeable sexual roles, permeable sexual categories, and fluid sexual identifications, seems to be a symptom of, rather than a solution to, that crisis in masculinity.

Given that *Journal d'un innocent* narrates a loss of sexual confidence, it is interesting that the narrator retreats into his flat not merely for sex but also to write: 'For it is also lack of money and the writing of this book which keep me indoors' (p. 51). Indeed, the imperatives of writing can be even more irresistible than his other needs: 'I loathe going out when I'm involved in this book, I ate something cold and uncooked' (p. 271). Since, for the narrator, sex and writing

both benefit from the same conditions - cloistered privacy and obsessive fascination - there is a sense in which writing already imitates sex, in which sex is the natural and inevitable subject of writing, and whereby, therefore, it is impossible for writing not to substitute for sex and for writing not to chart that substitution. In the same way that many of Renaud Camus's 'tricks' are intrigued by him as a writer, the *Journal* narrator's last partner is fascinated with his typewriter.

It is, therefore, wholly appropriate that the narrator should see his *Journal* as pornography - 'this is a pornographic book I'm writing, all it needs is cock' (p. 75) - and as a pornography that exposes and deconstructs its own fascinations. As Duvert also writes: 'I'm a strange pornographer. The only ones I'll turn queer are old maids like myself. I need to revise the way I deprave and corrupt' (p. 234). 'I'll only turn queer old maids like myself. I must review my methods of inciting debauchery'). The final irony of *Journal d'un innocent* is that it is, in a sense, not a misnomer: the sexual hunter is also an ascetic. For, by the end of the *Journal*, the sexual hunter is excluded, or excludes himself, from the uninhibited sexual brotherhood he seemed to be unproblematically celebrating. Thus, the serial sodomy recounted in *L'Enfant au masculin* becomes 'mere' narrative *mise en abyme*.

III

When compared to *Journal d'un innocent*, Hervé Guibert's *Vous m'avez fait former des fantômes* (1987) offers a rather different kind of *mise en abyme* and a very different kind of hunt. Or, indeed, hunts, since the work, like so much of Guibert's writing, is double, and virtually comprises two novels. (26) In the first

section, entitled 'Many night-games', a semi- mafia-style group of ruthless bounty-hunters, rejoicing under such nicknames as Lune, Loup, Tigre, Puma, Leopard and Pirate, abduct, sequester and torture a group of young boys in order to train them for combat against 'infanteros' who will slaughter them in crowded arenas. In a second section, entitled 'Surrendering to boys' games is, like a wolf, lying on a bed of dying flowers', a young would-be infantero, Mickie, steals and cobbles together the necessary 'costume of light', (27) and contrives to fight alongside the declining but still charismatic Rudi. Mickie's infantero career is brief; but he is rescued from death by the head-hunter, Baleine, on condition he will betray the whole infantero mafia, led by Homard and Hombre. Mickie is now 'virgin of fantasies' (p. 203) ('vierge de fantasmes') and the game, we are led to believe, will soon be over.

As this summary indicates, one of the main preoccupations of the almost

exclusively male world of *Vous m'avez fait former des fantômes* is, indeed, 'jobs for the boys'. If the gangsters' fiendish cruelty - removing teeth, branding, hanging the boys in jute sacks - is geared solely to increasing the boys' aggression, the boys seem to respond either with relish - 'the torture had become a game' (p. 41) - or with docility. Even of the escapee called 2 it can be said: 'Training had erased his memory. He recalled neither his parents' features nor the home which had sheltered his early years' (p. 46). He recalled neither his parents' features nor the home which had sheltered his early years'), and, at the moment of their capture, the twins follow Pirate 'like two sleepwalkers' (p. 60).

One of the paradoxes of *Fantômes* is, therefore, that the boy is both naturally aggressive and naturally compliant: he is both malleable victim and, as Mickie shows, willing executor of other boys as prey. Guibert's boys are as naturally versatile in violence as Duvert's are in their sexual roles, and in fact, as a celebration of male-to-male violence, *Fantômes* is even more provocative than the *Journal's* paeon to pederasty: the violence in *Fantômes* is perpetrated by organized groups, not by a single individual, and is, it seems, sanctioned by society and applauded - literally - by some 25,000 spectators (p. 191). Although reprisals may be threatened by Baleine at the end of the narrative, this belated and unconvincing prospect offers little evidence of a crisis in masculinity and even less of an ethics of marginality: the animal appellations of the gangsters, the forests where they hunt, the human tauromachy for which they all prepare, the Aztec sacrifices invoked in the coda, all suggest a sempiternally natural and mythically validated association between hunting and mankind, one simply waiting to be added to Matt Cartmill's collection.

If the violence of *Fantômes* does indeed seem both natural and culturally endorsed, the same cannot, however, be said of male-to-male sexuality. Even though sex among the gangsters reminds one of the boys of dreamlike 'wondrous, coupling beasts' (p. 42), sex with the boy-prisoners - who are not identified with animals but branded with numbers - is prohibited and punished with death. Lune's weakness for one of boys, 2, leads to 2's escape and to Lune's execution. Pirate, who falls for another 'two' in the form of the twins, is also condemned to be drowned. Jobs for the boys means no (blow)jobs with the boys, whether for the gangsters or for the infanteros: as Rudi tells Mickie: 'no infantero has carnal knowledge, of either man or woman; we remain virgin' (p. 184). On the relatively few occasions sex takes place, it is between partners who are unseen or unseeing - because the boy, 2, is blindfolded in his sack or because the twin that Pirate sodomizes is dead. Sex is invisible and/or hallucinatory. As Pirate at his trial remonstrates: 'vous m'avez fait former des fantomes' (p. 104). Sex in *Fantômes* is merely, if devastatingly, fantasmatic and

phantomatic. It is both elevated and reduced to fantasy.

Given that the title of the novel, which Pirate has either wittingly or unwittingly quoted, is also a quotation from Sade, then the 'fantômes' to which he refers are doubly if not triply derealized. They are disavowed as shallow and derivative; even the visceral is ersatz. (28) While seeking to articulate, for the first time, his deepest urges and obsessions, Pirate encases himself in a web of intertextuality of which the whole book, with its echoes of the *bestiaires*, *Don Quixote*, Fellini, Rousseau, Genet, Wittig's *Les Guerillères*, Aztec myths and last, but not least, Sade, speaks. Hence the importance of the second part of the book, where the violence of the gangsters is replaced by the play-acting of the picaresque Mickie and where doubles, masks, fakes and shadows proliferate, from the stucco virgins to the 'trash' ('*pacotille*') with which Mickie dresses himself to become an infantero (p. 126). Another way of looking at all the boys is to see them not as unique, but, like the twins, as an imitation one of the other, and thus, as infinitely reproducible and expendable. Even the gangsters are only imitation animals and, possibly, like Guibert's other *Gangsters*, (29) also imitation gangsters. Thus while seeming to confirm the immutable naturalness and perennial appeal of male violence, and, more particularly, male erotic violence, *Fantômes* also undercuts this violence with a constant

reminder of its constructedness, its facticity and its disposability. When juxtaposed, the spurious self-vindications of Pirate and Sade can be dismissed as so much sexual casuistry: beliefs in the mystical inevitability of male violence can be thrown, like the Aztec sacrifices, on the cultural scrap heap.

It follows that the ambivalences of the male hunt in *Journal d'un innocent* and *Fantômes* are reflected and conveyed through different forms of *mises en abyme*. In the *Journal* these were suggested by the ambivalences of a highly committed, highly passionate but at the same time self-distancing 'I', encapsulated in the ironic non-innocent 'innocent' of the tide. In *Fantômes* a similar distancing effect is achieved through citation, self-citation, and self-recitation in this highly original but also stereotypical 'company of wolves'. Thus, in their very different but complementary ways, both *Journal d'un innocent* and *Fantômes* deconstruct, even as they feed on, the fascinations and the fornications of 'jobs for the boys'.

IV

In his 1990-1992 *Journal*, *L'Avenir n'est à personne* (1993), Julien Green refers to Eric Jourdan's *Charité* (1991a) as 'this narrative of unrelieved cruelty'

and, in relation to *Charité* and *Révolte* (1991b), to the author's 'imperviousness in the suspense of horror'. Of the third novel, *Sang* (1992), Green writes: 'Here cruelty attains, as it were, perfection'.³⁰ Although, as Green also notes, the novels are separate and independent, 'with each having its own light like stars in a constellation', (31) they are, in fact, linked by common themes and characters. *Charité* is the story of the arrest, sequestration, escape and hunting down of the apparently dissident student, Ian. At the end of this antithetically entitled novel, Ian is stoned to death by children, for no obvious reason other than that he is an outsider. In *Révolte* et *Sang*, Ian's place as human quarry is taken over by Roman, an ex-novice who tended Ian in his monastery-refuge. Roman is also pursued, interned in a death camp - Camp Zero - and released, only to be beaten to death in his own flat by rampaging soldiers. He is replaced in his turn by a second Roman, the son of a friend of his long-time father-figure and military intelligence officer, Andrei. As he seeks to reunite with his former lover, Serge, this second Roman is also murdered by a group of local hunters, since he has 'the physique which lent itself to . . . Yes, to a sacrifice' ('le

physical that was suitable for... Yes, to a sacrifice'). (32) He is executed in the name of 'a purifying hunt' in the excitement of 'the sexual fury of murder'.

It is evident that the theme of the hunt is central to this trilogy of novels. Although, as with Duvert and Guibert, the quarry of the hunt is still the adolescent or post-adolescent boy, the originality of Jourdan is to make the hunted rather than the hunter the focus of the narrative and of all its characters' attention. In *Charité*, *Révolte* and *Sang*, it is Ian and Roman who exert a magnetic and almost mystical attraction over protectors and persecutors alike: 'the boy they were taking had a way of stealing into people's hearts'. (33) Such is the charisma of Ian and Roman that their persecutors are infinitely more preoccupied with them than they are with their persecutors. Moreover, the roles of persecutor and protector are themselves confused: Adam, who betrayed Ian, becomes a protector and even dies in trying to save Roman; Andrei, who loves Ian, is being promoted within the secret police that is pursuing him.

The attraction of Ian and Roman is partly one of physical beauty, but since that beauty 'spoke to the boy's eyes, sex and heart' ('toucherait chez le garçon les yeux, le sexe et le cœur'), (34) it is also an emotional, indeed spiritual beauty, a beauty that is both innocent and sexual, virginal, and, as Roman at one point becomes, meretricious. Both Ian and Roman appeal to all ages, sexes and sexual orientations - whether men or women, an old hairdresser or a blind monk, the heterosexual Andrei or the homosexual Serge. They even fascinate

the guards at Camp Zero and the Head of the Secret Police. A whole society and a whole country is mobilized in the pursuit of these boys, (35) and yet such is their indestructibility that once one is killed, another is born, even with the same name; and they bear uncanny resemblances to each other, as if they almost self-reproduced out of their own mythical power. This combination of potency, restraint, and self-regeneration - like that of the twins in *Fantômes* - ensures that all the characters they meet and all the environments they traverse are transfigured by their mix of highly sexualized and yet desexualized *maleness*. Their constant journeying and revisiting of the same sites and people ensures that the whole of the trilogy is bathed in postadolescent male pansexuality.

This sexualization and, more specifically, masculinization, of characters and environments is reinforced by the very nature of the hunt novel. Whether the hunt is enclosed, as in the death camp, or spiritualized, as in the monastery

where Ian and Roman take refuge, or whether it invades the ill-defined expanses of forests, beaches and open roads, the spaces of the novels are being constantly patrolled by different troops of men whose job it is to cover and control the territory. Here the distinctiveness of hunter and hunted is less important than the sexualized ciphering and deciphering of the environment, whether on foot, in patrol cars, or by helicopter. Here indeed, are jobs for the boys - and all the boys have the same job. Whether their trademark is sexual murder, a stolen ruby, a password - 'May the angels protect you!' (36) - or a piece of jettisoned clothing, their job is to inscribe their environment with the passage of their animal traces, the evidence of their male trajectory.

At the same time, this constant reinscription and masculinization also shows the limitations of the hunt, and indeed of the hunt novel. As indicated above, it is not only the characters who are repeated - Ian, Roman and then a second Roman - but their visiting and revisiting of the same places, whether the hairdresser's, the monastery, or Camp Zero. In constantly returning to the same sites, the characters consciously turn the hunt into a pilgrimage, just as they turn the urge for freedom from an oppressive present into a return to a past of which the violence, such as Ian's double murder, is conveniently overlooked. With their constant loopings of time and spaces in repeated hunts, retreats, and renewed hunts, the novels expose the circularity of their own structures and the claustrophobia of a maleness that seems to conquer territory, but, in fact, only turns in on itself. Man the adventurous or sexually liberated hunter is shown to be introverted and sterile, and man the hunted is shown to be isolationist and even vicious. It is no wonder, then, that there are parallels as well as differences between Camp Zero and the Dormition monastery: both are characterized by

their inwardness, their rituals and their rows of dead. Nor is there any wonder that Jourdan repeats in both *Révolte* and *Sang* the soldiers' assassination of Roman. (37) Jourdan's trilogy thus confirms both the association between the death drive and the compulsion to repeat, and the fact that, as Hal Foster neatly puts it, 'the death-drive may be the foundation rather than the exception to the pleasure principle'. (38) By means of its focus on the male hunt, the trilogy also confirms the fascination, and the danger, of associating the death drive with the compulsion to repeat and jobs for the boys.

It is also clear from the above that the ambivalences associated with the hunt are, as in *Journal d'un innocent* and *Fantômes*, conveyed formally through a kind of *mise en abyme*. In Jourdan the combined temporal, spatial and

narrative loopings and layerings of *Charité*, *Révolte* and *Sang* give the sagas of Ian and the two Romans an allegorical, almost mythical status: the hunts become quests and pilgrimages; the protagonists become martyrs and their own reincarnations. Moreover, the *mises en abyme* in Jourdan create a distance and a detachment from the male hunt that, however different they may be from the self-ironizing of Duvert and Guibert, are at least equally critical of 'jobs for the boys'. For by showing the links between three separate murders in three separate narratives Jourdan not only uses *mise en abyme* to expose the imbrication of masculinity and violence, but also shows masculinity and violence themselves to be constructed like a *mise en abyme*. Male violence - whether the sadism of the prison commanders or the self-destructiveness of Ian and Roman - is, like the narratives themselves, represented and reconstructed through a mixture of repetition, imitation, and regeneration. By turning *Charité*, *Révolte* and *Sang* into myth via *mise en abyme*, Jourdan shows that it is precisely such myth itself that is complicit in the generation and regeneration of the sexual violences of 'jobs for the boys'.

V

It can be seen from the above remarks that the versions of the hunt novel offered by Duvert, Guibert and Jourdan confirm and yet also unsettle stereotypical representations of masculinity in different and yet complementary ways. However lyrical Duvert's defence of the 'paedophilic chase' might be, this lyricism is, like other examples of 'white man/brown boy' literature, (39) undercut by a sense of the writer's inadequacy and isolation from his companions, which is compounded by Duvert's espousal of the detachment and discipline of writing. In Guibert, too, the juxtaposition of the visceral and the vacuous in polymorphous male combats ensures that the naturalization of

homoeroticism and paedophilia is also parodied and problematized. In Jourdan, textual repetitions and symmetries show male predation to be complicitous with mourning and death. Thus, in Duvert, Guibert and Jourdan, three different but equally self-conscious literary modes - lyric, pastiche and allegory - expose the ultimate moral, sexual, and, perhaps even more interestingly, *literary* bankruptcy of the male erotic chase. If representations of jobs for the boys are either intertextual parodies or intratextual elegies, then it is time to move on to new and more fulfilling patterns of male-to-male relations.

There is, however, another dimension to these sexual stories that is surprisingly and yet revealingly easy to neglect: homosexuality. This neglect has

been facilitated in *Journal d'un innocent* by the fact that the boys' sexual orientation has yet to be constructed (p. 78) ('The laws of the group [. . .] have to manufacture heterosexuality' ('Les lois du groupe [. . .] ont à fabriquer de l'hétérosexualité'), and, orientation notwithstanding, by the narrator's preference for the seemingly heterosexual over the homosexual partner. (40) In *Fantômes*, what is important is not the sexual orientation of the characters - the only identifiable homosexual is the provocatively named queer (tapette), Sardine (41) - but whether or not gangsters and infanteros respect the taboo on all sexual relations. For the main characters in the Jourdan trilogy, sexual orientation is again not the issue: although the promiscuous and initially exploitative gymnast, Serge, can be identified as homosexual, the charisma of Ian and the two Romans is all the more powerful for being imbued with a sexuality above and beyond orientation. As Green writes of Jourdan: 'Sensuality cannot betray anything special [. . .] it is there because it is in man'. (42)

It can be seen, therefore, that all five of the books under consideration here marginalize homosexuality as an orientation or as an identification, while foregrounding a much more generalized fusion of the homosocial and the homoerotic. The importance of 'jobs for the boys' is that the boy can potentially do any sexual job: the boy combines sexual potency with sexual *indeterminacy*; he offers homoeroticism without, necessarily, a homosexual identity. In the hunt novel, jobs for the boys problematize certain forms of masculinity while, at the same time, positing the possibility of permanently *unproblematized* male-to-male *eroticism*. Paradoxically, this applies less to the sexual propagandist, Duvert, than to Guibert and Jourdan, where homosexuality can be ignored, and even occasionally stigmatized, because male-to-male desire is the ground on which the whole fabric of the novels is constructed (43).

Homosexuality in the sense of orientation can be shown to be the

exception to the rule here because homosexuality as a 'desiring machine' is the rule by which exceptions are to be defined. (44) In showing male gayness to be both 'off-centre' and all-pervasive, both supplement *and* norm, these novels offer a suggestive and challenging version of what John Champagne has called an 'ethics of marginality'. (45) For here is a view of the margin that is dependent on a centre that, by some standards, is itself decentred, and dependent on a homosexuality that is seen not from within the context of heterosexuality but from within a mixture of homoeroticism and homosociality

- (46) There is, therefore, an interesting homology between the *mises en abyme* of the gay hunt novel and new and suggestive rewritings and re-envisionings of male- to-male relations. For the violent *mises en abyme* of the gay hunt novel enact, at the level of representation, the incorporation of homosexuality within a generalized homoeroticism, and the replacement of *male-to-male* by *male-within-male* relations. The *mises en abyme* of these novels can thus be seen as the narrative encapsulation of a generalized, serialized sodomy.

It follows from the above that the challenge of the novels under discussion is to be, and at the same time not to be, 'homosexual'. In the same way that the hunt was shown to naturalize and yet also denaturalize 'naturally' violent masculinity, these hunt novels denaturalize and yet also renaturalize 'homosexuality'. That is to say, they denaturalize myths of the homosexual, paedophile predator while at the same time renaturalizing myths of an empowered homophilia. At the same time as they critique stereotypical versions of 'jobs for the boys' and the male hunt, they lift that critique out of a vicious circle of ghettoization, guilt, recrimination, and redemption through catharsis. For it is in these celebratory, elegiac, parodic, and allegorical reinscriptions of essentially homophobic myths - as Guibert would say: 'Vous m'avez fait former des fantômes' - that the gay hunt novel can consciously, and corrosively, create space for a myth of its own: a space for compulsive, not to say ubiquitous, compulsory, homosexuality.

NOTES

1. L. Bersani (1993), 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', in D. Crimp (ed.), *AIDS. Cultural Analysis. Cultural Activism*, Cambridge, Mass, p. 222.
2. See E. Jourdan (1991b), *Révolution*, Paris, p. 167. All the translations in this chapter are, unless otherwise indicated, my own.
3. See, for example, L. Frappier-Mazur (1991), *Sade et l'écriture de l'orgie*, Paris, and, on Bataille, K. Millett (1994), *The Politics of Cruelty*, London, pp. 155-62. For studies of the violence in other authors such as Breton, Char and

Leiris, see J. Chénieux-Gendron and T. Mathews (eds) (1994), *Violence, Théorie, Surréalisme*, [Paris].

4. On Rachilde, see for example D. Kelly (1989), *Fictional Genders*, Lincoln, Nebraska, pp. 143-55; L. Frappier-Mazur (1994), 'Rachilde: allégories de la guerre', *Romantisme*, no. 85, 3ème trimestre, pp. 5-18, and J. Beizer (1994), *Ventriloquized Bodies*, Ithaca and London, pp. 226- 60. On Genet, see L. Bersani (1995), *Homos*, Cambridge, Mass. pp. 113-81.

5. On the indissociability of violence, gender and representation, see T. de Lauretis (1989), 'The Violence of Rhetoric. Considerations on Representation and Gender', in N. Armstrong and L. Tennenhouse (eds), *The Violence of Representation. Literature and the History of Violence*, London, pp.239-58.

6. See M. Tournier (1970), *Le Roi des Aulnes*, Paris, p. 184 and also pp. 152, 180, 223.

7. M. Cartmill (1993), *A View to a Death in the Morning*, Cambridge, Mass. p. 5.

8. Quoted *ibid*, pp. 125-6.

9. *Ibid*, p. 9.

10. *Ibid*, pp. 76-91.

11. See 'The Bambi Syndrome', *ibid*, pp. 161-88.

12. L. Bersani (1990), in *The Culture of Redemption*, Cambridge, Mass. questions theories of 'the restitutive or redemptive power of cultural forms' as themselves 'symptomatic versions of the very process they purport to explain' (p. 22).

13. See R. Dyer (1991), 'Believing in Fairies: The Author and the Homosexual', in D. Fuss (ed.), *inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, London, pp. 185-201. For homotextuality as homosexuality in performance, see O. Heathcote (1994), 'Masochism, Sadism and Homotextuality: The Examples of Yukio Mishima and Eric Jourdan', *Paragraph*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 174-89.

14. L. Schehr (1995b), *The Shock of Men*, Stanford, CA, p. 140.

15. For one of the most thorough studies of the narrative *mise en abyme*, attributed to Gide but developed by C. E. Magny and others, see L. Dallenbach (1977), *Le Récit spéculaire. Essai sur la mise en abyme*, Paris, who defines *mise en abyme* as 'any internal mirror which reflects the whole of the narrative by either simple, repeated or specious reduplication' (p. 52).

16. T. Duvert (1976) *Journal d'un innocent*, Paris, p. 114. Future references to this text will be given in parenthesis.

17. I need cities because of boys. I only become civilised for them, it is to seek them out and welcome them that I discipline my days [. . .] For the Puritans, the pleasure of love is a dried-up delicacy [. . .] for me, it is my social life and my food' (p. 112). In Renaud Camus's *Tricks* (Paris, 1988) the hunting metaphor is

less in evidence, partly no doubt because all the meetings described are, however brief, 'successful'. In the episode entitled 'A Perfect Fuck' Camus does, however, write: 'I have spoken of pleasure, but I do not see what economy would prevent me from calling such moments happiness, precisely because they are so precarious. When they are experienced, their perfection seems a culmination, as if there is nothing more to be sought [. . .] But they simply return one to the quest - for how can one not desire afterwards to live other similar moments, once more, just once more?' (p. 459). We think, when we experience them, that their perfection is the end of the matter, that there is nothing more to seek [...] But all they do is return us to the quest, for how can we not then desire to encounter similar moments once again, just once?)

18. With its strong partitions, its rough luxury, its high windows pierced in the walls like those of a dungeon, but generous in light, this place has a powerful, gentle atmosphere, which seizes, welcomes and encloses' (Duvert *Journal*, p. 200). See also the more specific reference to Sade (ibid., p. 202) and *Paysage de fantaisie* (Paris, 1973) where the boys are also detained in a kind of *maison close*.

19. Quoted by C. Robinson (1995), *Scandal in the Ink: Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century French Literature*, London, p. 243. See also Duvert, *Journal d'un innocent*, pp. 148-52.

20. It is in *L'Enfant au masculin* (p. 21) that Duvert invents the term 'pedhomophile'.

21. I will encourage him to persiflage me, to spit on the least things I touch or admire. And, by being for him a living example of the ugliness and worries of indiscipline, I will make of him a more normal, more average man than any normal, average father could make of his children' (pp. 204-5).

22. Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, p. 161.

23. For the narrator's consciousness of his own (small) penile size, see pp. 149, 184.

24. Bersani (1993), p. 212. According to Michel Foucault, the ancient Greek male-to-male relations were not even seen as 'homosexual' or 'feminizing so long as the older partner was 'active in the sexual relation and active in his moral self mastery' (*Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 2, *L'Usage des plaisirs*, Paris, p. 98). Such relations, however, became increasingly stigmatised when 'the role of the erastes and that of the eromenos can no longer be distinguished, the equality [of their bond] being perfect or their reversibility complete' (*Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 3, *Le Souci de soi*, Paris, p. 258).

25. J. Boone (1995), 'Vacation Cruises; or, The Homoerotics of Orientalism', *PMLA*, vol. 110, no. 1, p. 104.

26. For comments on the double in Guibert, see O. Heathcote (1995b), 'Les

Chiens d'Hervé Guibert: analyse d'"une plaquette porno-graphique"', *Nottingham French Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 61-9.

27. H. Guibert (1987), *Vous m'avez fait former des fantômes*, Paris, p. 150. Future quotations from this text will be given in parenthesis.

28. In July 1783 Sade wrote to his wife: 'For example, I would wager you thought you were achieving miracles, when you reduced me to hideous abstinence in the sins of the flesh. Well, you were deceived: you fired my brain, you made me create ghosts to which I will have to give life'. Well, you were wrong: you have warmed my head, you have made me form phantoms that I will have to realise' (See G. Lely (ed.) (1967), *Œuvres complètes du marquis de Sade*, vol. 12, Paris, Letter CLXII, p. 397). I am grateful to Ralph Sarkonak for indicating this reference.

29. In *Les Gangsters*, too, writing takes over from 'reality': 'In the evening at T.'s, at C.'s request, I told my story once again. At each retelling, it grew more and more into a tale formed, and perhaps deformed, by writing' (p. 61) ('Le soir chez T., sollicité par C., une fois de plus je racontai mon histoire. Each time I told it in person, it grew stronger as a tale formed, and perhaps deformed, by writing'). It is also interesting to note that in Dennis Cooper's *Frisk* (London, 1992), the graphic descriptions of sexual murders are also revealed to be fantasy - whether those supposedly committed by 'Dennis' or those portrayed in the supposed snuff films. According to Gregory W. Bredbeck (1995), this anticipation of fantasy by (faked) representation shows that '[b]oth the hegemony of the social and the difference of the antisocial are revealed as always already constructs within the social construct of representation itself' ('The New Queer Narrative: Intervention and Critique', *Textual Practice*, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 487).

30. J. Green (1993), *L'Avenir n'est à personne*, Paris, pp. 208, 216, 354.

31. *Ibid*, p. 354.

32. E. Jourdan (1992), *Sang*, Paris, p. 343.

33. E. Jourdan (1991a), *Charité*, Paris, p. 63.

34. *Ibid*, p. 176.

35. As with *Journal d'un innocent* and *Fantômes*, the geographical setting of the Jourdan trilogy is too imprecise to locate it in France or elsewhere. The student unrest may be a pointer to France, but the Eastern Orthodox Church - and the concentration camps - suggest a different location.

36. 'Que les anges te protegent!' is initially murmured by Andrei to Ian (*Charité*, p. 64) and then reprised at intervals, creating an increasing sense of mystical community between the male protagonists (pp. 167, 194, 318).

37. See *Révolte*, pp. 319-26 and *Sang*, pp. 227-35.

38. H. Foster (1993), *Compulsive Beauty*, Cambridge, Mass, p. 11.

39. See Boone, 'Vacation Cruises; or, The Homoerotics of Orientalism', p. 104.

40. See the narrator's objection to Francesco's 'tête de femme' (p. 97), his 'figure de star' (p. 104) and his status as 'un acteur consommé' (p. 108).
41. See Guibert, *Fantômes*, p. 189.
42. Green, *L'Avenir n'est à personne*, p. 216. It could be argued that the sexuality in Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* is also above and beyond both gender and sexual orientation. See M. Wittig (1992), 'The Mark of Gender', in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, New York and Hemel Hempstead.
43. However interesting in terms of 'gender trouble', all three authors under discussion here pay scant attention to women, and aspects of *Fantômes* could be seen as misogynistic. See O. Heathcote, 'Eroticism, violence and play in *You Made Me Form Ghosts*' (forthcoming). On the question of boys' changing sexual identities, see B. Gibson (1995), *Male Order: Life Stories from Boys Who Sell Sex*, London, p. x.
44. For 'Les Machines désirantes', see G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (1972), *L'Anti-Œdipe*, Paris, pp. 7-59.
45. See J. Champagne (1995), *The Ethics of Marginality*, Minneapolis, p. 32. See also in this regard B. Smith's review of *Critical Quarterly: Gay Lives?*, ed. by D. Trotter, (1995/6), Oxford, in *Perversions*, Issue 6, p. 170: 'I fail to see what self-esteem can be found in identifying with a sensibility which defines itself as a *subculture*. A walk in the closet is still a closet.'
46. See Bersani, *Homos*, p. 10: 'If homosexuality is a privileged vehicle for homo-ness, the latter designates a mode of connectedness to the world that it would be absurd to reduce to sexual preference'.

Christopher Robinson, (*Scandal in the ink*, 1999, page 241-243):

(...) There is in fact very little bodily description in gay male writers which is not harnessed to some level of meaning beyond itself. At its most direct, the further level can merely be a sense of potential psychological elements created by the use of abstractions, as when Collard, in describing a young Canadian as a strange mixture of beauty and ugliness, refers to 'the heaviness of his forehead,

the emptiness of his washed-out eyes, the narrowness of his mouth'. Usually, however, one of three techniques is used: comparison with nature, comparison with art and definition by association or context. As we saw in Chapter 6, comparisons with nature are particularly frequent in representations of the adolescent male body in pederastic writing, where they perform the dual task of activating 'feminine' associations (particularly through images of flowers) and of

naturalizing pederastic desire itself. The description, for example, of Diego's crutch in Duvert's *Journal d'un innocent*, plays on details of nature vocabulary,

the neat pouch of his scrotum with its fine parallel furrows, the little plump half-moons which close around the hole',

then draws these together by defining the ensemble, objectified by Diego's perception of it in a fragment of mirror glass, as

the simplicity and radiance of this young land- scape with the rounded hillocks of its sleepy cheeks'.

A wide range of writers from Proust and Genet to Bory and Yves Navarre apply nature images to the adult male too, but for a more disparate range of effects. It is rare for the primary purpose of such images to be to make the visual experience of the body more immediate. Sometimes the writer is referring to a convention of writing rather than to a reality. Renaud Camus, for example, uses conventional images of strength - tiger, mane, lion - to suggest that a blond Italian friend misleadingly fits a heterosexual stereotype. More often we are dealing with a metaphorical system. Collard, for example, introduces a beach scene with the image of 'an avalanche of muscular, sun-tanned bodies' in order to integrate himself, sunbathing, into the natural order, an integration which is a prerequisite for presenting himself as the vehicle of a natural force, *désiré*. In Jouhandeau's *Tirésias* and Navarre's *Le petit galopin de nos corps* this use of natural images is expanded to provide a running commentary on the sexual and emotional experiences at the centre of the texts - respectively, release of male 'femininity' through anal sex, and expression of the natural force of passion.

There is an inherent stylization at work in the way gay writers use these images. They are drawn from a narrow range of elements - fruit, flowers, animals, landscape features. When applied to the adolescent body they usually suggest freshness, fragility and grace; applied to an adult male they either

indicate macho qualities such as strength or they are markers of androgyny; applied to males of any age they are also used to symbolize the force and naturalness of homosexual desire.

Stylization is even more evident in definitions of the body in terms of art or literature. If comparisons with flowers and landscapes naturalize desire for the male body, comparisons with classical sculpture make it intellectually respectable. They also lock the body into a one-way objectifying perspective,

keeping a safe distance between beholder and beheld. Very rarely is sculpture presented as something tactile; I can only think of one example, the narrator's response, in Eekhoud's *Voyous de velours*, to the half-naked body of the young gymnast Bugutte:

I felt a desire to run my hands over that admirable statue of flesh and to mould it, passionately'.

A more typical use is that made by Julien Green, who harps on the visual aspect of statuary in *Terre lointaine*, evoking the desire aroused in him by the reproductions of Greek sculptures in the University of Virginia and the particular erotic effect of the androgynous bronze Narcissus, a copy of which he obtains from a Naples museum, then comparing and contrasting these desires with his response to the bodies of the young men he sees around him. By transforming the latter into art metaphors, he objectifies and possesses them whilst keeping them at a safe distance. The process applies as much to casual encounters - the sailor in summer uniform 'who seemed like a silver statue, for his impeccable uniform was exactly moulded to his body to the point of becoming a new form of nudity' - as to Mark, whose naked photograph becomes the repository of his desires and thus allows him the illusion that his feelings for Mark himself are 'pure'.

The mirror image of the process, interestingly, occurs in *Journal d'un innocent*. The narrator finds the attractions of Diego pall precisely because he is readily assimilable to a picture, and therefore too readily objectifiable, as though he were no more than an image in a pornographic magazine: 'Diego is nothing more than a perfect, banal picture; I can only draw up a boring list of his physical perfection Even his erections have the fixity of a photograph.' Green uses art to fix bodies at a distance, in an effort to neutralize their erotic power over him; Duvert becomes indifferent to a body which has a self-distancing quality, because he *wants* erotic involvement (...).

Bruce Benderson (Introduction to *Diary of an Innocent*, Semiotext(e) 2010)

Innocence on Trial: The Politics of Tony Duvert

Literally, the "innocent" to whom the title of this novel refers only makes an appearance at the very end of the book. He's a sweet, dimwitted street boy who is fascinated by the narrator's typewriter and spends long periods of time

typing every letter of the keyboard in order, over and over. Jokingly, the narrator considers handing in the boy's work, rather than his own, as the manuscript for the book but realizes that few would read it. Nevertheless, he asks himself, "Is there a law that is so different in the series of words that I put down?" Such comparisons and contrasts between the illiterate and the literate, the amoral and the moral, the impoverished and the well-to-do, and the individual and the family are the mechanisms that drive this narrative. But the real "innocent" to whom the title of this novel refers is the narrator himself, an unnamed lover of boys living temporarily in an unnamed Southern city that suggests North Africa of the 1970s. This shouldn't, however, lead to the conclusion that the word "innocent" is being used ironically. Or rather, if it is, that irony is at our expense, rather than that of the protagonist's or author's.

Those familiar with the other writings of Tony Duvert (1945-2008) or his public reputation are bound to conflate the fictional experiences recounted in *Diary of an Innocent* with his own. However, during the years in which he enjoyed notoriety as a literary figure (1969-1989), he never publicly clarified his own sexuality, despite the fact that he made his politics surrounding the issue of sexuality absolutely clear. His critique of French bourgeois life seen through the lens of sexuality was as acerbic as it was tireless, and much of it targeted initial repressions and exploitations of sexual energy during the period of childhood. As he explained at length in his nonfiction book, *Good Sex Illustrated*, those cultural institutions we sanctify the most—the rearing of children, education, the family, our legal and medical systems, the clergy, marriage—are actually accomplishing the very opposite of what they claim. The raising of children, as he sees it, is a ruthless commandeering of their impulses and the capitalization of their bodies by an enslaving process of marketability. In this system, mothers are no more than low-level meat factory managers, who serve as the overseers of the sacrifice of childhood to the capitalist packaging conglomerate we call decency; fathers are trained to take out their frustrations through oedipal vectors in order to geld their children before they have become fully aware of their own capacity for pleasure; teachers are

hypocritical lackeys whose sole occupation is to rein in children's polymorphous creativity and to provide convincing rationalizations for its reshaping into obligation; doctors, psychiatrists and priests are there to stamp such processes with legitimacy. And finally, the sole purpose of marriage is to repeat this inescapable cycle by creating more upholders and defenders of it. The narrator in *Diary of an Innocent* serves quite obviously as a mouthpiece for these politics. For Duvert, the promiscuous boy lover has become the most convenient device for taking pot shots at our social order.

So much for the narrator, but what about the succession of street boys in

the novel who serve as his love objects? Almost all of them are wayward prepubescent panhandlers or child laborers from the petite bourgeoisie and working classes. Most tend to enjoy a high degree of autonomy in the streets outside the family circle. All have relationships with parents or elder siblings that are characterized by neglect or violence. Certainly, we expect the author to be calling attention to their plight. However, Duvert demonstrates quite convincingly that-even given such conditions-these boys are in a position that any French middle-class child should consider enviable. This is because the street boys enjoy full ownership of their bodies and their time whereas the average protected French child is taught to be a robotic tool of parents, teachers and priests.

This is not to claim that, when the novel enters the homes of some of these street boys, their parents and older siblings aren't portrayed as frankly tyrannical. But Duvert goes out of his way to attach such behavior to the reality of poverty and to the rigid, simplistic, traditional codes of the culture he is describing. What mitigates the bad behavior of these particular caregivers is their directness, the fact that their actions lack the hypocrisy and hidden motives of the same kind of treatment when it occurs in a bourgeois context. In taking these positions, Duvert's radical project essentially involves turning our moral code upside down, so that the alienation and sexual tastes of the narrator resemble innocence and sincerity whenever they are compared to those of the normal bourgeois literary audience who will become his readers and whom he is attacking.

The narrator in *Diary of an Innocent* functions as a test case for someone who attempts to avoid-however abjectly-the oppression of social institutions. His position is one of complete alienation from every element of society that Duvert has defined as hypocritical. He lives without family, without concern for his own safety or health, without allegiance to his own country and without the sexual orientation and sobriety we would expect from someone of his level of education and class. He is "innocent" of all those things and thus completely at odds with the social order. Rather than being a member of a political group or movement, he is single-handedly opposed to the capitalist cultural machine that produced him. This does not imply, however, that he is a firebrand, fighting for justice and attempting to convince others that he is in the right. As an "innocent," he seeks merely to live his life in as unfettered a way as possible.

Despite all of this, one is occasionally-and erroneously-led to believe that Duvert is a kind of activist. One of the most striking devices in this complicated narrative is a section that fantasizes obsessively about what it would be like if homosexual pedophiles were considered the norm and heterosexuals were treated the way homosexuals were in the era of pre-Stonewall. So fastidious is

Duvert in covering every element of reversed oppression that could occur that this section becomes a hilarious send-up of the child protection schemes and exclusion of homosexuality from daily life that prevailed in Western society in the middle of the twentieth century. As each prohibition and each prejudice is piled on, all of them begin to seem more and more absurd, producing delightful satirical effects. But once this reverse dialectic is accomplished, Duvert deflates it immediately by pointing to a central flaw in his argument: no homosexual, he explains, would ever oppress another group to the level of exclusion and isolation to which the homosexual himself has been pushed. Thus, the purpose of this upside-down narrative is not to produce change, but merely to sharpen our consciousness of the mechanisms of the social order, and such a process of analysis promises to lead most of us into a profound state of uneasiness.

What American readers will find most repulsive about this novel is the fact that it isn't redemptive. In order to understand the importance of the theme of redemption to the American scene, we must first briefly discuss the influence of seventeenth-century Puritan literature on the roots of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition, and the about-to-be-born novel of the century that followed. Especially in its early stages, the novel in Anglo-Saxon cultures was deeply influenced by the spiritual autobiography, which had already become a favourite form of reading. Perhaps the best known of these spiritual autobiographies is John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), in which Bunyan recounts his lapses into sin that lead eventually to his epiphany and conversion. In such a book, the journey from point A to point B—from damnation to grace—created a ready-made linear narrative that always enjoyed the same structure. It is a movement from error toward conversion and the proverbial "happy ending." And it suggests that no story is worth its salt, or perhaps, no story could be called a story at all, unless the protagonist is brought back into the fold. Although this fold may have originally denoted a relationship only to God, it has taken on more banal and conformist parameters in modern times. One could almost substitute "family" for "fold."

Today there are thousands of fiction and nonfiction books that are constrained by the pattern established by narratives like *Grace Abounding*. Depictions of transgressions may be limitless, accounts of sensuality and appetite luridly graphic, the altered states of drug abuse described to a T, but we always end up in a recovery meeting, which we then realise is our perspective for looking back, and which wins us, hopefully—if we are authors—a guest spot on Oprah.

By saying this, I am not claiming that we do not also enjoy narratives that end in tragedy rather than in a happy ending. But these tragic narratives are, as well, adapted to the mould of redemption. In every case, the tragedy serves as a kind of punishment, and since the book is being written from a post-

punishment perspective, the narrator is finally established as "good," having gone beyond error (even if it was too late in his or her particular case) and therefore worthy of our attention. As an extreme but relevant example, I must point out that our literary tradition has no narratives about pedophiles who avowedly enjoy behaving in a manner they admit we would see as having bad intentions. They are either confessing an illness to us or trying to prove that their orientation really is well meaning and socially constructive, usually in the sense most accepted by the middle-class mind.

Duvert, on the other hand, who remains very close to his narrator in this novel, doesn't wish to be thought of as contributing to the well-being of society, which he sees as a machine of speciousness. He makes a strong claim of being absolutely irredeemable in our eyes, salting this negation with a brazen claim to innocence. And indeed, in a way that may seem perverse to some readers, he locates the moral superiority of his text in its absolute irredeemableness. He forsakes the only two possible approaches to this subject that an Anglo-Saxon might choose: "coming to his senses" and realizing the error of his orientation, with the narrative representing the journey to that realization; or settling on a way to convince us that his life-style is for the betterment of society. Duvert's character, on the other hand, is "lost" to our notion of what is good or right, and he chooses to stay that way for the very purpose of declaring himself innocent. He may be "lost," but if that is the case, it's not because he has chosen the wrong path and is lost to himself, but because he has been abandoned by the social order, something he has little hope of changing.

Duvert belongs, of course, to a well-known tradition of French poètes maudits, who aligned themselves with variations of the notion of evil and who include Sade, Baudelaire, Bataille, Huysmans and Genet. The fact that many passages of *Diary of an Innocent* were repulsive to me and that I identified that repulsion as much more than a matter of taste is merely proof of the efficacy of Duvert's purpose. Several scenes are there mostly to ensure a portrait of the protagonist as someone who is plainly repugnant to the normal reader. In one, he removes a tiny worm from his anus with the tip of a knife as if it were light comedy; in another, he devotes almost an entire page to describing a cat munching on a giant cockroach as he speculates about how it might taste and compares that taste to elements of French cuisine; in a third, he recounts an attempt to have coitus with a dog during a camping trip when he ended up in a French town that felt alien and rejecting to him.

Even in France, discussions about or with Duvert have tended to touch upon the startling amount of aggression and alienation in his texts. In both his writing and the interviews with him, it is almost as if he were jumping the gun and expressing his disgust for those who would express theirs for him-as if he has left any call for inclusion by the wayside long ago and has made himself a

sacrificial victim of social rejection. But for what purpose? One could say he has chosen to lie down with the Devil in order to escape the narrow boundaries of social experience-and thus achieve an unusual kind of transcendence. As I have tried to show, such a stance probably could not be more foreign and more distasteful to the American mind, which tends to function on the assumption of conformity and inclusion. (There's room for everybody, if only we can learn to understand!)

There may also be one other purpose of Duvert's narrative, though evidence for it is subtle. I would call this *de-idealization*. Idealization of human behavior is a tactic all of us use to survive. A most obvious example of this is our reluctance in almost any discourse (excluding vulgar satire) to discuss or provide examples of certain activities we engage in regularly, such as defecation. When we see a beauty queen on television gushing over the receipt of a rhine-stone crown and a bouquet of long-stemmed roses, it is true that some of us may in our minds subject her to a prurient sexual objectification, but the furthest thing from our thoughts is what she looks like on the toilet or menstruating. Why? Not only does the frequency of both make them an integral part of human life, they also preoccupy all of us to a high degree at moments when we're alone.

As a child, I remember a transgressive game I would play compulsively with myself: I would think of friends of my parents, teachers, politicians, alluring actresses or any individual who encouraged idealization and radiated social power; and then I would try to visualize the same person on the toilet. After questioning friends, I have come to the conclusion that such perverse fantasizing is far from original. To see authority, beauty or other social currency suddenly disappear the moment one adds certain universal but private behavior to the repertoire of the imagination can become positive exploration for a child who has just begun to confront the world and its intimidating institutions.

Duvert's intention in this text may be analogous. Not only is he forcing the grotesqueries of his own libido upon us; he is also calling for a de-idealization of our experience and human experience in general. Hidden behind his rather boastful descriptions of situations that threaten to turn our stomachs is the challenging question: *And how pretty would you look with your soul bared to this extent?*

If this aspect of Duverts texts truly exists, it presents one of the hardest of his lessons for us to take in. Our initial and defensive reaction will obviously be: *Well, I don't sleep with little boys!* But anyone who has the inclination, the mind and the stamina to absorb a larger part of Duvert's oeuvre will eventually be subjected to his careful and detailed inversion of our system of values, obsessively and meticulously worked out according to the most stringent rules of reasoning, with the help of Marxist theory. His worldview certainly is audacious but never lacks rigor. I would go so far as to say that its repercussions

are as inescapable as the oppressive systems he is unraveling. They support his claim that our intimate and private lives are just as wicked- indeed, more so, because of their hypocrisy-than the disturbing descriptions in this book.

This allows the dialectic of the book to justify the narrator's plea: he is *innocent*. According to Duvert's reasoning, it is an innocence that approaches sainthood (in the sense of Sartre's *Saint Genet*) because the protagonist chooses to suffer (and, in fact, there are even passages in this book in which he chooses to live for several days on bread and water, because he finds this preferable to confronting the social networks of the outside world). By his "sins," he is critiquing, or even neutralising, all of ours, which are not only oppressive but entangled in exploitive social functions that have constructed themselves as incontrovertible and reach far beyond us. And though it may be true that the protagonist's life-style is helping no one, we-as cowards and upholders of the very order that oppresses and exploits us-are harming many. Into the libidinal, alternative, alienated world which this narrator so categorically invites us, it inevitably becomes our shit that stinks, not his.

Marie Jardin, Hors (syn)thèse, ou l'enfance queer (L'Unebêvue n° 32, Inéchangeable et chaosmose, II - Désarticuler le discours succube du signifiant, November 2014)

Neither innocent nor guilty, they are subject to the same essential amorality as the gods of the ancient mysteries from which tragedy sprang.

Antonin Artaud, on *Les Cenci*, OC, Tome IV.

I'd forget everything and start again, innocent forever.

T. Duvert, *Interdit de séjour*, p. 25.

With this title, which is an allusion (based on an article by Beatriz Preciado "L'enfant queer", published this winter in *Libération*) to Gilles Sebhan's *L'enfant silencieux* (1) - a book that has the merit of existing and bringing Tony Duvert and his work into existence, and which is the first attempt in France to revive the reading of Duvert by bringing us back to it, in the aftermath of his death - I introduce my approach to an Italian work done at the University of Naples (2) in 1994-95, without having been informed, for the moment, of the follow-up it will have had for its author and in Italy.

It is not without reading Tony Duvert and his own reading as a theorist that I approach this work. "Lecture introuvable" (Untraceable Reading), an article from November 1972 in No.1 of the journal *Minuit*, which was entrusted to him, sounds like his literary manifesto. (Barely a year earlier, the journal *Littérature*

had published Jacques Lacan's article "Lituraterre" in its 3 October 1971 issue, entitled "Littérature et psychanalyse"), a Lacanian way of saying, perhaps, a modality of the "reader's attack" when the text plays between pleasure and enjoyment. Duvert has this to say: for someone who has a majority and dominant conception of literature, "the technique of writing is taught in the same way that sexuality is closed and formed". We could say that the textual, narrative and stylistic modalities of literature, or of art in general, that shape its reception, are of the same order as the linguistic and discursive modalities that 'form and close sexuality'. Writing and sexuality are linked. Lacan's 'motérialité' is echoed after the fact by Duvert's 'various alluvia that swell and twist the narrative', as he writes of Robert Pinget. At the end of the same 1972 text, Tony Duvert writes that in the subversive writer, the denouncer of convention

It is an explicit form of writing that requires fiction to be a duplication of the accepted universe; its effort to write is a revelation and destruction of ideology at the very heart of what appears to lie below or in opposition to its power - the "personal good" personality, subjectivity, desire, memory, even impulses. There is a similarity in approach between this art and the subversive action of a minority. "Tearing from within" is what it's all about ("Decapitate order and keep your heads, order grows back", he later wrote in *the Abécédaire malveillant*), for a reading that would be present to liberating writings and to the world that seeks itself in them. This is "furious craftsmanship".

Duvert cannot be read without his contemporaries, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari (1972 *L'Anti-Œdipe*), Hocquenghem and Schérer, and in another way, before that, Barthes, the review *Tel quel* and the new novel, and of course the action, then, of 'minorities', May 68, the women's movement, 1970, the creation of the F.H.A.R. and the publication in 1972 of Guy Hocquenghem's book *Le désir homosexuel*. If subversion is "turning things upside down", then this is Duvert's ceaseless effort in his artistic practice, with a will to which it is so difficult today not to retreat, and which it is so difficult today not to interpret. "Putting the paedophilic experience into language - language that is necessarily an enemy - is my headache as a writer", he wrote to René Schérer (in the collection *Un homme parle*, published by Editions Bleues). And also: "It's not up to 'special' authors to decipher our bodies, it's up to literature as a whole". Willing to reach an audience, won't he try to make himself heard by subverting legal rhetoric using the coordinates of this language in *L'île atlantique* or parodying himself in this extraordinary *Anneau d'argent à l'oreille*? Yes, a headache for critics too, trying to find a way to talk about him today, a man who, it cannot be stressed enough, hated paedophiles and all forms of identity and ghettoisation. In the Preface to Hocquenghem's *L'après-mai des Faunes* in

1974, Deleuze underlined the importance of Tony Duvert: "It is from the depths of a new style that homosexuality today produces statements that are not, and should not be, about homosexuality itself". Does writing that attempts to express the "paedophilic experience", that hates paedophiles, teach something of a "childish eroticism", a counterpoint to a mythologised "childhood" that doesn't exist, and to poetic writing at the same time? This is what might interest psychoanalysis, but on a crest where it is also confronted with having to say "what remains of childhood" (title of a recent book by Colette Soler).

And now, a few years after the seventies, during the lifetime of In 1994-95, someone tried to write about Duvert. And at university!

La tesi di laurea de Pasqualina Cirillo.

On Wikipedia, at the end of the bibliography on Duvert, I came across this reference: *Tony Duvert: Journal d'un innocent (Quand la pédophilie entre en littérature)*, Pasqualina Cirillo, Master's thesis (*laurea*) in French language and literature. Year 1994-95, Oriental University Institute, Naples, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy.

I was curious about this thesis, written in Italian, and its title, but I couldn't download it. I turned it around, asked some Italian friends, and finally, through the intermediary of Mayette Viltard, Jean-Hervé Paquot, whom I thank, gave it to me on my computer. Curiously, on this copy of the thesis, the parenthesis containing the word paedophilia has disappeared! How did it get there? So, I ask you, is there anyone in French universities who gave a master's degree in literature on Tony Duvert in the 1990s? This thesis was written in 1994-95. Tony Duvert is not dead, and the candidate suggests that he will write again, indeed she expects him to. Since he writes every 7 years, then... What could have gone through the mind of this student of modern foreign languages and literature from Naples to choose to defend a *tesi di laurea* (which corresponds roughly to our old master's degree, the end of the second cycle of university studies) on Tony Duvert, a student possibly born in the 1970s?

"Trouble led to this?"

Subversive fiction... Duvert says that it was "hard work" and that "trouble led to it".

Duvert is certainly not translated into Italian. All the quotations are in French, is this a constraint of the exercise? In any case, the *tesi* can only be received in Italy by readers who read French! It remains a 'foreign language' for its reader,

in literature, therefore, and echoes *Interdit de séjour* and this difficulty of inhabiting language. Still, reading this *tesi*, I had the impression that Pasqualina Cirillo was very touched by Tony Duvert.

Her approach to his writing places him in a modern context (post modernism). She will bring into play the categories of literary analysis through a minimum of structural analysis of the narratives, which avoids an approach based exclusively on meaning. But we shall see that the translation of symbols and the psychologisation of the Duvert character will not be avoided. I will try to give the broad outlines of this work, quoting Pasqualina Cirillo's translation in indirect discourse, translating almost everything when it comes to the critical approach to *Diary of an Innocent*, the centrepiece of his work, and putting in brackets throughout the sentences, when I can't help it, the notes of *traduttore traditore*, adding my own quotations or associations. I will do this as soon as I present the first part of the *tesi* and the following ones. It has left enough open, a side road to talk about Tony Duvert!

A crucial translation issue here is the vocabulary relating to childhood. (My references are to the Garzanti dictionary). Childhood! In Italian: *infanzia*, but when it comes to 'child', the generic gender-neutral term would be *bambino* or *bimbo*, but the 'o' ending is masculine! In any case, it's a "masculine child"! A "woman-child" would be *una donna bambina*, "to make a child" would be *bamboleggiare*, a "childish child" *una bambinata*, *una puerilita*, (a doll *una bambola*). When we move on to the register of the childish, the dictionary gives *infantile* or *puerile*, and *infantile* (med.), for "infantile" in French. Childish and infantile would therefore be homonyms in Italian, and would create false friends in translations! (Important for the Pasolini translation!) L'enfant in the sense of "my child" is *figlio*. To have a boy and a girl: *un bambino e una bambina*. *Ragazzo* is the boy and the young man, but it's also the youngster, the guy, the kid, the lover, the son. The feminine *ragazza*, the young girl, is also (fam) "the girl". In Italian, the endings added to the word specify an augmentative, diminutive or pejorative meaning, transforming the noun into an adjective or verb. There is also the term *giovane* for "the young" or "youth" and *giovanile* for "juvenile". *Fanciulla* and *fanciullo* for "little girl" and "little boy". *Fanciullezza*: childhood, *fanciullesco*: childish, childish, *fanciullaggine*: childishness...

Writer of an era

Pasqualina Cirillo resituates Duvert as a writer of an era, there is no fiction that is immediately universal. Her bibliography includes Lyotard's *La condition*

postmoderne, a book such as *Les jeunes auteurs de Minuit* by Ammouche-Kremers (is this where she discovered Tony Duvert?), or at

Maurice Nadeau *Le roman français depuis la guerre*, which every literature student in France read in the 1970s?) There are also encyclopaedias of French literature, many authors I don't know who have dealt with theories of narrative, and the indispensable Lukacs (on the interaction between language and social structure, a reference for Pasolini), Genette and Todorov. She doesn't overuse theoretical quotations, so we'll see what she uses. There are also works on psychoanalysis and psychology. She points out that there are none on "paedophilia" (since then, there have been...).

Her references range from a text by Freud, *Sexualita e vita amorosa*, (Roma, Newton 1989), to Adler, *Psychologie de l'homosexualité*, (Roma, Newton, 1972), Jung, *l'archetipo délia madré* (Torino 1995)... and Laplanche and Pontalis, *Enciclopedia della psicoanalisi*, (Roma Laterza 1987). She did not meet *Lacan in Italy*, but Lacan was not a reference point in Italy and it was easy to find Jungian analysts. It is certainly on the basis of the allusion to destruction and the death narrative that we find cited the books by Georges Bataille, *l'erotismo*, (Mondadori, 1969) and Edgar Morin, *L'homme et la mort*, (Paris, Seuil, 1970) (Duvert can be taken as not so far removed from Bataille, when it comes to tearing apart the common fiction and tackling a form of writing in which the impulse emerges). There is nothing about Pasolini, (French literature obliges?) but Pasolini will be mentioned in passing, once cited among "the great transgressives", Duvert being in their lineage, and perhaps his existence enabled this Italian university department to open up to Duvert's work? Pasolini was not called a paedophile in the Casarsa trial on suspicion of "indecent assault". I don't know the laws and their variations concerning the sexuality of minors, nor the state of Italian society with regard to paedophilia. Both at that time and when this *tesi* was written, the Dutroux and Outreau trials had not yet taken place.

With regard to Pasqualina Cirillo's reflections, it should be noted that Duvert, for her, is one of the writers of the post-war period and, as an unclassifiable figure, she places him among the excluded and rebellious, reacting to the wrong done to them and suffering their fate as de facto marginalised homosexuals. In the background are the AIDS years, the years of reaction to the revolutionary process of the 1960s and 70s (is this, among other things, the thread of his concern?).

A self-referential work

With a number of differentiations drawn from the analysis of the narrative that serve it well

The most interesting part is where she quotes him extensively. The most interesting part is the one in which she quotes him extensively. With Duvert's texts to back it up, she turns it into a self-referential work. In the end, the not enough and the too much said, Duvert's omnipresent I and his absence of a biographer and biographical testimonies, seem to prevent the reduction to the frequent psychologisation which would have it that it is indeed the author who is moicallly in his works that would express him. This shows that the literary Duvert has pulled off quite a trick in the aesthetics of his disappearance! He has organised an I who can always say I in literary writing without anyone having to go and check and say that's what it is. Alone in writing his story. Can we say that he constituted reading as not finding him, or at least not finding him for real, that's something! Pretending to be real is what children do. To write about sexuality would be to write about oneself and not about the ego; shamelessness and obscenity would be elsewhere than in writing when it reaches the written word (cf. what Duvert says about this in his essay "L'écriture introuvable")!

Note to the reader of *Diary of an Innocent*: "Those who, by some infantile (!) reason, only perceive transgression, treat pornography as puritanical, excited or censorious. Let us instead be sensitive to its object - faces, bodies, sexes - and the transgression is a preliminary time that is worth nothing in itself: the pleasure is not in breaking the ban but in inhabiting the territory it protected and which is the most populated there is.

But let's get back to the *tesi di laurea*. In the preface, a sentence by Stendhal, the origin of which Pasqualina Cirillo doesn't note (*Travels in Italy?*) and which I have to translate from Italian: "The novel is a mirror to be walked through. A road that teaches (*maestra*): sometimes it reflects the blue of the sky, sometimes the grey of the puddles". The novel is a mirror held up to reality, the blue of the Bataillian sky... Note that this is not a mirror held up to the author!

France and its intellectuals at the end of the 20th century.

In the first part of her thesis, the 'candidate' paints a picture of France and its intellectuals at the end of the twentieth century^e. To sum up: a crisis of values, doubts about rationality and the progress of science. Widespread scepticism, the idea that art is a reflection of the social, economic and political state. Two trends: nihilism and critical analysis. In France, economic recovery

and the 1960s, the beginning of minority demands, and critical artists analysed the symptoms of society.

Negative conception of humanity. The novel becomes the privileged place for the expression of violence. An attraction to the destruction of the living and the decaying. A quest has emerged to express these new cultural conditions through formal innovations, postmodernism and neo-avant garde, a contemporary that rejects modernity in terms, a poetic revolution in which each writer seeks to invent his or her own language.

The characteristic feature is the fragmentation of language. But Pasqualina Cirillo doesn't quote J. Kristeva's *La révolution du langage poétique*, she quotes the names of Irigaray and "Witting" (misspelled, and her teachers don't correct her, nothing in the bibliography). This interest in language led the critic to the semiological study of the individual's relationship with art and life. Eco's name is mentioned. The question of innovation and conditioning by implicit cultural codes is raised. The development of mass culture and the media modifying the relationship with language, the cultural industry, the commodification of works, the consumer society, the production of knowledge as a market value, the book as a product producing its readership... The candidate will situate artistic creation within the anthropological broad outlines she outlines, referring to authors such as Lyotard. The law of profit and massification, the standardisation of values. Perhaps Duvert's extraordinary critical essay 'Lecture introuvable' was not available or unknown to her? Yet it sheds light on what can be said about the reception of her work.

I'm continuing my reading of the fin de siècle she depicts: within this process of standardisation, individual aspirations and innovations risk being recuperated (she doesn't quite put it like that, I'm summarising) as stylistic novelties or as just another commodity. The process of receiving works, and the conditioning of publishing by the market. The writer is not resigned to this and is in search of a word without language (subversion taken from the Saussurian differentiation between language in its conventional use and the word that is based on it). She then turns to the French production of the 'new novel' with Robbe-Grillet, Butor, Sarraute (re-read Sarraute's *Enfance*, in this context of reading Duvert!), Simon, authors published by Minuit. She recalls the publication in 1950 of Sarraute's *L'ère du soupçon* as a Manifesto text: the character, the story, the third person, literature does not hand out messages to readers but the reader participates in the experience of writing, the action is not narrated, chronology is not respected, dream and reality intermingle.

superimpose, the primacy of the object over the character. Beckett, then (the thesis was not read closely as regards the spelling of names!) Beckett, whose innovation in the theatrical field she cites. She notes the absence of a literary movement as such from the 1980s onwards; by and large, writers are minimalists. She leaves Duvert out of the 'new novel' genre, but what's more embarrassing is that she cites him along with Echenoz and Chevillard (because of that book on young authors by Minuit, I suppose?).

However, to approach this new form of writing, she draws on the theories of the novel and analyses of narrative by Barthes, Todorov and Greimas (in which it is asserted that criticism is consubstantial with its object). This enables him to differentiate new writing, with the ways in which narrative is subverted, from the traditional conventions of the novel. The traditional narrative is a succession of statements whose temporal dimension at the same time ensures a causal understanding of behaviour, whereas the new writing makes no cause-effect link, the beginning and end are not summaries of the work, they do not give it coherence, there is no universe. Todorov differentiates between history - events that are presupposed to have taken place - and discourse: the narrative from the narrator's point of view and its reception by the reader, with time no longer the condition that guarantees succession and the way in which the action is brought to a conclusion, but the subject of the novel itself. And to quote Butor in his works and those of Proust and Virginia Woolf. There are three distinct times: the time of the story, the time of events, the time of writing and the time of reading. Whereas the classic novel has a series of narrative devices, the minimalist novel fragments the narrative and there is no longer any explanatory conclusion, the stories interweave (I'm thinking of Duvert in "*Le Libéra* "A propos du livre de R. Pinget"): "We can't stop at this idea of a narrator whose personality would explain the nature of the *Libéra's* preoccupations... a fiction that borrows the 'I' to constitute itself... as a technique of engendering fiction... the plot is subjected to the movement of writing rather than being its driving force... attractions by proximity...". This would be a way of talking about Duvert's early books, too). What she emphasises in these minimalists is their fragmentation into small units separated by blanks. Syntactic dismantling, incomplete sentences, punctuation that no longer makes it possible to distinguish between narrator and characters, direct from indirect style, free indirect (not forgetting Pasolini, who was one of its theorists!). We can no longer make the Aristotelian distinction between mimesis: actors acting before an audience and diegesis: there is the intermediary of a narrator. Punctuation makes it impossible to identify the narrative voice.

Another point of differentiation is his choice of themes: cruel and violent

life, and the scandalous: drugs, prostitution, madness, AIDS, homosexuality, paedophilia. She situates Duvert among these new writers, those of the 1980s, Koltès, Guibert, Collard, in the wake of the great transgressives (see above the question of transgression and Foucault's homage to Bataille, which shifts the question of the forbidden), Gide, Genet, Pasolini. These themes, most often denied until then, will immerse the reader in this world of pain and suffering. The reader will receive the *rabbia* (she uses Pasolini's essential word) of these authors who are fighting the bourgeois world.

Life and works of Tony Duvert

The second part of the thesis is entitled "Life and works of Tony Duvert". From Tony Duvert's date of birth, 1945, and his place of birth, a small commune in Seine et Oise with a population of 1,243, "mediocrity and simplicity", it deduces all the sufferings of the post-war period, with its self-centred survivors - Duvert himself excluded from this small community by his sensitivity. In *Journal d'un innocent (Diary of an Innocent Man)*, Duvert writes: "We applied the pre-war rules to a time that was the beginning of today".

A biographer's problem

It's interesting to see how she deals with the question of biography, since autobiographical statements can't have an 'objective' value and there's nothing official about them (*trapelato*). So she recounts, adding "certainly that..." and so on. So she tells the story of how, at the age of 15, she was confronted by Tony Duvert and the neuropsychiatrist M. Eck, "public enemy No. 1 of French gays", "the inspiration for the Minguet amendment which declared us a social scourge", in order to remove "the canker of diversity" from her... and then her suicide (she quotes this passage from *L'enfant au masculin* in full in a footnote).

Jérôme Lindon's *Récidive*, published by Minuit in 1967, was "official": "The Church had recently lifted its veto, the Index", the years 68, the books that followed in 1969, *Portrait d'homme couteau*, *Interdit de séjour*, (but there is no hint of their being rewritten), 1970 *Le voyageur?* She recounts the hostile wall of silence Duvert imposed from the outset on curious onlookers, the problems with the courts over the assassination attempt, etc.

to modesty... Today," she writes, "Duvert lives withdrawn like an ancient misanthrope, resistant to all interviews and unapproachable. A choice of solitude, in the eternal present of feelings and in maintaining a position of transgression, renouncing conviviality and all connivance. But, she adds,

perhaps in fleeing from his roots and his natural habitat, he also fled from himself. "Our Duvert," she says. She draws on his statements, again taken from the long quotation from *L'enfant au masculin* :

These opinions of parents in 1978 seem to me to be very similar to those that prevailed when I was a minor. My father used to say: "If I had a homosexual son, I'd kill him"; my mother, who was gentler or more thrifty, thought it was better to kill the homosexuality but keep the child... The advantage of this treatment was that it left the awkward question entirely to the doctor: my parents didn't get involved any more, and we never spoke about it again. The psycon acted as a buffer between me and my parents: what a relief.

They brought him a runaway kid, a long-time fag, too sensual, too lively, too mature, whose only illnesses were that he couldn't stand his family and that he was in love to the teeth [...].

His therapy:

Spitting in the face, vicious humiliation, Jesuit tampering. [...] At least here was a man who knew how to enjoy minors without touching them [...] After two months of this torturous treatment, I ran away for a long time and committed suicide. My life was more or less saved [...].

This dazzling art of depressing, unbalancing and pushing a kid to his death because he's an intractable, irreducible faggot [...] One-eyed moralists, I was that minor and I suffered that respect. I'll recognise you, rapists, in whatever disguise you take: that voice is never forgotten.

Pasqualina Cirillo's work has the enormous merit of having chosen some extremely hard-hitting quotes, and there is something of a "Duvert par lui-même" about her commentary on *The Diary of an Innocent Man*.

One wonders what voice came to replace Eck's unforgettable voice, or to emerge from what void? Pasqualina Cirillo has assumed that Tony Duvert had an existential void, and she will later hypothesise that Dr Eck is a substitute for Tony Duvert.

This is the place in the *tesi* where Pasqualina Cirillo begins to say "according to me". This is the point in the *tesi* where Pasqualina Cirillo begins to say "according to me". The critic comes out of his reserve and, abandoning a pseudo-objectivity, tells his fiction. The family that imprisons rather than connects, roots in the sense of family, primordial, originary, Duvert's struggle against this and that in himself, and his division between his immanentism, his

materialism and his fragility, his idealism and his lack of love... 1973, the Prix Médicis, for *Paysage de fantaisie*. "Of his brief stay in Rome, there will be practically no trace either in him or in his writings", she confuses the Prix Médicis with residence at the Villa Médicis; she wants it to be part of a trip to Italy!

The fiction of Pasqualina

This whole section is in the first person, and Pasqualina Cirillo calls herself an "attentive reader", one might say "concerned"! She gives her interpretation: in his writing, through his quest for children, Duvert is looking for the tender child he was and was never able to live fully, and these loves are this 'refused' love and these tendernesses he never received and which created these abysses that only the fleeting pleasures of stolen orgasms tried to fill. In all these literary descriptions of paedophilic sexual acts, she can only read a way of unwinding a game that never really began and is still suffering, and that, as if in a dream, Duvert-the-man, by adapting himself to a child, whoever he may be, gives his approval (his right to exist?) to Duvert-the-child. And like a child, Duvert comes close to love, to the sexual act, without the violence that distinguishes the heterosexual relationship in opposition, but with the tenderness and tortuous passion that defends and unites children playing with each other and in their united caresses, playing pranks together and holding hands to defend themselves from adults and their world. Like every child, Duvert is not deliberately immoral, he has no preformed and oriented morality, and follows only his primordial instinctuality, certainly castrated by a knowing mother, and which he turns towards the most fragile, each constituting a fragment of a mirror in which he could reflect himself. A Duvert, according to her, an "attentive reader", whom she cannot imagine claiming to have an Oedipus complex and, with violent force and no modesty, having a relationship with a woman. This woman, denied and passed over in silence, is all the more dominant and asserted throughout his life and work, and with whom, at forty years of age, he has never had a balanced relationship. She is the archetypal mother. The one you carry inside you, the one you can't seem to shake off.

and that, if we think we've fought it, it's the victory of death, of thanatos, because the mother is the repository of Eros (a way of talking about the Thing!)..

The disintegration that has taken over the world

1974: *Le bon sexe illustré*, Duvert's first published essay, a Duvert who

confronts society. She refers at length, in notes, to the context that has shaken up the old institutions: 21 July 1969, we walked on the moon; note on the year 68; note on the Red Brigades, on the rise of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and terrorism. 1976: *Diary of an Innocent*. 1978: *Quand mourut Jonathan*, then *District* and *Les petits métiers* published by Fata Morgana, 1979: *L'île atlantique*, and *L'enfant au masculin*, a second essay, more incisive than the first. 1982: *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille*, and after a 7-year silence, *l'Abécédaire malveillant*.

She talks about Hervé Guibert, who died of Aids in 1991, and his books that disturbed the dominant bourgeois culture, the first writer to break the omerta on Aids, his way of talking about himself in fiction from which, real or symbolic connotations, we can only deduce what has marked him... A writer confronted with a world that rejects diversity, where it is only accepted under a label. But Duvert is even more persecuted than Guibert, Collard or Koltès, writers inspired by an otherness that has always shaken power and taken the form of the infidel, the rebel, the revolutionary, the Negro, the homosexual, the poor. And this rebellion, intrinsic to each of us, which takes pleasure in transgression into account, distances us from others. A writing that tends towards death, that exalts it, and that dies at the same time as it is created, ends at its very source, which is not the fruit of an inspiration but the imperative need of an ancestral (primordial?) rejection. She reiterates the assertion that Duvert's writings are not immoral insofar as they combat accepted morality, but bear witness to the disintegration that has invaded the world and those who celebrated it, the writers.

Book after book

From there, Pasqualina Cirillo takes us chronologically through Duvert's writing, book by book.

*1967: Recidive. It would appear from the quotes that she reads *Récidive**

in its 1967 version. An embryo of all Duvert's themes. But the polemical tone would increase from work to work. A continuous, spasmodic, repetitive journey through the intertwining of a he and an I, a he who moves from one train to another, interspersed with the reflections of an I. One narrator in the time in which the story is being told and another in another time. A doubling, assuming that one is in the time of the writing, the writer (not Duvert himself!). Formal dichotomy, marker of the suffering denied in his treatment as a 'patient' of this shrink (he was subjected to a regime of truth!). Description to affirm, relive, self-analyse and free himself. A journey of many paths in search of "not necessarily

the real truth, but what I prefer to hold as true". The only link to life are primordial needs such as sex, which allows us to feel alive. "Lying on a bench in a waiting room, in the nocturnal sunshine of a railway station, I'll be at home. A lost world, with no future and no asylum" "and when I travel, I won't be an ordinary passenger: my real destination is the train itself". But this narrative cannot be reduced to some kind of factual reality.

1969: Portrait d'homme couteau and Interdit de séjour. From her quotes "the rape and murder of a little girl", it is clear that she has read the first version. What characterises these two novels is the transformation of the notion of time in the novel, with the present used as both yesterday's present and today's present, and the past as both yesterday's past and today's present. Objects and beings bear signs of the passing of time, of decay. Writing in the service of an ethic of 'evil'. In *Interdit de séjour*, the first and third person are interchanged. Themes of the individual and the mass.

1970: Le Voyageur, which *Le Monde* of 5 February 1971 described as follows: "This book will undoubtedly come across as indecent, deliberately shocking in its vocabulary, provocative even in its immorality. A train journey, the duration of which we do not understand, perhaps that of a lifetime, images between reality and dream, a journey into the world of adults as perceived by a "miscellaneous": "The condition of traveller, the goals that served as an alibi for a mysterious wandering, in pure loss, in free fall, my absence from myself, the pale vigour of this perpetual movement". In search of a place where he would be accepted, where he would be free to express his desires, where he would loosen the noose.

1973: Fantasy Landscape. He was not afraid of scandal, the novel's uninterrupted obscenity. The title is borrowed from a painting by

by F. Guardi. A narrator has dreams about children, and the setting for these visions is an orphanage where sadistic violence and sexual acts are carried out. Visions, moreover, of a homosexual paedophile. A narrative devoid of logic and unusually punctuated. Duvert is in another mode of provocation, using images. Necrophilia, too. "I'm leaving, I have no goal, the countryside, I'll die there without a witness, I've never seen a corpse, a funeral with a light wooden coffin on a simple cart with dusty, moth-eaten black sides". The polemic here is based on the images of these sexual games between children in particular, "childish games in the old May sun", with little reference to adults through the "customers" and their violence.

1974: *Le bon sexe illustré*. This was Duvert's first essay, published at the time of his departure for Marrakech. It sets out his positions on sex. He deconstructed a sex education manual, *the Encyclopédie Hachette*, which was seen as progressive and liberal, a benevolent pedagogy. Analysis of the "sexual order" and how it is transmitted to children and adolescents. "The book has a very difficult role to play: it reveals the "existence of sexual relations" to human beings who have no right to them. She quotes and comments extensively. "Children are told repeatedly that desire means procreation, that impuberty means impotence, and that sexual practice absolutely requires the possession of "operational" genital organs, enabling mating with an adult and fertilisation". Bodies and minds are controlled "according to rules and prohibitions that vary from one society or era to another, but are always aimed at the same end: 'capitalising on the body' and exploiting it". Ideology defines what individuals we should be, what objects our conscious mind is entitled to, what relationship we should have with others, what ideal we should pursue, what feelings we should cultivate, what values we should respect: "you have to respect order for order to respect you". And it is against this order that Duvert stands up (an exercise in deconstruction in the tradition of the work of Foucault, Schérer and Deleuze, whom she never quotes).

1976: *Journal d'un innocent*. She devoted the whole of chapter 3 to a critical analysis of the novel. In this novel, she says, the theoretical ideas expressed in the essay find their proper realisation through the actions and loves of a series of young boys of different ages who, in the end, are no longer objects but subjects, aware of their actions and their sexuality. The diary is a significant moment in Duvert's work because the story and its 'narrative' are interwoven with a 'fiction' that is not merely descriptive but discursive and ideological, in which the author expresses his ideas about sex,

the various episodes give him the opportunity to attack morality and sex education, while at the same time demonstrating how sexual freedom can be achieved not only between adolescents but also concerns so-called "minors". The author no longer confines himself to images of these relationships, but goes on to make long, polemical digressions about "giovanile" sexuality. This is an approach that will be repeated, with the exception of *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille*.

1978: *Quand mourut Jonathan* (Minuit) and *District* and *Les petits métiers* (Fata Morgana). In *District*, the titles anticipate the place where the case or object will take place. The themes are the same, but disenchantment seems to prevail. With a few strokes, we can see what needs to be emphasised, in a less

vulgar but even more disturbing way, with language that suits children (the bookshop, the toy shop). The criticism is subtle. Children can just as easily embody the vices, cruelty and baseness of adults (Duvert doesn't like children! as we say "love children"!) Duvert leaves children with the only thing that is not denied to childhood: fantasy.

Small jobs: exaggerated situations, short sentences. Invention of occupations to accuse adults. Cruel humour and paradoxical situations. She particularly quotes "Le peintre en rêve". "The painter was painting this portrait of the desire we had for ourselves" "what he would have chosen to be if he could".

When Jonathan, a retired painter from Paris, *died,* his love affair with Serge, an 8-year-old child, began. Duvert spends less time on caresses, and pleasure is assumed in a natural way. Jonathan rediscovers his childhood. It's the child who decides and chooses the type of relationship. More concise observations and criticisms. "You can fight against men, just men: you can't fight against characters, against roles, because there's a society behind them". "How could I tell him that it was a crime, which would be proved by hiring doctors to remove his buttocks: and that their pleasures would earn Jonathan ten years in prison, and Serge, avalanches of psychotherapy and torture with his bare hands? If you want to avoid suffering, "take your place among the dogs and bark in their tone. Otherwise you're too weak and too alone". The accusations here are directly theorised by the characters. Love here is dominated by Thanatos, love is free, if it is conditioned it is distorted.

1979: L'île atlantique (The Atlantic Island), a realistic description of a gang of children at war with adults, a mercilessly realistic description of adults who all rival each other in their perversity towards children. Duvert is an eternal child. Elle

quotes Duvert's unbridled ferocity. Caricature. No precise descriptions of sexual relations, but if they are sketched out, they are present as spontaneous and innocent. Solidarity between friends, relationships with parents, relationships between parents.

1979: L'enfant au masculin, second essay. In her opinion, this is the work that contains autobiographical details and annotations by the author, "humble and fragile modest things, raw opinions". The power of the dominant sexual culture, which recognises only heterosexuals, manageable and identifiable in their pre-ordained roles. Questioning the role of parents. Sexual freedom for minors, respect for children's choices, denunciation of parental behaviour,

criticism of tolerance of homosexuals as sick or perverted. The table of contents is explicit: "childish sexuality" "bad homophiles" "the homosexual child" "heterocrat charity". In the phrase "to accept, and sometimes love, this monster that one has not chosen: here is a virtue without example" she reads all of Duvert's bitterness and his experiences. "My mother, who was gentler or more thrifty, thought it better to kill the homosexuality but keep the child. His ruthless logic, the fruit of suffering, analyses the errors of the unwritten precision of heterosexual education. "The aim of sexual liberation is not that everyone should make love or be able to make love with everyone else, but that the State, its structures and its laws should forbid any scrutiny of private lives, regardless of age, sex or tastes. "I believe that no psychotherapist should be ethically entitled to accept a minor entrusted to them by adults for anti-homosexual treatment". She notes the humorous style and funny situations.

1982: Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille. Change of literary genre. A crime novel. An 8-year-old child and his family. The unravelling of the investigation makes up the novel. The denouement serves to endorse the thesis that children have a capacity for choice and action, yet the child is exonerated as incapable, even if he speaks. Little Marc, nephew of the murdered psychotherapist and linked to the archbishop, is homosexual. No description of sexual acts. All the characters have dual identities. The variety of names creates different situations. Cross-dressing.

1989: Abécédaire malveillant, after seven years of silence. Collection

of aphorisms and brief reflections; she notes that he rages against the church, teachers, the dominant culture and parental absolutism. "We love our parents for want of anything better, like Robinson Crusoe loves the goats on his desert island. But these coquettes pretend to be worthy of them and to have, in short, only their due". Anti-preface and afterword. To take human behaviour as simple animal strategies, techniques for survival, venting and pleasure. She suggests that the malevolence of this primer is due to the author's survival instinct. Does he now write every seven years? She calculates that since 1989, no other writings have appeared, so perhaps in the seventh year, who knows! (The year is 1995).

Critical analysis of Diary of an Innocent Man

The third part of the thesis is devoted more specifically to a critical analysis of *Diary of an Innocent*, published in 1976, as a 'narrative' rather than a 'novel'.

(Looking up the Italian word for "innocent", I found "gli innocenti" in the

Garzanti dictionary, meaning "foundlings": children without parents! But there's also a "massacre" version...)

"Story" and not "Novel".

*Tesi differentiates between "novel" and "narrative" in that the latter "is based on events that only become so when they are narrated, this representation being the interpretation of a witnessing narrator who always completes his fragmentary perception of an event". The novel, a literary work, blends reality and imagination and, in its traditional form, seeks to arouse interest by recounting the fate of a hero, the plot unfolding between several defined characters and on a moral or metaphysical substratum. As far as *Le Journal d'un innocent* is concerned, she makes a quick allusion to the exotic imagination (although this would be Segalen's counter-exoticism rather than Pierre Loti's, in my opinion.*

There was also Gide's, and Pasolini's social, cultural, ethnological and temporal elsewhere), as something that allows us to detach ourselves from a restive reality (I don't think it's a question of detachment in this case). The descriptions (she quotes some very beautiful passages), their serenity, contrast with the violent plurality of the loves. The importance of the multiple characterisations of the sun leads her to make the sun a symbol of the male sex and of authority, a father figure (we might prefer to use this 'symbol' in the textual treatment given to it in

Bataille...) and she reads in it, in Duvert (Duvert confused here with the narrator), a desire for fatherhood. "Buying this medicine made me feel like a father for a moment, because they asked me how old the child was: I was sad to admit that it was for me alone" comes as confirmation. The serene sky serves as a mediator between the sun, whose presence upsets, as an authority, and the "I" (She recalls: the father as the main agent of torment, cf. *Le bon sexe illustré*). The omniscient perception of the narrator, who also enjoys the smells. He is an open window on the world (I would stress the importance of windows in Duvert's work, cf. *Interdit de séjour*). She notes that the window is everywhere in the descriptions, an assignment to receptivity, which we can presumably attribute to Duvert's incessant thirst for knowledge and his search for ever-new impulses and stimuli. (Lacan will speak of the window as the frame of the phantasm when he deals with the gaze as object *a* in the scopic drive, its characteristic of a bordered hole). She underlines the descriptions with quotations, a few lines chosen for their rhythm and musicality that envelop the entire narrative.

"Entering the night" would refer, on the one hand, to the gestation of becoming and, on the other, to the entry into the indeterminate, nightmares and monsters, the imaginary of the unconscious - the fermentation of day and life that Duvert consumes without being able to give it, the struggle between spiritual and material forces. The "I" in conflict, between social rules and instincts, desires, pleasures, sexuality. The fragmented "I" is the shadow of the light, inside and out, moving with the descriptions of places and opening up a space where reality is that of an experience brought to life by the narrative (cf. the neighbourhood attractions that Duvert talks about in *Libéra*). But this "I" is also a disappointed Parisian, and juxtaposes two realities. "Marginalised and accused, scorned and mocked, suffocated by his own world, he will seek to fulfil his aspirations here: he will love the serenity and freedom of this new environment, the elasticity of customs, the ease of relationships". The way he looks and describes reveals the necessity and desires of his homosexuality, and the insistence of the descriptions of the intersecting streets shows the insistence of the search for his being, for the roads to follow (in short, no prior representation of a self that would express itself). (I'll add a quote here: "I don't express what I see (that would change what I'm shown), so people think I'm blind: whereas it's the passion of seeing that makes me so neutral").

(The form of writing is correlative). No chronology of "facts" or narrative progression, just a rapid succession of anecdotes from one encounter to the next. Creation of a whirlwind (and no psychological plot). Mixed tenses: present tense of the past anecdote, present tense of the writing in progress.

It's the past, the past of "newspaper" meetings and the past of Parisian memories. A present tense, on the other hand, that allows us to generalise: "In France, social life is so hideous that I don't regret staying away or being kept away" - or that serves to universalise the principles of heterosexual repression. Omission of the time in which the writing, narration and story take place (note the differences). "It's been almost a year since I started this book". (I think it's very interesting that Duvert dates the book according to the narrator's handwriting and not according to an implicit "it happened on such-and-such a date"! neither on the supposed date of the narration, nor on the author's own writing time). Pasqualina Cirillo raises the question of the narrator as protagonist of the diary, without making it Duvert's diary in any obvious way. (The discrepancy can be maintained. Cf. when a narrative is transformed into the code of judicial narration). This "I" remains foreign, foreign in its human situation, foreign to the place, to the environment, strange in relation to the dominant heterosexual normality. No physical features, no name, just the most minute details of his occasional relationships. (No introspection).

A diary helps to explain the doubts and evolution of a conscience on a daily basis, and in this case the daily basis is love, but not an abstraction of love. And it is only by carefully decoding these few elements that Pasqualina Cirillo evokes a few traits of Duvert's psychology (always a moment of deduction and inference!). "A world without ideals, without a future, without love, but where pleasure is consumed (consumed?) alone.

The characters

More specifically, she will look at Duvert's use of characters, where unlike the traditional novel, where the action is underpinned by the way in which the characters enter into conflict, form alliances, etc., the narrator character reveals himself through contact with the others and also makes them reveal themselves. He is the source of the dynamic, the "I who brings together the centrifugal movements" (*Le Libéra*), like a kind of film director, focusing successively on this or that character and on this or that image. (I'll add the following quotation here: "The one I call Francesco was therefore, despite our affair, the most imaginary of the boys I'm talking about. I created him for myself with what he simulated for me. Nothing but an illusion, to which I dedicate this book"). (cf. R. Schérer

Une érotique puérile). In this book, the antagonistic force is French society, the violence of bourgeois normality, which crushes the weakest and the singular: "I generally stayed away from homosexuals, who seemed timid, hunted down, possessive and devious".

It attempts to apply the categories of structural analysis of narrative (actant, beneficiaries, adjuvant, opponent), the addressees and adjuvant here being the children, the *ragazzi* (And the Italian here leads me effortlessly to Pasolini's *Ragazzi di vita* of the Roman areas after having been these *ragazzi* of Friuli, then those of the Third World. Reproaches of exoticism, paternalism and exploitation of the poor will be levelled at Pasolini). (I would add the following quotation, so typical of Pasolini: "An archaic beauty, their language preserves the trace of the times when French was a living language, spoken in the flesh", the superiority of images in deciphering bodies and the weakness of literary pornography - "a few suggestions, a few equivalences, a nothing that is transmitted, drowned in the stammerings of a language armed against the flesh and which cannot reach it"). These *ragazzi* embody the theorisations of "I", they are given more and more space; beyond their beauty and the matter but of itself and consumption. It's man himself in his materiality, in his bambino brilliance, who carries within him the potentialities of adulthood, which are

expressed there to the full. They are desirous (*volitivi*) with their necessities, their instinctive and primordial needs, they are delirious, initiated into sexual practices and there would be there (I'm putting this in the conditional) a form of atavism and immutability of practices as the only immutable practices of human relations, and considered as a universally primordial means of knowledge (of human relations taken at an original level, a form of universal heredity at the human level, and this is where the reading of an instinctual form with regard to bambina sexuality raises a question; her way of interpreting it opens us up to this question). For Pasqualina Cirillo, Duvert's work seeks to highlight this bambina consciousness, which would be childlike or infantile or puerile, a whole programme of differentiation to be worked out!), actors (*agenti*), without taboos, like the character of Serge.

(Duvert's childhood, in my opinion, is not primordial or original, but perhaps an emergence of the impulse in writing or through writing, a way of giving body to that which has none, like Carlo Bene and his *burattini* or composite images, to the aftermath of the already lost, that inorganic, and at the same time active, which forces us to consider the impulse of life and death outside dualism) ("Blocks d'enfance", as Deleuze puts it, "Blocks of childhood", "Blocks of childhood").

Would "childhood memory" be an appropriate term for this kind of writing?) "What helps me go back to childhood is that everything I like, do and will continue to do I chose from the start. My first literary graffiti (which wasn't obscene) dates back to when I was 7 [...] I was very secretive and I was ashamed of what people saw. As far as boys are concerned, my first ass-fucking was when I was nine or ten. I was first raped by a boy at least a year younger than me". (You could add: "I slide inside myself like a river that you can go down or up, I find myself and agree with myself everywhere").

The most immediate means of communication is sexual curiosity, and it is this that leads Duvert, introverted and from a difficult family (Pasqualina Cirillo would say: castrated, watched over and without love) to become an accomplice to his companions in transgression and silence (*omerta*) towards repressive adults, and these fleeting experiences in a child will become for Duvert the essence of his existence, having nothing else to fall back on. The pivot of his attention would be the other, refracted (and not reflected, my emphasis), inciting, (companion of marginality). The game becomes a habit and habit becomes law, she tells us, and that's how Duvert becomes homosexual, but his

desire for tenderness, perfection, his need for rejected love, for fatherhood, brings him closer to children. They are the untouchable symbols of a pyramidal, consumerist and greedy society, which sees in them its myth (but this is the first chapter of *Une érotique puérile*: "the child seized by the law!"), in contrast to the old outcasts it seeks to suppress. This is how Duvert displays his homosexual and paedophilic transgression, which will undermine the beliefs and myths of the bourgeois state, aware that this will lead to social death and private death through a lack of love for oneself and others.

There is no exoticism of a pure nature here, and each encounter will contain an element of unease and will be personalised as if by a prism by the different personalities of the children described. (Duvert wrote: "There was a cowardice, a fear of pain, in my need to link to real beings these fragments of existence that passed through me. It wasn't me, it wasn't them. These images can float around without ever being linked to anyone, to an external source, to some namable point in the world. And it is only because in my memory they are composed of one another that my narrative lends a name to each group of fragments, like three phalanges in a hunt", which refers to his text "La mémoire immédiate" of May 1977 and tends to render

the writing process).

Pasqualina Cirillo writes that these encounters are personalised like a prism. Each description contains a different trait of Duvert's personality. She will approach them one by one.

Francesco, who does not accept himself, drinks and tries to detach himself from reality, an alcohol that burns and regenerates, and that allows Duvert to talk about the place of money, the money that makes society more lenient towards those it usually excludes. "Homosexuality is an unbearable freedom in the misery in which it was born" (see Abdellah Taïa's recent film *L'armée du salut*). Children learn to lie and put on the masks expected of them. Francesco and his thousand roles to be less unhappy despite what he was. A fiction of the self. He is the one who feels the social conditioning and makes himself the object.

Pablo, the ten-year-old brother, is at first a voyeur, in his shamelessness and the innocent falseness of children, and then, conditioned by this voyeuristic experience, enters into an oedipal conflict. His family sells him, and in this he is a symbol of all those children sold, victims of hunger and offered up to consumerist sexual freedom, just as they were previously sold as labour.

Andrès, who acquires a dual nature to defend himself, dresses in the right image, and invents rapes to avoid admitting his inclinations "like many guilt-ridden homosexuals I've met in France". Andrès wanted boys, but it was neither innocent nor guilty, neither thoughtful nor provocative: he wanted to live and preserve what suited him. The laws of the group turned him into a "homosexual" "because they had to manufacture heterosexuality [...] The story of the rape that Andrès invents rightly rejects this "homosexuality" towards the outside, where it comes from. In reality, he suffered violence not from a pervert but from a normalising group, not from a man but from a word".

Pedro, "no fantasy, no embarrassment; but a sensuality that is a little clumsy, convinced, kind, massive and cold-blooded".

Diego, his story of "*ragazzo di vita*" (in Pasqualina Cirillo's text, at last!). The description of his shyness in contrast to his anatomy.

In the works of the second period, Duvert gave greater prominence to the children's actions, tastes and games. Duvert always gives their age. He highlights their young age and the way in which they act with full knowledge of the facts, a way of asserting the sexual freedom of minors. Andrès, Pablo, Francesco (*Diary of an Innocent*), Serge (*When Jonathan Died*), Julien (*The Atlantic Island*), Bernard (*Fantasy Landscape*) know what they want and how to get it; they are not objects but subjects aware of their choices.

The "Journal" form

Pasqualina Cirillo discusses the "diary" form. (In Italian, there is the differentiation *giornale*: daily newspaper, *giornale di bordo*: diary, *diario*: diary). The title "Diary" asserts an autobiographical writing style that is true or false in relation to the author (evocative of all the other literary "diaries", of a scoundrel, of a thief). True or false, it essentially gives rise to a creativity whose aim is not realistic but clearly postmodern. In its official form, the "diary" belongs to the everyday, specifying "travel journal, logbook", while the *diario*, while belonging to the everyday, connotes intimacy. It is the expression in writing of feelings, sensations and passions that have been experienced and that arise from the situations offered by everyday life, a manifestation of the inner world of emotions, whereas the "diary" formalises content and makes it public. Tony Duvert's choice of this term is important in that it demonstrates his explicit desire to make public a reality made up of homosexuality and paedophilia. The provocation is inherent in the work, which for the first time sees an 'I' confess to a sexuality that has always been apprehended as horrible

and monstrous. This 'I' is not talking about the emotions aroused by these relationships, but about sexual relationships and the real way in which they manifest themselves.

In literature, a diary usually has autobiographical content. However, from the very beginning, Tony Duvert's is not a day-to-day diary; there are no chronological notes. The events recounted by the homodiegetic narrator, in the time of his narrative, are not given as having been recorded on a daily basis, but take the form of memories, of what is remembered and what is relived mentally, which in this particular case has been transcribed. She notes that the easiest way for a narrator to be present in his story is to write a diary or memoir. Knowing the details, he can generalise and give his opinion like an omniscient author. A diary is an effort to translate one's inner life from day to day.

and does not know the future. Memoirs presuppose a reader and also a point of departure and arrival for one's own story. But in both cases, it is a question of looking back at the past, and whether it is a question of hours or years, the point of view can be changed.

This work by Tony Duvert is presented as a book in which the narrator talks about certain episodes in his life without any chronological progression. It marks the beginning of a new phase in Tony Duvert's literary output, as he moves towards more traditional prose. (Duvert gave an account of his successive transformations in an interview published in *Libération* in 1979). Pasqualina Cirillo reviews the writing of *Paysage de fantaisie*. She notes that the use of the first person is frequent in this phase, but alternates with the third person singular or plural (*Récidive*, *Interdit de séjour*), as if the author wanted to give full force to the singularity of an experience. The "Diary" is a work of transition, because it uses the first person but at the same time abandons formal research and adopts a more conventional style of writing (with punctuation). Subsequent books will have a heterodiegetic author, i.e. one who is absent from the story he or she is telling (it's funny how words change from homo- to heterodiegetic!). The peculiarity of this diary is that everything revolves around the question of infantile sexuality (*sessualita infantile*). (There is talk of "pagan sexuality", and here I quote Scherer in *L'érotique puérile*: "not a contribution to the study of children's sexuality but an untimely consideration of their passions"). "Francesco kept a diary [...] for his loves, he shared information: written in words, his encounters; written in signs, his pleasures. A cross if you fucked him, a circle if he fucked you". And the author-protagonist: "It's a pornographic book I'm writing, it only needs cocks" (self-reference,

productive narrator-author gap).

The digressions focus on education. The various stories are an opportunity to generalise about the physical and moral constraints imposed by society and the family, as will be found in his other books and essays (in particular *L'enfant au masculin*). While it is usual in memoirs for the past to be measured against the present, here the author persists in his point of view ("I am a singular pornographer"). Even if he insists on making a pornographic book, paradoxically it emanates a poetry of solitude, as she quotes: "I wanted to talk about birds but it's no longer the time [...] it's the winter of a world without a season" (I would rather note here a use of the imperfect tense and the past tense that seems an allusion to another time, that of writing). "A new flesh was organised...

to let themselves be ravaged by invaders, I would like nothing better than this destruction".

The narrative contains a lot of description but little dialogue. Accelerated reading time, in line with the emphasis on the incessant search for pleasure. The narrative does not describe the unfolding of an action as such, the dynamic does not belong to the characters (no psychological intrigue, no introspection either), it is about the action itself of living, looking, making love, at each moment of the narrative (and not to advance an explicit causality). Description drives the narrative forward, in this first phase of Duvert's literature. Direct speech will be more present in *Quand mourut Jonathan*, and *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille* will be the only novel in which dialogue predominates and is used to get to know the "characters" and move the pseudo-plot forward (with the self-mockery that will bring into play the whole of Duvert's displaced and trembling universe).

The theory of the novel distinguishes between: the vision with a single character at the centre of the narrative; the vision behind the character's back, with the author detaching himself from the character and apprehending his psychic life in a direct mode; and the vision from the outside, which takes in everything that is materially observable and at the same time reveals an "interiority". The "diary" identifies the narrator and the protagonist. The mode and the narrative voice "which sees" and the narrator, the narrative enunciation "which speaks", this is the differentiation made by Genette. There is a threefold identification here between narrator, character and author. Several clues lead the reader to believe that this is an autobiographical work rather than literary fiction. But no document has made it possible to clarify, she writes in a note, whether this is an account of a period in Duvert's life (she looks for sentences in

the book that suggest this). She calculates Duvert's age when the book was published, thirty-one, on the basis of "my twenty-nine years didn't put them off" and "well, almost a year has gone by since I started this book". This book would have taken two years to write. Or again: "Since I am a writer to my own detriment, because I didn't see any other liveable status within my reach, any less destructive compromise". When the narrator talks about modern education, he quotes *Le bon sexe illustré* as a note. This would indicate that he is the character in the text. In any case, he is present with his irony, his judgement and his way of accusing. "Love between boys is forbidden, but popular mores tolerate some vestiges of it: we mate a little without girls or women. As for boys, they don't consider themselves any different from girls.

Men are not taught innocence, they like adults' bodies and, if they are wild, they want to make love like anyone else; even impubes seem to find it quite natural to be interested in their little penises, of which they are not half-glorious". (Non-innocence is society in the subject, i.e. innocence acquired through education!)

The fundamental themes of Duvert's work are homosexuality, paedophilia, social criticism and contempt for the mother figure.

As a footnote, Pasqualina Cirillo addresses the issue of increasing homosexuality, which affects children as well as adult men and women. There are many accounts and theories of this infidelity to the assigned sexual role, but nothing has changed in terms of the barriers that society has erected against it. Society, which for some time seemed to accept diversity, has recently become homophobic again, a connotation that has reappeared since the AIDS problem, and the ghettoisation that followed and the responsibility attributed to homosexuals for the contagion. (Position of her *tesi* in context?). She refers to a book published in Italy in 1995 and to the *Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* by a man called C. Rycrift, 1970, which defines homosexuality according to Freud as narcissistic love and, by extension, feelings and attitudes towards a person of the same sex. She goes on to define paedophilia: literally, love of children, but a term reserved in practice for the tendency to sexually attack them. There are no psychoanalytical studies on paedophilia, but sociological studies suggest that it is rarely associated with violence, that it is not a perversion in the sense that it is not the subject's preferred form of behaviour and that the victim is sometimes consenting (from the same dictionary!). (What was the legislative situation in Italy at the time?).

She quotes (and I'm shortening the quotations a little) "permissive, nomadic, homosexuality [...] cannot become a source of collective prohibitions"

and comments: after imagining a homosexual society identical in its domination to the heterosexual one, Duvert explains the impossibility of such a hypothesis, homosexuality cannot create conditioned and castrated individuals. And what if the 'others' and the minorities were the heterosexuals (isn't this reversal of values a tradition of novels and carnivalesques?)? This is the author's way of showing the coercion and tyranny of all institutions: "To prevent inveterate heterosexuals from contaminating society, they are given a few bars, [...] police and neighbours to keep them out of trouble".

They're so annoying that they're afraid to go there". Through fiction, he subjects straight people to the same conditions as gay people. It underlines the author's logic, irony and provocation, and the extent to which straight people are frustrated: "manic fixation, compulsive eroticism" in their conjugality. He highlights the methods used by those in power to control and direct the masses. "It is on homosexuality and paedophilia that, once again, all human communication remains centred [...] thanks to which the members of this society would hardly find in their minds or bodies the slightest trace of desire for the opposite sex, and are therefore unanimously convinced that homosexuality is dictated by Nature - that of the human race". In this situation of reversal there is a kind of revenge for women: "It is decided that, in order to emancipate men and women from the unequal horrors of coitus, and to divert our excessively abundant desires to the benefit of social unity, mass homosexuality must be imposed. Legislation based on these principles will therefore repress the crime of bestiality, i.e. heterosexual acts. "Birth control, artificial insemination [...] children belong to no one: adults who, having agreed to donate their sperm or lend their womb, keep for themselves the children they have made, are accused of infanticide and put to death". Society turns those it wants to fight into monsters. Freedom belongs to the majority. Duvert has the courage to lay bare the coercive power of society, and to speak out forcefully against the moral and physical violence suffered by all those who do not fit into the majority. "So, if we want children to blossom, they must be free to go where they want, talk to whom they want, organise themselves as they want, learn what they want, and through hundreds of encounters, chats, associations, initiatives, risks, experiences, accommodation and friendships with people of all ages, cultures, places, races and professions, they must be able to adapt their minds to society. To deny him this is to murder him, to turn him into a cretin who fears others". (At the time of the *Summerhill Free Children*, institutional education, the invention of the Freinet school, living spaces, etc.).

With regard to paedophilia, she refers in a note to *L'enfant au masculin*: "Who am I? a paedophile? yes and no", "a paedhomophile". For Duvert, it is not

the abuse of children but the liberation of their bodies and their own sexual desires. Faced with the paedophile, the child does not suffer but acts by expressing himself, far from the gaze of the family, public opinion and medicine, referring to the *Good Sex illustrated*: "The child belongs to the Universal Order: to Medicine, to the Family", he abandons himself to his own instincts. Diego's opinion on homosexuality: "It's frowned upon and it's doesn't want to be seen in a bad light". With the paedophile, the child is treated as a consenting, thinking subject... She goes on to quote *Le bon sexe illustré*, which refutes the idea that paedophiles obsessively seek out their prey: "In our societies, when an adult meets a child, two fears come together, and the one who is most afraid is not the one we think". No apology: "The first duty of men, it is said, is to be happy. I took the worst route to get there: it's not that I regret it, but I wouldn't dare drag anyone down with me". Duvert's work is full of children ("mes marmailles") expressing their sexuality and listening to their instincts, *bambini e ragazzini* indulging in all manner of sexual extravagance and uninhibited caresses. Duvert restores to children a knowledge of the body and desire, making them aware of their actions and lovers of pleasure. A child is not asexual, but has all the features of a man in miniature, and is even more beautiful. Parents claim to control them simply by having brought them into the world, making them their property, puppets to be dominated according to their ideology and social conventions. Children lose their freedom from a very early age, and every instinct (impulse?) and right they have is repressed and subjugated to the adult, with the only right anyone seems to recognise being that of protection. While he favours homosexual relationships in his novels, the opposition he creates is not between gay and straight, but between those who love pleasure and the puritans who repress it. "And the war of manners did not take place between our two tastes, but between humanity and the cockroaches". In several of his books, Duvert gives voice to those in hiding (Francesco and Pablo, Serge, Julien). Most of the *Journal's* readers may be embarrassed and indignant about the sex scenes involving young children (*ragazzini*), but they are violently attacked for their opinions, affected as they are by their way of being and their beliefs.

She returns to the title. She has already alluded to the term "diary", but what is the possible meaning or meanings of "innocent"? In the story, the adjective is used for a fifteen-year-old boy who is "shackled" and "dumb", innocent because he is not responsible for his diversity. The word has a double meaning: not guilty in moral and legal terms, but also those who have no knowledge or experience of evil, devoid of malice, ingenuous. It would perhaps be a question of attribution not only for that child, but for all the children he wrote about, whose manifestations and actions fall within the scope of the

Bambino, of childhood in general (*la vita bambina*, Pasolini, Carmelo Bene). In this sense, the Diary is dedicated to children who have not yet discovered the suffering that the world can cause. The first interpretation suggests that the author may have

Duvert, aware of the controversy that the book would provoke among heterosexual readers, accentuated the provocation by giving a priori absolution, through his title, to his protagonist. While heterosexuals see 'I' as guilty of abusing and taking advantage of children, Duvert sees 'I' as innocent, not guilty (the 'innocent' asks to use the typewriter, "I have kept the pages of the innocent", "Is there a really different law in the sequence of words I have traced?", followed by a consideration of writing, "the diary", the event/advent of writing in the making).

The female, or rather maternal, figure in Duvert's literary output is the most disparaged. In *L'enfant au masculin*, Duvert made it clear that he distinguished between women and mothers. "The powers that a mother holds make her an interesting character in a plot: the mother is rich in drama, she can play a very active part in the construction of a novel, she arrives there with her role all made up. I obviously take advantage of that. She cites the series of mothers in *L'île atlantique*, with their different characteristics: the apparently modern Laure Boitard, the romantic Mme Théret, the family shrew, the most cruel Simone Roquin (Thérèse Raquin, an allusion to the Folcoche in *Vipère au poing?*), who urges the husband to punish the son... and who, at this spectacle, "was red with excitement to the point of bursting", "an effort to shed light on the female need for power over the child... a clear majority of French women never experience orgasms"... And then there are the adoptive mothers, those who work with children, children who are entirely a woman's thing, in *Enfant au masculin*, mères et suppléantes, "Règne des mères" in *Journal d'un innocent*. "Barbara, protector, boss and resolute lover of a dog called Serge", *Madré padrona* (in Italy there was a film called *padre padrone*), "Barbara especially hired her son when, feeling herself to be on the cusp of childish, languid, maternal and cosy femininity, she sank into chastity : In *Quand mourut Jonathan*, "Serge served as her spare humanity when she had nothing else". (These are terribly apt clinical remarks. We find the same *rabbia* in Angelica Liddell's *Todo el cielo sobre la tierra*).

According to her dictionary of symbols, Pasqualina Cirillo makes the mother a symbol of the unconscious, one aspect of which is destruction as the source of instincts. The unconscious can rebel against the conscious and the conscious against the unconscious.

To destroy it, it takes on the role of a devouring, indifferent mother attached exclusively to the cycle of creation. In the child, there may be regression in the form of a fixation on this image of the mother. The mother always plays an active part in the origin of disturbances, neuroses go back to early childhood, in which case the mother continues to exert an influence that threatens the development of the ego. Duvert's hostility to the mother figure, manifested in the negative images of his novel characters, can be attributed, she believes, to this revolt of the unconscious: the mother figure, the first material manifestation of the unconscious, is seen as a destructive force rather than a protector. The instincts from which it is the source have prevailed. Here she refers to Jung and his archetype of the mother.

Conclusion from *tesl*

Duvert's courage. A style of writing that sheds light on the most topical issues, those on the margins and those deemed guilty (homosexuals, Aids sufferers and 'others'). In their condition of solitude and discrimination, the author makes their reality public, and without hypocrisy. In the name of this suffering, Duvert writes with *rabbia* and violence against society. Affected and accused himself (I recall the accusation made against Pasolini, the one that forced him to leave Friuli, for "indecent assault", and the countless trials that followed concerning his life and his works), the writer finds the response in his works, finds the way - the voice of the novel, the opening up of a new modality of expression, constantly under construction, like Duvert's writing. Through the raw truth of the episodes, the vulgar and necrophiliac language, he sends back to society the violence of the blows suffered. Like Koltès, he expresses his maladjustment to social reality and its rules; but whereas Koltès devotes his books to all the persecuted, all the marginalised, Duvert is mainly concerned with homosexuals and paedophiles. (Our list would be long: cf. *Dustan*, whom she must not have read, and the collection he chose to publish, *Dorothy Allison and the little white boys of the South in misery and beyond to the children-daughters of these men and women and the writing of homosexuality in the feminine*, *Virginie Despentes*, and then that strange book *Lointain souvenir de la peau* by R. Banks with those sex offenders under the viaduct, and then *Copper*, and *Delany*, etc.).

For Pasqualina Cirillo, the violence of the expression manifests itself through a necrophiliac language, and she explains by noting: Greek *nekros*: corpses, dead, inhabitants of the afterlife (zombies and vampires?) Latin *nex*, *nec*, violent death, murder. *Nekros* does not refer to death but to the dead,

to the corpse, to murder, to violent deaths, to the act of dying. *Thanatos*, Greek, *mors, mori*, Latin, necrophiliac language is an attraction to corpses, characterised by the predominant use of words referring to destruction, faeces, toilets, the smell of dead flesh, putrefaction. She refers to Erich Fromm's *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, published by Monda-Dori in 1973. "Destroy for the simple pleasure of destroying", like children cutting up worms (corpses are not who you think they are!). Living at the level of death, "approving of life even in death", as in eroticism according to G. Bataille. Duvert wrote in *his Abécédaire malveillant*: "Reading is a necrophiliac who wants the illusion of the living". And in one of his essays, *La mémoire immédiate* (1977), he wrote: "Contemplating this other immemorial and cruel present, next to our own [...] These apparitions designate the painful inhumanity of the all-too-human that we carry within us, and which is none other than death". The corpse of the Chinese victim for Bataille, Pasolini's corpse on the beach at Ostia, Duvert's corpse in the deserted house...)

Last sentence from *tesi*: "Through these works, heterosexual society, for once, is touched at the heart of its rules and morals".

(Has Duvert found a foreign-language reader? Did the University of Naples give this student a distinction? Did she continue to be taught by Duvert? Duvert was concerned that when people write things that are in themselves quite marginalised, at least their mode of expression should be such that it circulates. Pasqualina Cirillo, in her own way, gave them a mode of circulation).

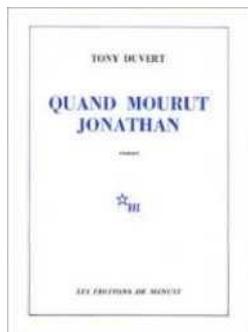
NOTES

(1) Gilles Sebhan, *L'enfant silencieux*, Paris, Denoël, 2010.

(2) *Tony Duvert: Journal d'un innocent (Quand la pédophilie entre en littérature)*, Pasqualina Cirillo, Master's thesis (*laurea*) in French language and literature, 1994-95, Oriental University Institute, Naples, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy.

WHEN JONATHAN DIED

Roman, 1978.



Stéphane Deligeorges (*Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 1978): It's easy to see that innocence isn't the naïve purity we assume children have, nor is it an anxious perversity. It's a state of being cut off, completely removed from people and the projections of grown-ups. Diary of an Innocent marked a turning point in his writing.

In this novel, we find the same clear, smooth, dominating sentence, perfectly suited to the tone.

Antoine Orezza (*La Quinzaine littéraire*, 1978): Here again we find that religious, almost militant universe of paedophilic works and destinies, where the object of love - the young boy - is fascinating, irresistible, dispossessing the lover of his freedom, his self-control, because he is beauty, of course, but much more: his own lost paradise, the real world, real life.

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech (*Le Monde*, 14 April 1978):

There's nothing pitiful about it, I think, like those parents who wonder on the sly whether their kids are touching themselves or sleeping with each other, with whom, how, more voraciously than them at the same age, or less, there's no question of finding out directly, so by whom, a priest? Madame Dolto? If only this freedom they didn't have made the kids happy, but look at them, sullen, earthy, what a time!

Instead of dabbling in feigned anxiety and preconceived ideas, parents would do better to learn from the source, i.e. by reading not psychosocial treatises but first-hand accounts from the new generation.

Tony Duvert has a reputation for confusing freedom with licence. He is said to be downright pornographic, and it is quite true that in *Paysage de fantaisie* (Prix Médicis 1973) and *Journal d'un innocent* (1976), his taste for very young boys

was displayed with as much detail as frenzy. But we may also find that this naturalness contains more true fervour than the mawkishness in which such tastes have long been hidden, even in children's publications reputed to be prudish and harsh.

Quand mourut Jonathan is a love story between a middle-aged painter and Serge, an eight-year-old boy. It's a love that refuses no caresses, and draws its nourishment from them. But Duvert dwells less on this than usual; no more, in any case, than on the small domestic gestures in which pleasure is a natural part.

This fusion is only possible because of the setting of the novel. We are in the countryside, not in a farmhouse with carpets: on the floor and in the dung. Life is lived in the smell of burnt bacon and the scurrying of mice. Objects take on the wear and tear that city plastic and cement no longer tolerate, the patina that is now rarely seen except in the privacy of chicken coops and nests.

The love between man and child takes on the appearance and rhythm of a biological association. It's like animals delousing each other, or plants eliminating poisons harmful to each other.

Society has always felt threatened by such connivance with kingdoms and types of life deemed subaltern. Here it is expressed through the parents of little Serge. Through is the right word, because it's hard to imagine a more thoughtless and selfish household. For them, it's not a question of re-establishing some rule they don't believe in, but of keeping the peace. This has often been the case since *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Lady of the Camellias*.

After an enforced separation, the hunted couple get back together. But the child has become someone else. All it took were those few months, so well described by Montherlant, when unpredictable, foreign fluff and influences appeared. The child learnt to name what it intensely felt beyond all words, and changed the thing for the word; a sad barter. His body feels like too much, an object brought back. Its embraces no longer have a place in the succession of pleasures and days. All that's left for the adult is to let himself die, a little like Phaedra: not because flesh that's too fresh is forbidden, but because anti-nature is denying him a place in the sun. Visit

suicide doesn't exist. You're always killed by someone. Here, it's the norm that strikes. The rabbit's foot out of the steaming hutch: schlac!

This sixth novel fulfils the promise of the others all the better for

dispensing with their provocations. A universe is given. And the writing that goes with it. There's just the right dose of unusual perceptions and undeniable memories, the tints of a stream, the breath of a sad spring, the smell of a destitute childhood. We learn that love dies from wanting to be social and lives from plunging into animality. Far from contracts and constraints, happiness here rediscovers the innocence of animals at rest, the violent taste of the farm.

BELOW are TWO ARTICLES by Brian Gordon Kennelly. The first dates from 2008; the second, a reworking of the first, will be published two years later, in 2010, in issue 92 of *Dalhousie French Studies*.

VERSION 01 (2008)

Pedophile as Paragon? Or (Mis)Representing Motherhood in Tony Duvert's Quand mourut Jonathan

[...] the voices of the lovers of youth are disclaimed by all [...] We need to tell every story we can from our own point of view and get these stories told, in our own immediate context, before courtrooms and psychiatrists' layers force their idealizations onto our experience.

--Mark Pascal, *Varieties of Man/Boy Love*

If there were a Nuremberg for crimes during peacetime, nine mothers out of ten would be summoned to appear.

-Tony Duvert, 1979 *Libération* interview

That the polemical French novelist and diatribist Tony Duvert's death in his sixties of natural causes last summer went unnoticed is an understatement. By the time Duvert's dessicated body was finally discovered at his home by French authorities in August, the process of decomposition had been underway for at least a month. The writer's neighbors had noticed something amiss: not a smell but a sign of negligence, the overflowing mailbox outside his house, which had not been emptied for weeks (Simonin, "Duvert est mort").

This combination of neglect and excessiveness is surprisingly apt. Not only had Duvert been living in seclusion for some twenty years in the remote Vendôme village of Thoré-la-Rochette, but on the French literary scene he had long been forgotten. Indeed, he might as well have been dead. Censored in the 1960s, as Anne Simonin notes, and published only thanks to the transgressive editorial strategy of the Editions de Minuit, Duvert's works had seen the light of

day and garnered considerable critical acclaim in the 1970s. But they had all but disappeared from the public eye in the decades thereafter. Despite having authored some dozen works of fiction, two lengthy essays, and having received France's prestigious Prix Médicis in 1973 for his novel *Paysage de fantaisie* (Strange Landscape), the aggressively homosexual writer, a self-proclaimed 'pedhomophile' (*L'Enfant* 21, my translation) has long been excluded from histories of contemporary literature. This is partially due to the relatively modest sales of his works and no doubt also to the author's reclusiveness. Yet it owes more probably to the general marginalization of homosexual writing in France and most likely to Duvert's perceived outrageousness, his showcasing of the space of "conflicting anxieties and desires" that Victoria Best points out is the image of the child in contemporary culture ("Uses" 230). Because, as Jean-Claude Guillebaud observes, pedophilia is not only defended in Duvert's texts but is at their very heart (*Tyrannie* 24), because Duvert therefore plays with fire (Josselin), the author's literary profile has, as a result, more or less been erased: in the 1980s his corpus became "clandestine" (Simonin, "L'Ecrivain" 423).

There have to date, for instance, been no full-fledged university-level studies of Duvert's oeuvre, which his death last year conveniently defined, essentialized, and contained. The two extant studies of Duvert's novel *Récidive* (*Repeat Offender*), which was first published in 1967 then rewritten and republished in a much shorter version nine years later (1), the study of the male hunter in Duvert's works (2), the English translation *Good Sex Illustrated* by Bruce Benderson last year of Duvert's 1974 indictment of sex education in France, *Le Bon sexe illustré*, his rageful pointing at the "strangulation of pleasure by capitalist shackles" ("Introduction" 8), and Simonin's own examination of Duvert's works through the lens of publishing history all promise to change this: to create the critical momentum necessary to bring to Duvert's prose the overdue-albeit posthumous-attention it warrants and thereby finally to salvage his literary legacy. To this short list we offer the following reading of maternal (mis)representation in *Quand mourut Jonathan* (*When Jonathan Died*), Duvert's 1978 novel that is considered a "masterpiece of tender understanding" by Edward Brongersma in his multidisciplinary study of male intergenerational sexual relations (*Loving Boys* 106) but also as Duvert's most "unsettling" novel by Joannic Arnoi on his literary blog ("Tony Duvert"), and as the "most controversial selection" in *The Penguin Book of International Gay Writing* by its editors (422).

In the essay titled "Misogynie" ("Misogyny") which is part of the to-date untranslated but contentiously "antiheterocratic" 1980 text by Duvert, *L'Enfant au masculin* (*The Child in the Masculine*), in which he denounces the self-

proclaimed right of heterosexuals to "reproduce" what he sees as their sexually repressive, repressed, puritanical, and dishonest selves (45), the author notes—or feigns-surprise that his books and the various opinions people believe contained within them are all too often deemed hostile to women. Those females he portrays are by and large mothers and thus all play both a social and familial role: "institutional beings," "administrative creations," of the same order as tax collectors, teachers, proprietors. Although certain readers believe Duvert may not shed the most favorable light on maternity, is it appropriate for them to label the author a misogynist, as a result? Given that his literary portrayals of fathers, children, and homosexuals are equally acerbic, he finds the label too strong. It is as misrepresentative of himself as he is deemed to be of his female characters:

It is true that my descriptions of mothers rarely portray maternity in a positive light. But I do not portray fathers, children, or homosexuals in any more flattering a manner: and for that I am not criticized. Only when I treat mothers the same way as my other characters do I get accused of purposely distorting the truth [...] Having said this, are my mothers really that outlandish? Are the real French mothers, the millions of average mothers any different or any better? Honestly, I am not sure (27, 29, my translation).

Reader reactions to Duvert's 1979 novel, *L'île atlantique (Atlantic Island)*, for example, would tend to suggest otherwise: that to label the author a misogynist is misleading. Both sexes, the author claims, find the mothers he portrays therein realistic, if not recognizable:

A book like Atlantic Island, specifically, provoked an outpouring of awful confessions: as though it had inspired, emboldened readers of both sexes to denounce their own terrible mothers. And the worst mothers of the novel were those my readers found most like those of real life (29, my translation).

Is motherhood as portrayed by Duvert in *When Jonathan Died*, the novel published the year before *Atlantic Island*, any different? Are the mothers, the so-called "rare and fragile, persecuted, secret creatures" (34, my translation), also (mis)cast here as "skirted and slapping monsters," as the "mother-torturers" (19, my translation), "cops," "female Nazi guards," "human by-product[s]" ("Tony Duvert," my translation) Duvert demonizes in his later novel? Besides their social and familial roles, what part do mothers play in the novel and, more broadly, in Duvert's overarching activist rhetorical strategy, his textual call to arms against heterocracy—"a system," he points out, "founded on the exclusion of almost all amorous pleasure and relying on a scaffolding of

inequality, falsification and both the mental and corporal mutilation of men, women, and children" (*Journal* 78-9, my translation)-and its concomitant criminalization of pedophilia, its crushing of pedophiles, "subjected to the most violent repression and demonized" (*Le Bon sexe* 100, my translation) "under mountains of hatred and exaggerated mistruths" (*L'Enfant* 23, my translation)?

Of the five mothers featured in *When Jonathan Died*, that of eight-year-old Serge has the command performance. Because the part she plays is the biggest, most problematic and ironically the most intrusive, we will as a result focus most of our attention on her. (3) Now while her travels might remove her physically from most of the action of the novel, she looms larger than life in the wings as the passive-aggressive "owner" of her son. From the start it is clear that she should be seen first and foremost in this "ready-made" maternal role (*L'Enfant* 27). The novel begins this way:

The little boy came into the kitchen, and he saw strange things on the floor. But he said nothing. His mother was chatting to Jonathan. He, Serge, was going to explore this unknown house; he was unhappy at being neglected by the conversation.

A little later, his mother left without him. His eyes followed her. She went down a little track that led to the road; her car was down there. Jonathan shut the garden gate, pushed the child forward by the shoulders, and they went back into the kitchen (5).

The artist-painter Jonathan, whose "slight accent, an English, Dutch or German accent, you couldn't tell" (5) makes his origins, his so-called motherland, hard to determine, and the young Serge, who will be staying with him, are both named by the fourth sentence of the novel. Serge's mother, a

bohemian-artist-cum-hippie-cum-world-traveler-cum-loose-woman is identified by name some five pages later. The paragraph in which she is finally named sets a time limit for Serge's stay at Jonathan's; it furthermore takes us back in time and also qualifies her, rehearsing the nonchalance ("abandon" in French) and abandonment that typify her:

Barbara would leave the child with him for a week to go on a trip to the south, and she would pick him up again when she returned. Free of a husband, she used to leave Serge here and there, as she enjoyed the life of a single girl (8).

It is not surprising that "Barbara" is not her real name. For naming, as we soon learn, is not this mother's forte. Serge has somehow escaped being

saddled for life by his extravagant mother with a name as complex - indeed complex-forming - as "Sebastien-Casimir," "Gervais-Arthur," or "Guillaume-Romuald" (33). His cat, on the other hand, has not been so lucky. When the two males compare Serge's domesticated feline back in his Parisian apartment to the wild mice that here roam free in Jonathan's country cottage, it quickly becomes clear that for Georgette-Barbara's real name and, notably, the feminized form of "George"-gendered labels only have currency when it suits her. Just as she sees nothing wrong with the life of a single girl, with kicking up her heels ("vivre en fille") instead of playing stay-at-home-mom, "Barbara-Georgette" (235) thinks nothing of giving a female name to a male cat:

"(Ah we've got a cat it's a boy and it's called Julie, said Serge), and they're soft to touch, really soft."

"You've touched one? It was my mother, calling it Julie, the cat, have you really touched a mouse?"

"No, they're too frightened. It was your mother who called the boy cat Julie?"

"It was her, really; so you haven't touched one?" (6)

If she does not hesitate in her onomastic regendering, the aptly named Barbara just as readily mixes manipulation with fiction to convince Jonathan to care for her son while she continues to live up her "dissipated life" (34). To his credit, Jonathan suspects as much: "(He) wondered why she dared give the child into his care again. It seemed to be some kind of deal" (8). For some two months earlier, the artist-painter, despite being cash-strapped himself, has lent Barbara money. The letter written, if would first seem, to thank Jonathan, curiously contains an uncharacteristic and passing

mention of Barbara's son. It is as though she could not resist the gratuitous "barbarism" of cruelly tormenting Jonathan:

Barbara had thanked him with two pages of gossip, in which the only special thing had been a passage about Serge; her other letters had never mentioned the child.

Jonathan had been intrigued by this unexpected gift. I hope you think of my lovely boy every now and again!!.... He seems to have forgotten you completely!!!!... I talk to him about you-we were even going to see that exhibition of yours in December!... But no, the young man wasn't interested... You know at their age they forget very quickly which is best don't you think... But you can't imagine how lovely he is now!!!!, Barbara had written, with her individual punctuation. She went on to say that Serge was at last behaving

himself at school, that he loved her more and more, hid himself in her bed in the evening, a real little lover; he was getting to be a bit of a cry-baby, but so sweet. And really I do prefer that to when he went round breaking everything!!.... Children!...

This wonderful news had driven Jonathan to despair.

As for the letter promising her son's visit, it also mentioned the financial difficulties in which the mother found herself. The ploy was so outrageous that Jonathan was afraid Barbara would in the end arrive alone (9).

Barbara's punctuational exaggeration, the grammatical abusiveness of her multiple and repeated exclamation marks and points of suspension aside, she pushes all common notions of politeness to extremes. Indeed, she appears to abuse the kindness of the seemingly benevolent Jonathan whose fear that she might arrive at his cottage without her son proves ultimately unfounded. Barbara cannot be relied upon either as a mother or a friend; the week that Serge, "whose possessor had loaned him, deposited him" (28), is to stay with Jonathan, and which has been intended to correspond with the "short" trip of his mother, soon stretches to months. This further stretches Jonathan's resources too.

But Serge, "used to being abandoned as he was to being periodically abused" (42), predicts that his absent mother will not return on the day she

has agreed. Jonathan might be preoccupied by Barbara's supposedly imminent return; however, nothing is further from Serge's mind. When Jonathan reminds Serge that he will soon return to Paris, the unrealistic attitude ("attitude irr elle"), the "naive refusal" ("refus naif") of the boy disconcerts his older host:

She won't come [...] she's always late!... I bet she won't come [...] she won't come. I know. She's always changing her mind [...] Don't worry! I'm telling you she won't come! Everything's alright! If you ask me it's nothing at all, you'll see (38-40).

The letter announcing-although not justifying-the amorous trysts that have taken Barbara unexpectedly from the south of France to Sicily and Greece, then all the way to California after her invitation by another total stranger, who ostensibly believes in her artistic potential and healing powers, confirms that Serge has been right all along. If the various excuses Barbara gives Jonathan for not being able to provide financially for her son and her temporary abandonment of him would seem abusive to many, in the eyes of the good-

spirited boy, the prospect that he will be able to stay with Jonathan and thus be free from his mother—at least through the end of the summer, when French law will oblige him to return to school—is like hitting the jackpot:

"Such freedom was beyond the boy's imagination, like a figure in billions. He was abstracted and inactive the whole afternoon, and never for one moment did he leave Jonathan's side" (42).

The scope of the freedom that these long, lazy summer months with Jonathan represent, where as Joannic Amoi observes "there are neither roles to be followed nor a hierarchy to be respected" (My translation), is almost unfathomable to Serge. The time to be spent with Jonathan in his cottage, a place "[where] [i]t would be possible to hide away [...], to get older by a year or two, without changing" (44), "like one of those fine shells, in whose cavity, when held to the ear, you can hear the sound of the sea" (42) seems limitless, frozen. Yet the cruel reality of its limits soon hits home. Just as one might prefer not to imagine the monstrous mass that once inhabited the smooth sheens of the shell to which Jonathan's cottage is compared, "the probably shapeless mollusc, utterly repulsive when out of its shell, which secreted this mother-of-pearl and polished the plunging corridor" (43), Serge is not prepared for the brutal scene between mother and son he and Jonathan witness the next time they venture outside it. Do the true monsters roam unchecked outside the

idealized space, the "lost paradise" (Orezza, my translation) inhabited for this summer at least by Jonathan and Serge?

Seated at a café in the neighbouring village with Serge, Jonathan hears sobs, "[h]igh-pitched, not very loud [and that] must have had their origin in a very tiny breast." Serge points to a child of four or five years whose mother is reprimanding him for not drinking the lemonade she has ordered for him. From where he is seated, Serge has been able to witness what has happened: "She slapped him like that, across the face," Serge explains to Jonathan, "and it bled" (45). The mother initially ignores the blood, which, like melting lard, is slowly streaking the delicate white cheek of her son. Whether the injury has been caused by the mother's ring or by a broken nail matters less than calming the crying child so as not to attract further attention. She thus threatens him that if he keeps crying she will strike him again:

Contrary to plan, the slap to induce good behaviour had produced a striking and indecent spectacle which the woman was trying in vain to bring back under control. Words were not enough; at the edge of the table, her hand, with rigid

fingers and cupped palm, was tapping rhythmically to draw the infant's attention to the threat of another slap to correct the results of the first (45).

Only once the blood starts dripping onto her son's shirt collar does the mother attempt to wipe his cheek with a handkerchief. Her son attempts to writhe free, all the while sobbing louder, for the line between tenderness and abuse in what others might see as an overdue maternal gesture is for him too fine: "Perhaps [the young boy] took this for a further act of violence, beginning to cry more loudly and trying to free his head, which the woman held from behind as she was wiping" (45). However, this only exacerbates the situation, further enrages the child's mother, who angrily throws some coins on the cafe table before storming out with her poor boy in a final yet unequivocally violent show of force: "she pulled up the child from his seat, as far and as roughly as possible, plonked him firmly onto the ground, took his hand and marched him away" (45-6).

Why do the cafe patrons and passers-by turn a blind eye on this brutal familial (brutally familial or familiar?) scene? What to make of their silent glances? Prudently preferring to hold their tongues and feign indifference, rather than to interfere ("s'éloign[er] [...] sans avoir dit un mot ni risqué une mine"), they recognize that the "dressage" of child-raising is not without

unpleasantness: "they knew how difficult was the art of teaching manners to the little ones" (45). Similarly resigned to the rights that come with motherhood and to his own powerlessness, Jonathan is ashamed to try and justify to Serge why he for one has neither spoken out nor tried to intervene. The older artist-painter seems resigned to shamefully forgetting this "tiny [drama] which it would be ridiculous or dangerous to take to heart" (46) as quickly as possible, and to the inevitability of the mother getting the final, if not more painful word: "Nobody says anything, it was his mother. It doesn't help. She has a row with you, and she pays him back twice over when they get home" (46).

No matter how troubling it may seem to Serge, the older Jonathan is fully aware of the "excessiveness of female power". He knows that mothers hold a privileged and protected role in society. He has witnessed countless scenes just like this one, each confirming to him that maternal love is little more than "a love of an inspector", that the only form of education that a mother can provide is negative, one in which she "controls, sets norms, disciplines like a dog- or cat-trainer" ("[elle] distribue [...] ses contrôles et ses normes, sa discipline de ménagère, comme à un chien, un chat"), that mothers in effect are little more than "skirted robots" (*L'Enfant* 42). Though Serge may claim that if his own

mother had hit him like that he would not have stood for it ("If my mother did that, I'd hit her back"), this is little more than hyperbolic bravado on his part. For when Jonathan first stayed with Barbara and her son in Paris, Serge would often hide in a closet and cry rather than stand up to her-this, after Barbara would strike out at him when he acted up and violently shake him in order ironically to be able to continue meditating, of all things:

when she had friends round to think quietly and meditate, with incense sticks, green tea, and a Zen book within hand's reach, she would shake Serge and hit him, reasoning with him in a measured voice:

'Listen now, young man, it's time to stop the play-acting, don't you think?'

Beside himself, the child would go and cry in a cupboard. Now Barbara and her friends could continue their exercises in serenity (20).

Indeed, under his mother's repressive reign, Serge's childhood seems little more than a nightmare of control and bribery (*L'Enfant* 29). Is it any wonder then that he so relishes the time he spends with Jonathan? That he

yearns to free himself from her? At least insofar as circumstances appear in the unfolding narration of events, Serge is finally able to be himself, to do as he pleases, to "live" (*L'Enfant* 38). And as the person willing to host, feed, entertain, and nurture him, Jonathan at first appears a paragon of virtue. Jonathan has gone all out to make the eight-year-old as comfortable as possible, despite being short on savings and in spite of his habit of living austerely. "He didn't have a lot of the things he needed for the child. He had few sheets, just one pillow and one pillow-case, one dishcloth. He washed them all himself" (10). Jonathan has, for example, rented a refrigerator, added a mirror and whatever other furniture a young child might need to feel at home, stocked up on food, and thoroughly cleaned his living space both inside and out.

Yet despite the appearance of order, normalcy, and creature comforts, something is not quite right. In the same way that Jonathan is ashamed when he turns a blind eye to the abusive scenes he frequently witnesses in town between mothers and their children, he is embarrassed by his duplicity in purchasing games, toys, and periodicals for Serge. He first inquires at a pharmacy, for example, which items would be most age-appropriate then claims that they are for his son when he later purchases them at the next-door store:

At the toy shop, he said he had a son. When he left the shop, his lie caused him such shame and unhappiness that he almost left the package behind on a bench. Finally, he thought to himself: 'If only he doesn't come.' (10-11)

Why, if Jonathan did not have anything to hide, would he feel it necessary to lie? Surely he could simply have responded that the items were for a boy and left it at that. Are the follow-up questions that might ensue so fearful? And what drives the interest he takes in this boy who is no relation to him ?

Over the course of the summer that Serge stays with Jonathan, it becomes clear that much more is at stake, that Jonathan is more than the innocuous "nurse" (155) for Serge that some believe him to be.

While Jonathan and Serge may have seemed innocently to have slept together when Jonathan had first visited Barbara in Paris and "[i]n their own way [...] had loved each other very much" (8), it is only once Serge is free of his

mother that the extent and true scope of this so-called "love" between himself and the man some twenty years his elder becomes evident. It is suggested early during Serge's stay that Jonathan's disingenuousness extends to his relationship with the boy. Serge comes in from the garden and asks his host where to find Jonathan's "junk-drawer" ("foutoir"), whose etymological tie to the French noun and verb "foutre" ("sperm" and "to fuck," respectively) and whose sexual connotation as "brothel" are also significant: "He quickly put his drawing out of sight [...] Jonathan, for his part, hadn't dared show his drawing to Serge, for the drawing was obscene. It showed one of their secrets" (24, 27). If the drawing does indeed represent the secretive sexual component of their relationship as suggested, why-unless Jonathan is ashamed of the obsessiveness of it-should he find it necessary to hide it from the very person with whom he is sharing that secret relationship?

Now admittedly, Serge precociously initiates much of the sexual play with his older partner whose "relationship of pure passivity" Duvert notes in his 1979 interview with the newspaper *Libération*. In the bathtub, it is Serge who takes Jonathan's penis first, "grabbing it, slapping and twisting it" before soaping up his host's naked body "vigorously all over, thoroughly, leaving nothing out, as carefree and energetic as a housewife flanneling her kids" (34). The suggestiveness of what happened in the bedroom shortly thereafter-"[c]alm returned after what quenches boyish passion" (34)-gives way to time to slightly more elaborate descriptions; the thinly veiled "what" ("circonstance") for the exchange of seminal fluid or "foutre" becomes a true "bout of filthiness" in which "they played at sex" (82). Caresses of Serge's anus by Jonathan with his finger, for example, "a stroke of the index finger, or rather of its tip, which followed a fixed course [...] the divide of the buttocks, an inch or two above the hole [...] one side of the ring [...] the middle" (35), soon become obvious

"coupling" (131), penetration of the boy by his elder and vice-versa, with Jonathan penetrated in turn by Serge's "pretty little sex" (38). It is undeniable that there has been a sexual dimension to their relationship from the start and that the sometimes sexually tyrannical Serge plays his part in initiating the "thing";

They had always fucked a bit. This is what had astonished Jonathan when in Paris he'd slept alongside the child-then hardly seven years old-who would turn his back on him and go to sleep with his bottom pressed into the hollow of the young man's thighs, both of them curled up together. In the morning he would regain the position, and once, without saying a word, he slipped his hand behind him, took the

sex that lay along the divide of his buttocks, and moved his hips so as to put it just at the hole. Jonathan didn't dare move, and pretended to be still asleep. But that very evening, when they were in bed and had indulged in various caresses, they were again in the same position; and Jonathan, as the boy's hole was still wet with saliva, pushed in his sex. He had not imagined it so elastic. When he had gone in about the length of a finger, he heard Serge, his voice calm, murmur simply:

That hurts a bit.

Hedrew straight away, and would not start again. The disproportion terrified him, although Serge, for his part, seemed quite unaware of it.

Later, the child repeated the gesture. Jonathan understood better then the pleasures of this little body. He didn't penetrate, or hardly, but in this way masturbated the anus at length, until he flooded it, then wiped it dry, unless Serge demanded, as he did on some later occasions, with placid tyranny:

'No, you must carry on when it's wet.'

The thing was part of their routine, without occupying a privileged place. As for Serge, after various low and hesitant provocations, he had found means to amuse himself with the young man's bottom, although for orgasms he relied on his hands.

So, for a long time this sodomy had been mixed up with other pleasures; among them, it was nothing special, it went unnoticed. Only the child's growing up, or the length of their intimacy, had gradually modified the nature of the penetrations-much deeper, but still almost static, on Jonathan's part; more

skillful, less facetious, longer and more solidly implanted, on Serge's.

A development which continued through that summer (147-8).

But should it matter who initiates the sexual act? And that Jonathan is always the silent, if not nearly immobile partner of the seemingly more sexually charged Serge? Would such questions matter to a judge? Jonathan knows full well that in the eyes of society what he is doing with this prepubescent

youngster will, if it is ever exposed, be deemed wrong, perverse, if not criminal and that his silence both in the bedroom and out of it is, ironically and relatively speaking, a measure of his prudence. This plunges him into despair. The mothers might seem monstrous to him by the way they (mis)treat their children. But if his repeated and ongoing sexual contact with Serge is discovered, he will be judged far more severely. How to explain to the child that what may seem perfectly natural to the two of them is in the eyes of society deeply troublesome, a "social horror," to use the words of Kenneth Plummer, author of *"Pedophiles: Constructing a Sociological Baseline,"* certain to evince the most extreme moral outrage (244)? How to explain that the "innocence" in the adverb "innocently" is actually a perversion, distortion, misrepresentation of reality?

How to tell him that their amorous encounters [...] were not what he believed, not what he lived himself, not what he innocently and frivolously insisted upon, in the perfection of his personality as yet intact. How to tell him it was a crime, to be corroborated by commissioning doctors to spread apart his buttocks; and that their pleasures would bring Jonathan ten years in prison, and bring upon Serge a flood of psychotherapy, torture without instruments (155).

And what to make of Barbara, who it seems is too caught up in her "courses in movement," her "primal scream seminars" (115), her "narcissistic mania" (114), and thus has not been aware of the true nature of the relationship her son has with the older artist-painter? Should she too be condemned as a bad mother for being so out of touch with reality? From the distorted perspective she exhibits for most of the novel, Jonathan's "bad influence" has been due to his negative energy, to the "negative vibrations he put out without being able to control them" (21). Indeed, she has permitted Serge to spend more time with Jonathan while she has traveled with Simon, the husband with whom she has been reconciled. But this second visit of the boy with the artist-painter will be the last. Before seeing predation or perversion, she sees rivalry. Less a *paragon*, or "model or pattern of excellence, Jonathan-as

actor in the "bout of filthiness" (82)-actually *paragons* Barbara (4). In the familial "theater" she reserves for her son, Jonathan is a match for, a rival to her. Whatever the situation, whatever the other roles she might play, Barbara sees her primary role as Serge's mother: not as caregiver but as the person with the definitive, unparalleled, and unchallengeable right to control him:

she felt that she had over her child an absolute right, which she might enjoy according to her whims, and which authorized all the contradictions. Serge served her as a reserve human being when there was no one else left. He was a doll on whom she could experiment with those activities she would try again later on less lowly victims. A partner for rehearsal, for stage design and research. Whence the incoherence in her behaviour towards him: it depended on the play.

But it was clear that in all these theatres, Jonathan himself was the enemy and the danger. Barbara probably didn't think particularly unfavourably of him; his problem, his clear qualification as unconditional enemy, was simply that Serge preferred him to her (154).

As her competitor for the "real little lover" Serge, as she herself has earlier described him (9), Jonathan must be kept at bay, neutralized. She thus intercepts all written communication between him and her boy. And when Barbara's husband Simon suggests that Serge again be sent to spend six days with the artist-painter while Simon and his wife visit London, Barbara's refusal, while rambling, is also categorical.

The bond of this foreigner about whom her son appears to know far more than she does is far too strong for her liking. But although she never fully articulates what she senses, with the abbreviation "it" ("ça") suggestive and its referent illegal, this is also the first time Barbara hints that Jonathan's caretaking role might be a front. As self-imposed star in her own familial drama, Barbara knows enough to call it curtains. And so ironically to counteract what is also Jonathan's paragonic role, she finally exercises her maternal privilege

to protect Serge in a tirade that mixes the pathological with the paranormal, the intensely private with the theatrical:

Oh no! [...] That's enough of Jonathan!... It's not healthy, you've got to admit it!... Since he's come back from there, he's never been the same, he's quite impossible [...] I don't want him to carry on seeing Jonathan. I don't want any

more of it [...] I don't want to hear about it again. There's something not right about it. It[s] probably not their

fault. I'm not saying that, well... But there's something wrong. I can feel it. I can feel it. And I'm not wrong about that sort of thing. No! Something, I'd rather not tell you what I think. But I can feel it. No, there's something wrong. No. It's over, as far as Jonathan is concerned, and that's it. I tell you we'll have trouble for years to come if we let it go any further. Fine! Nothing! I'm not saying anything! But it's over. It's all over, and that's all there is to say about it. Serge has become too attached, don't you see. And I don't know to who[m]. I don't know who it is! Yes, that's what worries me... It's my right... I produced this child, I don't know whether you've noticed. I can feel it. It's serious [...] I can feel it. It just can't go on, this business. No. That's enough. The end. Full stop (165, 168-9).

But in what appears to be the first positive maternal intervention by Barbara on behalf of her son, in this defiant act of protection, Barbara ironically and tragically loses him forever. With his sights set on visiting Jonathan again, Serge takes the metro to the outskirts of Paris where hitchhikers try their luck getting a lift:

He knew where the hitch-hikers went, the exit from Paris which led to the road for Jonathan's. His own road now. It couldn't take very long, surely. Not with all the cars. It had to work. There were plenty of people (170).

Once outside in the pouring rain, however. Serge quickly becomes disoriented. Yet he has reached a point of no return: "[He] told himself he wouldn't leave. Nor would he go home" (173). As the hundreds of cars speed by, their headlights like stars in the heavens beckoning to him, Serge sees his chance:

Now, watch the cars, until there was one going very fast and all by itself. And watch the headlights and throw himself against them, very fast too, there where the light shone brightest. Rigid and motionless, his sight a little blurred, Serge allowed several cars go by, before he saw the one he was waiting for (174).

And so, with this "unimaginable" suicide ("Tony Duvert"), not quite accomplished, premeditated but not quite enacted, the novel draws attention one final time to the very inevitability that has driven it: that the erotic variety it celebrates is always already dangerous, unhealthy, and depraved (Rubin

(280) If, as Duvert notes in *L'Enfant au masculin (The Child in the Masculine)*, "the adult lover is the only man in the world who treats the child as an equal

and therefore gives him freedom" (38, my translation), in truth and because of social norms, this freedom can only be ephemeral. Serge will always be a "marionette": the relationship between Jonathan and Serge, their "ideologized coupling" ("Tony Duvert") has been doomed from the start and will never be permitted by modern society to survive. But the final, foreboding scene of the novel also rehearses one last time the misrepresentation at its heart and framed by, as if dramatized, in everything its title is not. Just as Jonathan, the adult lover of Serge, neither dies in the novel nor is the paragon he appears, just as Serge's mother proves herself ultimately not as unaware as she might first seem, this suicide is really a killing, manslaughter. Instead of murdering his mother as Serge has suggested he might to Jonathan-"I could kill her. Only that..." (155)-, Serge indirectly causes the death of the person dearest to him, the one who has made his life worth living by freeing him. For after Serge dies, Jonathan will not be able to survive. Having long contemplated ending his own life, his relationship with Serge amounts ultimately to an extended dress-rehearsal for the inevitable: "Jonathan's death, that too would have been a murder: for suicide doesn't exist. One is always killed by someone" (155).

When Jonathan *died*, indeed how Jonathan died, and why Jonathan died. If ever they were, they are no longer matters of fact but prompts for interrogative rereadings of Duvert, his literary and literal tackling of our civilization's most "sacred" taboos: childhood and maternity (Josselin). Whether Jonathan, this dead man walking, might therefore be resurrected, recuperated, or vanish into the "black hole" into which any measured speech about consent, pleasure and desire in intergenerational relationships seems to vanish (Davies 370) remains to be seen.

Webster University

NOTES

(1) See Brian Kennelly, "Rewriting, Rereading *Récidive*," *Dalhousie French Studies* 67 (2004): 135-42; and John Phillips, *Forbidden Fictions: Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth-Century French Literature* (London: Pluto, 1999).

(2) See Owen Heathcote, "Jobs for the Boys? Or: What's New About the Male Hunter in Duvert, Guibert and Jourdan." *Gay Signatures: Gay and Lesbian*

Theory, Fiction and Films in France, 1945-1995, ed. Owen Heathcote, Alex Hughes and James S. Williams (Oxford: Berg, 1998) 173-91.

(3) Besides Barbara, the other mothers are: Barbara's mother (Serge's grandmother), Jonathan's elderly neighbor (whose son is dead), the mother at

the cafe (who we will also discuss), and the mother of three boys (who Serge and Jonathan meet in a village).

(4) "Archaic. To be a match for; rival" (*Webster's*)

VERSION 02 (Dalhousie French Studies number 92, 2010).

Mothers and/as Monsters in Tony Duvert's When Jonathan Died

We need to tell every story we can from our own point of view and get these stories told, in our own immediate context, before courtrooms and psychiatrists' layers force their idealizations onto our experience.

Mark Pascal, *Varieties of Man/Boy Love*

That the polemical French novelist and diatribist Tony Duvert's death in his sixties of natural causes went unnoticed is an understatement. By the time Duvert's dessicated body was finally discovered at his home by French authorities in August 2008, the process of decomposition had been underway for at least a month. The writer's neighbors had noticed something amiss: not a smell but a sign of negligence, the overflowing mailbox outside his house, which had not been emptied for weeks (Simonin, "Duvert est mort").

This combination of neglect and excessiveness is surprisingly apt. Not only had Duvert been living in seclusion for some twenty years in the remote Vendome village of Thoré-la-Rochette, but on the French literary scene it would seem that he had long been forgotten. Published thanks to the transgressive editorial strategy of the Editions de Minuit, Duvert's works had garnered considerable critical acclaim in the 1970s. Although these works had remained uncensored and in print in the decades thereafter, they had all but disappeared from the public eye. Despite having authored some dozen works of fiction, two lengthy essays, and having received France's prestigious Prix Medicis in 1973 for his subversive novel *Paysage de fantaisie*, the self-proclaimed "pedhomophile" (*L'Enfant* 21) had suffered from indirect or insidious censorship (Phillips 13).

Why has Duvert been excluded from most histories of contemporary literature? Is it owing to the author's reclusiveness during his lifetime and the limited sales of his works? To the forms of caricature and shock tactics he embraces in his texts? To the perceived outrageousness of the content of his works? Or does a combination of all of the above exclude Duvert's texts from the 'forest of books' whose contours are outlined in otherwise compendious works such as Bruno Vercier and Dominique Viart's *La Littérature au présent*

(2008)?

In his writing Duvert actively champions and showcases the sexual rights of children: the space of "conflicting anxieties and desires" that is the image of the child in contemporary culture (Best 230). Duvert not only defends pedophilia, "l'enjeu d'un prosélytisme acharné" as Jean-Claude Guillebaud observes, but he makes it a central theme in his oeuvre (*Tyrannie* 24). During the nearly two decades marking the permissive "Emmanuelle era" in France (1967-1985), Duvert may not have raised too many eyebrows. For, as John Phillips points out, in the years following the publication of Emmanuelle Arsan's erotic *Emmanuelle* (1967), sexual discourse was relatively free of legal or moral constraints. But with AIDS came a new puritanism. Abstinence and chastity replaced the unbridled sexual pleasure of the 1970s (*Forbidden* 10, 149). In the post-Emmanuelle era, what Duvert touted in his texts was tantamount to playing with fire (Josselin). As a result, his literary profile suffered. Indeed, in the 1980s, which gave rise to AIDS writing and with it also the portrayal of more orthodox homosexual relationships, Duvert became increasingly marginalized. His work, "sent(ant] le soufre" (Nourissier 7), became "une oeuvre clandestine (...) écrasée par l'opprobre de sa thématique" (Simonin, "L'Ecrivain" 423).

Despite Duvert's social and political mission and his avant-garde representation of homosexuality as a fluid, not fixed position in his formally experimental novels (Phillips 150, 162), there have to date been no full-fledged studies of his oeuvre, now conveniently defined, essentialized, and contained for critics by the author's recent death. However, a spate of new publications promises to change this, to provide the overdue critical momentum necessary to salvage Duvert's literary legacy: two studies of the author's novel *Récidive*, which was first published in 1967 then rewritten and republished in a much shorter version nine years later (1) ; the study of the male hunter in Duvert's works (2) ; the English translation in 2008 of Duvert's indictment of sex education in France, *Le Bon sexe illustré* (1974), which ragefully points at the "strangulation of *pleasure* by capitalist shackles" (Benderson, "Introduction" 8);

and Simonin's own examination of Duvert's works through the lens of publishing history.

With a view to drawing further attention to Duvert's prose and the controversial position he takes on "hemophilic" relationships, the present article will focus on *Quand mourut Jonathan* (1978), considered Duvert's "most disturbing novel" by Joannic Arnoi on his literary blog ("Tony Duvert") and the "most controversial selection" in *The Penguin Book of International Gay Writing*

(422). (How) is the relationship in the work between the artist Jonathan and the young boy Serge both a substitute for and in competition with the relationship between Serge and his neglectful mother, Barbara? How does Duvert depict and simultaneously problematize the intergenerational relationships between the older man and the boy, as well as between the mother and her eight-year-old? And to what degree is Duvert's novel shaped but also distorted by the author's conflictual representation of "pedhomophilic" desire vis-à-vis the imperatives of motherhood?

Before turning to the novel itself, we should note that the figure of the mother in Duvert's fictional universe is generally speaking a negative one. She is "Madame Non" (*L'Enfant* 41). Both archetype of evil and arch-enemy, she typically plays the role of demon within his overarching activist rhetorical strategy. In his textual call to arms against heteroeracy-"a system of morals based on the exclusion of almost all amorous pleasure and on the establishment of inequalities, falsifications, and bodily and mental mutilations among men, women, and children" (*Journal* 78-9)-the mother is "rich in dramaturgy (and distributes) her controls and standards, her housewife discipline, as if to a dog, a cat" (*L'Enfant* 27, 41). Indeed, as Duvert observes in an interview published in the newspaper *Libération*, if there were Nuremberg trials for crimes committed during times of peace, most mothers would be found guilty: "il faudrait y faire passer neuf mères sur dix."

Given this negative bias against mothers, it is hardly surprising that Duvert has been accused of misogyny, of distorting the image of the mother for his own purpose. Duvert responds to his critics in the contentiously "antiheterocratic" text, *L'Enfant au masculin* (1980), where he also denounces the self-proclaimed right of heterosexuals to "reproduce" what he sees as their sexually repressive, repressed, puritanical, and dishonest selves (45). Feigning astonishment that his works are considered misogynistic, Duvert notes that the women he portrays are typically all mothers playing both a social and familial

role. They are "institutional beings," "administrative creations," of the same order as tax collectors, teachers, proprietors, "flics," and "kapos" (*L'Enfant* 42). They are "human by-products" (Arnoi). And to those who accuse him therefore of misogyny in his portrayal of mother figures, Duvert responds that his literary portrayals of fathers, children, and homosexuals are all equally acerbic. He wonders whether labeling him a misogynist is misleading. Is it as misrepresentative of his intentions as his critics deem him to be of his female characters?

It's true that my portraits of mothers rarely give a high impression of motherhood. But I don't flatter fathers, children or gays either, and nobody reproaches me for that. It's only when I put mothers in the same sauce as my other characters that I'm called a malicious fabulator (...) Having said that, are my mother characters that exceptional? Are real French mothers, the millions of average mothers, any better? Honestly, I'm not sure (27, 29).

Take, for example, reader reactions to Duvert's novel *L'île atlantique* (1979), which has been praised by François Nourissier for its "sarcastic, merciless, hilarious portrayal of adults" (8), and in which Duvert recounts the misadventures of a group of boys that end in murder. Both men and women, so Duvert claims, find the mothers he portrays in this work of fiction very realistic, if not recognizable:

A book like L'île atlantique, in particular, earned me a mountain of appalling confidences. It was as if it inspired readers to finally confess their bad mother. And it was the shrews in the novel who were found to be the most similar (29).

In light of this representational context, of Duvert's belief that his portrayal of mothers as "mégères," "tortionnaires" (*L'Enfant* 19, 29) is based on truth, it is logical that the figure of the mother in *Quand mourut Jonathan* is also portrayed in negative light. Although the novel as a whole, considered a "masterpiece of tender understanding" by Edward Brongersma in his multidisciplinary study of male intergenerational sexual relations (*Loving Boys* 106), is traditional in its narrative poetics and can thus be differentiated from Duvert's other works of fiction which are exaggeratedly ironic and hyperbolic or resemble what the prose of Jean Genet might have been had it been

rewritten by Alain Robbe-Grillet (Thiher), the unflattering portrayal of Barbara in the work mirrors that of the mothers in *L'île atlantique* and Duvert's other texts. Typical of the "fragile and rare, persecuted, secret creatures" (34) despised and demonized elsewhere by Duvert, Serge's mother is herself also cast here as a "skirted robot" (*L'Enfant* 42). She is pitted both against her son and, by extension, against the man who is presumed to love him. While her frequent travels might remove her physically from most of the action of the novel, she looms larger than life in the wings as Serge's passive-aggressive "owner."

Mother as Manipulator?

From the start it is clear that Barbara should be seen first and foremost in this "readymade" maternal role, "son rôle tout constitué" (*L'Enfant* 27). The

novel begins this way:

The little boy went into the kitchen and saw strange things on the tiles. But he said nothing. His mother chatted with Jonathan. And he, Serge, explored this unknown house: for he was unhappy that the conversation was neglecting him. Then his mother left without him. He followed her with his eyes. She took a small path that joined the road; her car was over there. Jonathan closed the garden gate, pushed the child by the shoulders, and they returned to the kitchen (11).

Jonathan, whose "light accent (...) German, or English, or Dutch, we didn't know" (11-12) makes his origins hard to determine, and the young Serge, who will be staying with him, are both named by the fourth sentence of the novel. But Serge's mother, a bohemian-artist-cum-hippie-cum-world-traveler-cum-loose-woman is only identified by name five pages later in a paragraph in which she imposes a time limit for Serge's stay at Jonathan's. This paragraph furthermore takes us back in time, qualifies her, rehearses the nonchalance ("abandon") and abandonment that typify her:

Barbara would leave the boy behind for a week, take a short trip south and pick him up again on her return. Free of her husband, she would also relieve herself of Serge here and there, because she liked to live like a girl (15).

It comes as no surprise that Barbara is not her real name. For naming, as we soon discover, is not this mother's forte. Serge has somehow escaped being

saddled for life by his extravagant mother with a name as complex and complex-forming as "Sébastien-Casimir," "Gervais-Arthur," or "Guillaume- Romuald" (33). His cat, on the other hand, has not been as lucky. When he and Jonathan discuss the wild mice that run free inside Jonathan's country cottage and evoke with fondness Serge's domesticated feline back in his Parisian apartment, it quickly becomes clear that for Georgette - Barbara's true name and notably the feminized form of "George" - gendered labels only have currency when it suits her. Just as she sees nothing wrong with the life of a single girl, with kicking up her heels ("vivre en fille") instead of playing stay-at-home-mom, "Barbara-Georgette" (235) thinks nothing of giving a female name to a male cat:

*(Serge says ah we've got a cat, it's a boy, it's called Julie), and it's so soft, so soft!
- Oh did you touch any? It was my mother when we called her Julie the cat, but did you touch any mice?*

- No, they're too scared. Did your mother name him Julie the cat boy?

- Yes, of course, so you didn't touch any (12-13).

If she does not hesitate in her onomastic regendering, the aptly named Barbara just as readily mixes manipulation with fiction to convince Jonathan to care for her son while she continues to live her "dissipated life" (34). And Jonathan suspects as much, that he is being used by her: "[Il] se demande pourquoi elle osait lui confier à nouveau le petit. It looked like a deal" (16). For some two months earlier, the artist, despite being cash-strapped himself, has lent Barbara money. The letter written, it would first seem, to thank Jonathan curiously contains an uncharacteristic and passing mention of Barbara's son. It is as though "Barbara" could not resist the gratuitous "barbarism" of cruel torment:

I hope you remember my lovely son from time to time! He seems to have really forgotten you !!!!... I talk to him about you - we even wanted to go to your famous exhibition in December! No, he's not interested... Mind you, at his age you forget quickly, so maybe it's for the best, don't you think? But you don't even know that he's so adorable now !!!! (16)

Barbara's exaggeration of punctuation, the grammatical abusiveness of her multiple and repeated exclamation marks and points of suspension aside,

she pushes all common notions of politeness to extremes. Indeed, she appears to abuse the kindness of the seemingly benevolent Jonathan whose fear that she might arrive at his cottage empty-handed, without her son proves ultimately unfounded. Barbara cannot be relied upon either as a mother or a friend; the week that Serge, "prêté, ou plutôt déposé" (42), is to stay with Jonathan, and which has been intended to correspond with the "short" trip of his mother, soon stretches to months. This further stretches Jonathan's resources too.

But Serge, "accoutumé aux abandons comme aux abus périodiques" (60), predicts that his absent mother will not return on the day she has agreed. Jonathan might be preoccupied by Barbara's presumably imminent return; however, nothing is further from Serge's mind. When Jonathan reminds Serge that he will soon return to Paris, the "attitude irréaliste," the "refus naïf" of the boy disconcert his older host:

She's not coming [...] she's always late!... I bet you she's not coming [...] She's not coming! I know she won't. She changes her mind all the time [...] Don't

worry! She's not coming, I'm telling you! We're in the clear! If you don't believe me, it doesn't matter, you'll see (56-7).

The letter announcing - but not justifying - the amorous trysts that have taken Barbara unexpectedly from the south of France to Sicily and Greece, then all the way to California after her invitation by another total stranger who ostensibly believes in her artistic potential and healing powers, confirms that Serge has been right all along. If the various excuses Barbara gives Jonathan for not being able to provide financially for her son and her temporary abandonment of him seem abusive to Jonathan, in the eyes of the free-spirited boy, the prospect that he will be able to stay with Jonathan and thus be liberated from his mother - at least through the end of the summer, when French law will oblige him to return to school - is like hitting the jackpot. He was distracted, not very active, all that day, and did not leave Jonathan for a moment" (61).

Mothers as Monsters?

The scope of the freedom that these long, lazy summer months with Jonathan represent, "où il n'y a plus de rôles ni surtout de hiérarchie" (Arnoi), is almost unfathomable to Serge. The time to be spent with Jonathan in his

cottage, a place "[where] one could [...] shut oneself away, grow old by a year, without changing" (63), "like those beautiful simple shells whose cavity, near the ear, produces the call of the sea" (61) seems limitless, frozen. Yet the cruel reality of its limits quickly hits home. Serge is not prepared for the brutal scene between mother and son he and Jonathan soon witness the next time they venture outside it. Do the true monsters roam unchecked outside this idealized space, this "paradise lost" (Orezza) that is inhabited, for this summer at least, by Jonathan and Serge ?

Seated at a café in the neighbouring village with Serge, Jonathan hears sobs, "[a]igus, peu élevés, qu'une très petite poitrine devrait émettre." Serge points to a child of four or five years whose mother is reprimanding him for not drinking the lemonade she has ordered him. From where he is seated, Serge has been able to witness what has happened. "Elle l'a giflé comme ça, à travers," Serge explains to Jonathan, "et ça a saigné." The mother initially ignores the blood. Like melting lard, it is slowly streaking the delicate white cheek of her crying son. Whether the injury has been caused by the mother's ring or by a broken nail matters less than calming the child so as not to attract further attention. She thus threatens him that if he keeps crying she will strike him

again:

The slap for good behaviour had, against her intention, provoked an indecent and noisy spectacle which the woman tried in vain to bring back to order. Words were not enough: her hand, on the edge of the table, fingers stiffened, palm hollowed out, had short rhythmic jerks to discreetly draw the toddler's attention to the threat of a new slap to remedy the effects of the first (64).

Only once the blood starts dripping onto her son's shirt collar does the mother attempt to wipe his cheek with a handkerchief. Her son attempts to writhe free, all the while sobbing louder. The line between tenderness and abuse is too fine for the son: "The boy [...] perhaps took this gesture as another form of violence: he began to cry louder and tried to free his head, which the woman was holding from behind as she wiped it". However, this only exacerbates the situation, further enrages the child's mother. She angrily throws some coins on the cafe table then storms out with her poor boy in a final yet unequivocally violent show of force: "elle arracha l'enfant de son siège aussi brusquement et aussi haut que elle pouvait, le plaqua un bon coup de pieds au sol, lui empoigna une patte et l'entraîna" (65).

Why do the cafe patrons and passers-by turn a blind eye on this brutal scene? What to make of their silent glances? Prudently preferring to hold their tongues and feign indifference rather than interfere ("s'éloign[er] [...] sans avoir dit un mot ni risqué une mine"), they recognize that the "dressage" of child-raising is not without unpleasantness: "ils savaient que l'art d'enseigner les convenances aux tout-petits est plein d'embûches" (65). Similarly resigned to the rights that come with motherhood and to his own powerlessness, Jonathan is ashamed to try and justify to Serge why he for one has neither spoken out nor tried to intervene. He seems resigned shamefully to forget this "tiny drama" as quickly as possible, and to the inevitability of the mother getting the final, if not the more painful word: "Nobody says anything, it's his mother, there's no point. She yells at you, and gives her a double at home [...] We cover our ears, we wait until it's over" (66).

No matter how troubling this maternal outburst may seem to Serge, the older Jonathan is fully aware of the "démessuré feminine power" (*L'Enfant* 42). He knows that mothers hold a privileged and protected role in society. He has witnessed countless scenes like this one. Each has confirmed to him that maternal love is little more than "un amour d'inspectrice", that the only form of education a mother can provide is negative; that mothers are in effect little more than "monstre[s] à jupes et à gifles" (*L'Enfant* 29). Though Serge may claim

that if his own mother had hit him like that he would not have stood for it ("Moi ma mère si elle me fait comme ça moi je lui fous dans la gueule"), this amounts to little more than hyperbolic bravado. For when Jonathan first stayed with Barbara and her son in Paris, Serge would often hide in a closet and cry rather than stand up to her - this, after Barbara would strike out at him when he acted up and violently shake him in order, ironically, to continue meditating, of all things:

When she had friends over for contemplation and meditation, with incense sticks, green tea and a Zen book to hand, she would shake and slap Serge, reasoning with him in a measured voice:

- *Listen, old chap, you should have stopped the comedy, don't you think?*

The child, beside himself, went off to cry in a cupboard. So Barbara and her friends could resume their serenity exercises (31).

Indeed, under his mother's repressive reign, Serge's childhood seems little more than a nightmare of control, "blackmail of [his] most basic needs".

elementaires" (*L'Enfant* 29). Is it any wonder then that he so relishes the time he spends with Jonathan? That he yearns to free himself permanently of her? At least insofar as circumstances appear in the unfolding narration of events, Serge is finally able to be himself, to do as he pleases, to "live" (*L'Enfant* 38). And as the person willing to host, feed, entertain, and nurture him, Jonathan at first appears a paragon of virtue. Jonathan has gone to town to make the eight-year-old as comfortable as possible, despite being short on savings and in spite of his habit of living austerely. "He lacked many things to welcome the child. He had few sheets, a single pillow with a single pillowcase, a single tea towel. He washed it himself" (17-18). Jonathan has, for example, rented a refrigerator, added a mirror and whatever other furniture a young child might need to feel at home, stocked up on food, and thoroughly cleaned his living space both inside and out.

Pedophile as Paragon?

Yet despite the appearance of order, normalcy, and comfort, something is amiss. In the same way that Jonathan is ashamed when he turns a blind eye to the passably abusive scenes he frequently witnesses in town between mothers and their children, he is embarrassed by his duplicity when he purchases games, toys, and periodicals for Serge. He first inquires at a pharmacy, for example, which items would be most age-appropriate. Then he claims that they are for

his son when he purchases them later at the store next- door:

At the toy shop, he said he had a son. When he left the shop, his lie left him so ashamed and hurt that he had to abandon the parcel on a bench.

- *I hope he doesn't come," he thought at the end (18).*

Why, if he does not have anything to hide, would Jonathan feel it necessary to lie? Surely he could simply respond that the items are for a boy and leave it at that. Are the follow-up questions that might ensue so frightening? And what drives the interest he takes in this child who is no relation to him?

Over the course of the summer that Serge stays with Jonathan, it becomes clear that much more is at stake. Jonathan is not the innocuous "nurse" (155) for Serge that Barbara and her husband Simon first believe him to be. While Jonathan and Serge seemed innocently to sleep together when

Jonathan first visited Barbara in Paris and "s'étaient, à leur façon, beaucoup aimés" (15), it is only once Serge is free of his mother that the extent and true scope of this so-called affection between himself and the man some twenty years his elder becomes evident. It is suggested early during Serge's stay that Jonathan's disingenuousness extends to his relationship with the boy. Serge comes in from the garden and asks his host where to find the "foutoir," whose etymological tie to the French noun and verb "foutre" and whose sexual connotation as "brothel" are also significant: "He quickly hid his drawing [...] Jonathan, for his part, had not dared show his drawing to Serge: for it was obscene. It represented one of their secrets" (41). If the drawing does indeed represent the secret sexual component of their relationship as suggested, why should he find it necessary to hide it from the very person with whom he is sharing that secret relationship? Is Jonathan ashamed of the obsessiveness of it?

As recounted by the novel's narrator, Serge precociously initiates much of the sexual play with his older partner. In the bathtub, it is Serge who takes Jonathan's penis first, "qu'il finissait saisir, gifler, tordre" before soaping his host's naked body "partout, à fond, jusqu'au plus indiscret, avec le sans-gene et l'énergie d'une ménagère qui torche ses moutards" (50). The suggestiveness of what happened in the bedroom shortly thereafter, "le calme revenait après la circonstance qui assouvit les garçons" (51), gives way with time to slightly more elaborate descriptions with the difference in age between Jonathan and Serge that has been masked in the heavily charged use of the noun "garçons" increasingly apparent in the "disproportion" of their sexes. The thinly veiled

"circonstance" becomes a true "théâtre de cochonneries" in which "ils se cherchaient le cul" (114). Caresses of Serge's anus by Jonathan with his finger, for example, "un effleurement de l'index, ou plutôt de sa pulpe, qui suivait une course précise [...] la raie des fesses, quatre ou cinq centimètres au-dessus du trou [...] un bord de l'anneau [...] son milieu" (51), soon become obvious "accouplements" (181), penetration of the boy by his elder and vice-versa, with Jonathan penetrated in turn by Serge's "beau petit membre" (55). It is undeniable that there has been a sexual dimension to their relationship from the start and that the sometimes sexually tyrannical Serge plays his part in initiating their intimate coupling:

[For a long time, sodomy had been mixed in with their other pleasures; it was nothing special; it went unnoticed. It was only the growth of the child, or the length of their marriage, that gave rise to it.]

*This intimacy had gradually changed the nature of the penetrations - much deeper, but still almost motionless, on Jonathan's part; more deft, less playful, longer and more solidly lodged, on Serge's part.
A development that continued that summer (205)*

Whether or not we can trust the narrator, whose point of view seems confused with that of Jonathan, should it matter who initiates the sexual act? And that Jonathan is always the silent, if not nearly immobile partner of the seemingly more sexually charged Serge? Would such questions matter to a judge? Is this the 'relation de pure passivité' that Duvert claims it to be in an interview with the newspaper *Liberation* after the publication of his novel? As an adult and not a mere boy, Jonathan knows full well that to view Serge as emotionally and psychologically mature enough to sustain a sexual relationship with him on an equal footing (Phillips 163) is highly questionable. Jonathan is aware that in the eyes of society what he is doing with this prepubescent youngster will, if ever exposed, be deemed perverse, monstrous, criminal. His silence both in and out of the bedroom is, ironically and relatively speaking, a measure of his prudence. His exclusion from society for what he considers acts of love and tenderness, "(objet) de la plus violente repression, de la vindicte la plus acharnée" (*Le Bon sexe* 100), plunges him into despair. The mothers might seem monstrous to him by the way they mistreat their children. But if Jonathan's repeated and ongoing sexual contact with Serge is discovered, Jonathan will, as he recognizes, be judged far more severely. How to explain to the child that what may seem perfectly natural to the two of them is in the eyes of society deeply troublesome, rooted in an imbalance of power, a "social horror" certain to evince the most extreme moral outrage (Plummer 244)? That

their 'innocence' is actually a perversion, distortion, misrepresentation of reality?

How could I tell him that their lovemaking [...] was not what he thought it was, what he lived and demanded frivolously, innocently, in the intact perfection of his personality? How could I tell him that it was a crime, and that doctors would be called in to remove his buttocks; and that their pleasures would earn Jonathan ten years in prison, and him, Serge, an avalanche of psychotherapy and torture with his bare hands? (216)

And is Barbara, who herself is too caught up in her "cours d'expression corporelle," her "séminaires de cri primal" (159), her "folie narcissique" (157)

and is thus not aware of the true nature of the relationship between her son and the older artist, also at fault? Is she a bad mother for being so out of touch with reality? From the distorted perspective she exhibits for most of the novel, Jonathan's "néfaste influence" has been due to his negative energy, to the "negative waves he spread without being able to control them" (32- 3). Indeed, she has permitted Serge to spend more time with Jonathan while she has traveled with Simon, the husband with whom she has been reconciled. But this second visit of the boy to Jonathan's house will be the last. Before seeing predation or perversion, she sees rivalry. Less a paragon, or "model or pattern of excellence," Jonathan - as actor in the "théâtre de (... (In its archaic form, paragon means: "to be a match for; rival" (*Webster's*))

In the familial "theater" she reserves for her son, Jonathan is a match for, a rival to her. Whatever the situation and other roles she might play, Barbara sees her primary role as Serge's mother not as caregiver but as the person with the definitive, unparalleled, and unchallengeable right to control him:

she felt she had a definitive right over her child, which she used according to her whims, and which authorised all kinds of contradictions. Serge served as her backup humanity when she had nothing else. He was a doll on which you try out the gestures that you will later perform on less minute prey. A partner in rehearsals, in staging, in studies. Hence the incoherence of Barbara's behaviour towards the child: it only depended on the play.

But it was clear that, in all these theatres, Jonathan was the enemy, the danger. Barbara probably thought nothing very unfavourable of him: his flaw, his obvious quality of absolute enemy, was simply that Serge preferred him to her (213-4).

As her competitor for the "vrai petit amant" Serge, as Barbara herself has earlier described him in a letter (16), Jonathan must be kept at bay, neutralized. She thus intercepts all written communication between Jonathan and her boy. And when Simon suggests that Serge again be sent to spend six days with the artist while Simon and his wife visit London, Barbara's rambling refusal is categorical. The bond with this foreigner about whom her son appears to know far more than she does is far too strong. Although she never fully articulates what she senses, with the abbreviation "ça" suggestive and its referent illegal, this is also the first time Barbara hints that Jonathan's caretaking role might be a front. As self-declared star in her own familial drama, Barbara knows enough

to call it curtains. And so ironically to counteract what is also Jonathan's paragonic role, she finally exercises her maternal privilege to protect Serge in a tirade that mixes the pathological with the paranormal, the intensely private with the theatrical:

Oh no! (...) Enough of Jonathan! It's an illness, admit it!... Ever since that kid came back from over there, we can't have him back, he's become impossible (...) I don't want Serge to keep seeing Jonathan. I don't want that any more (...) I don't want to hear any more about that. There's something wrong there. Maybe they had nothing to do with it, but listen... I'm not telling you that, well, I mean... But there's something wrong. And I can feel it. I can feel it. And I'm never wrong. No! Something, I'd rather not tell you what I think. But I feel it. No. It's not right. No. Jonathan is finished and that's it. I promise you we're going to be in deep shit for years if this continues. Alright! I said nothing! I say nothing! But it's over. It's over and that's it. Serge hung too much, you know? And I do not know to whom. I don't know who! Yes, it worries me!... It's my right. It was me who made the kid, I do not know if you're aware. I know. It's too serious (...) I can feel it. It's not going to work any more. No. That's enough. Finish it. Stop! Curtain! Curtain! (229,233- 4)

When Jonathan died?

But in what appears to be the first positive maternal intervention by Barbara on behalf of her son, in this defiant if not overdue act of protection, Barbara ironically and tragically loses Serge forever. With his sights set on visiting Jonathan again, Serge takes the metro to the outskirts of Paris where hitchhikers try their luck getting a lift south:

He knew where the hitchhikers were, on the outskirts of Paris before the road that led to Jonathan's house. His route for now. Not that long, surely. With all

the cars. It had to work. There are people (236).

Once outside in the pouring rain, however, Serge quickly becomes disoriented. Yet he has reached a point of no return: "(Il) se dit qu'il ne partirait pas. He wouldn't go home either" (239). As the hundreds of cars speed by, their headlights like stars in the heavens beckoning to him, Serge sees his chance to flee:

Now watch the cars, until one comes along by itself and drives really fast. And watch the headlights and throw yourself against them, also very quickly, where they shine the brightest. Serge, stiff and motionless, his vision a little blurred, let several cars go by before spotting the one he was waiting for (241).

And so, with this suicide not quite accomplished, premeditated but not quite enacted, "a suicide [...] that is not thinkable, that is not imaginable" (Duvert, "Tony Duvert"), the novel draws attention one final time to the very inevitability that has driven it: that the erotic variety it celebrates is always already dangerous, unhealthy, and depraved (Rubin 280), to be crushed under "mountains of cretinism and hatred" (*L'Enfant* 23). If, as Duvert notes, "The adult lover is the only man in the world who treats the child as an equal and gives him back his freedom (*L'Enfant* 38), in truth and because of social norms, this freedom can only be ephemeral; Serge will always be a "marionnette": the relationship between Jonathan and Serge, their "ideologized coupling" (Duvert, "Tony Duvert") has been doomed from the start and can never be permitted by modern society to survive. But the final, foreboding scene of the novel also rehearses one last time the fundamental misrepresentation at its heart. Just as Jonathan, the adult lover of Serge, neither dies in the novel nor is the paragon he appears, just as Serge's mother proves herself ultimately not as unaware as she might seem, this suicide is really a killing, manslaughter. Instead of murdering his mother as Serge has suggested he might to Jonathan ("Moi je peux la tuer. Y a qu'à la tuer"), Serge indirectly causes the death of the person dearest to him, the one who has made his life worth living by freeing him. How can Jonathan survive without his beloved Serge?

By the end of the novel it becomes clear that what one might have thought the work would be about - when Jonathan died - is mere window dressing. Jonathan may have long contemplated ending his own life, but his relationship with Serge amounts ultimately to an extended dress-rehearsal for the inevitable: "Jonathan's death, too, would have been an assassination: for suicide does not exist. You are always killed by someone" (215).

When Jonathan died? How Jonathan died? And why Jonathan died? These are ultimately overdue prompts for interrogative rereadings of Duvert, for closer attention to his literary and literal tackling of our civilization's most "sacred" taboos: childhood and maternity (Josselin). Whether Jonathan, this dead man walking, might therefore be resurrected, recuperated, or vanish into

the "black hole" into which any measured speech about consent, pleasure and desire in intergenerational relationships seems to vanish (Davies 370), remains to be seen. In the meantime, however, we should neither lose sight of his problematic relationship within social reality (Phillips 172) nor of the ethical questions he - and Duvert through him - raise. Without the perspective of literary characters such as Jonathan, without the loud, if not discordant voice of his late creator, the ongoing, perhaps unresolvable debates over pedophilia in society and in the texts defining and tracing its moral contours remain incomplete. As such, they may themselves be misrepresentations as well.

California Polytechnic State University

NOTES

(1) See John Phillips, "Homotextuality: Tony Duvert's *Récidive*" in *Forbidden Fictions: Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth-Century French Literature*, and Brian Kennedy, "Rewriting, Rereading *Récidive*".

(2) See Owen Heathcote, "Jobs for the Boys' Or: What's New About the Male Hunter in Duvert, Guibert and Jourdan".

WORKS CITED for both versions

- Arnoi, Joannic "Tony Duvert (1945-2008)." Accessed 4 May 2009.
<http://joannic-arnoi.over-blog.fr/article-22311409.html>
- Benderson, B. "Introduction: The Family on Trial. *Good Sex Illustrated*. By Tony Duvert. Trans. Bruce Benderson. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007. 7-13.
- Best, Victoria "The Uses and Abuses of Children's Fairy Tales and the Pornographic." *Textual Ethos Studies or Locating Ethics* Ed. Anna Fahraeus and Ann-Katrin Jonsson. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. 229-43.
- Brongerstna, Ed. *Loving Boys: A Multidisciplinary Study of Sexual Relations Between Adult and Minor Males. Vol. 2*. Elmhurst, NY: Global Academic Publishers, 1990.

- Davies, Jon "Imagining Intergenerationality. Representation and Rhetoric in the Pedophile Movie." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13. 2-3 (2007): 369- 85.
- Duvert, Tony *Le Bon sexe illustré*. Paris: Minuit, 1974.
- Duvert, Tony *L'Enfant au masculin*. Paris: Minuit, 1980.

- Duvert, Tony "From: *When Jonathan Died. The Penguin Book of International Gay Writing*. Trans. D.R. Roberts. Ed. Mark Mitchell. New York: Viking Penguin, 1996. 422-8.
- Duvert, Tony *Journal d'un innocent*. Paris; Minuit, 1976.
- Duvert, Tony *When Jonathan Died*. Paris: Minuit, 1978.
- Duvert, Tony "Tony Duvert: no to the doll child. Interview with Guy Hocquenghem and Marc Voline. *Libération*. 10-11 April 1979. 15-16.
- Guillebaud, JC. *The Tyranny of Pleasure*. Paris: Seuil, 1998,
- Heathcote, Owen "Gay and Lesbian Theory, Fiction and Film in France, 1945-1995", ed. Owen Heathcote, Alex Hughes and James S. Williams. Oxford: Berg, 1998. 173-91.
- Josselin, JFs. Review of *L'Enfant au masculin*. "Duvert plays with fire. *Le Nouvel Observateur*. 5 January 1981. Accessed 4 May 2009. <http://www.leseditionsdeminuit.com>
- Kennelly, G. B. "Rewriting, Rereading *Récidive*. *Dalhousie French Studies* 67, 2004. 135-42.
- Nourissier, F. "Preface." *The Atlantic Island*. By Tony Duvert, Paris: Minuit, 1979. 7- 9.
- Orezza, A. Review of *Quand mourut Jonathan*. *La Quinzaine littéraire*. 1978. Accessed 4 May 2009. <http://www.leseditionsdeminuit.eu>
- Pascal, Mark "Introduction." *Varieties of Man/Boy Love: Modern Western Contexts*. Ed. Mark Pascal. New York: Wallace Hamilton Press, 1992. 8-9.
- Phillips, John *Forbidden Fictions: Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth Century French Literature*. London: Pluto Press, 1999.
- Plummer, K. "Pedophilia: Constructing a Sociological Baseline. *Adult Sexual Interest in Children*. Ed. Mark Cook and Kevin Howells. New York: Academic Press, 1981.221-50.
- Robinson, C. *Scandal in the Ink - Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century French Literature*. London: Cassell, 1995.
- Rubin, Gayle S. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," *Pleasure and Danger Exploring Female Sexuality*. Carol S. Vance. New York: Routledge, 1992. 267-319. "The Writer, the Publisher and Bad Morals." *Mai-Juin 68*. Paris: Editions de l'Atelier/Editions Ouvrières, 2008. 411-2S. "Duvert is dead. Long live Duvert." Accessed 13 December 2008. <http://www.mediapart.fr>
- Thiher, A. Rev. of *Recidivism*. *World Literature Today* 51.2 (1977): 249. Viart, Dominique and Vernier, Bruno. *La Littérature française*

au présent: Héritage, modernité, mutations. Paris: Bordas, 2008.

Dr. Brongersma Edward (*Loving Boys, Volume 1, 1986*) : The most beautiful, intense picture of a love relationship between an adult man and an eight-year-old boy was given by Tony Duvert in his novel *Quand mourut Jonathan* (1978).

Christopher Robinson (*Scandal in the ink, 1999, page 163*): The fundamental difference between Duvert and Gide, as I indicated above, is that for the former it is through freedom to explore their sexuality that the young can hope to escape from the deforming values of society, whereas in Gide's case the status of adolescent sexuality for the adolescent seems much more peripheral. For Gide the adult mentor retains something of a patriarchal status - hence the way in which Pauline hands her son Olivier over into Edouard's care - but without the notion of power/possession. In Duvert, even in *Quand mourut Jonathan*, the true pederast renounces the conventional marks of adult status altogether.

Peyrefitte and Montherlant are quite different. Their texts are not concerned with the abolition of possession but with a change in the identity of the possessor. As Montherlant puts it quite openly in one of his essays: 'What is it I want then? The possession of those who please me, possession in peace and in poetry.' Their attacks on the family itself are similar in terms to those of Gide and Duvert.

THE ATLANTIC ISLAND



François Nourrissier (*Le Figaro magazine*, 17 March 1979):

It's huge, unbreathable and frighteningly realistic. A caricature? Yes, of course, but apart from the fact that caricature is legitimate, are we really sure that reality is not as good as fiction? The drunken antics of Mr Seignelet, the furious monologues of his wife, the musings of Laure Boitard, a journalist with the *Républicain réuni*, the ethylic and emphatic speeches of Glairat, the local thinker: not many of them are real.

There are few writers today who are capable of this kind of ferocious taming, this kind of verve intoxicated with malice.

Because Tony Duvert is an astonishing writer! Against a backdrop of classic, well-mannered language, he embroiders all the arabesques of delirious invention, slang, juvenile wordplay and the most pasty vulgarity. It's great virtuosity. For lovers of literary prowess, a delight.

Madeleine Chapsal (*Le Matin*, 1979): No, it's not easy to read Duvert. He is on the side - which was always rough and deserted - of desire. And yet he is a classic, for the simple, skilful beauty of his writing, for his undeniable tenderness - that 'milk' of the heart - and also because, following his own tortuous, bloody and often perverse paths, he moves towards the purest.

François Rivière (*Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 1979): This time, we're in the middle of a novel, with a perceptible, sometimes hyper-Balzacian delight. A small world on an island, and in some ways upside down, since the fascinating children who, at night, jubilantly disrupt the rituals of adults make the latter seem like atrocious caricatures. And Duvert doesn't hold back: his humour, a vitriolic humour, spares neither the torturers (of children, of course) nor the fools, still less the madmen of civilisation.

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech (*Le Monde*, 6 April 1979):

The Atlantic Island could be the island of Ré. Same location, same climate, but above all the same population, both maintained and deranged by summer invasions. The main town, with a population of twenty-five thousand, is in fact home to twenty-five thousand people, who are no longer kept in check by the fears of the parish priest and what people will say. When these ancestral fears reigned, children found ways to defy them. Now that the taboos are wavering, they're having a field day. The old adage has come true: God's children must be taken, well and truly, for wild ducks. Those whom Duvert has gathered into a gang and tracked down listen only to their instincts: caresses without any taboos, pilfering, stabbings and, on occasion, murdering old ladies. Scruples and remorse have disappeared from their consciences, and from their vocabulary. Even among themselves, you'd be hard-pressed to find any trace of the chivalrous spirit that well-meaning collections credit young people with, as if to reassure their parents.

At Duvert's, the latter compete in perversity with the children, and don't hide it as they used to. Only a few unmarried female workers still cultivate the clean morals of polish and skates. The rest steal, rape and kill when necessary. They're like wild ducks too, only dumber and more talkative, and with the right to a beating, then a prison sentence, for kids who do what they do.

The author reveals his feelings about this jungle. He blames it on the wealthy, the fifty-somethings with their "moustaches" who, on holiday, mimic the freedom confiscated from real teenagers. He blames the notables for trapping young people in charity. Parents are suspected of hating their offspring, of only looking after the food and washing, of only believing in "talion" - "you have to pay" - and "taloche". Does a mother see her son die? Duvert suggests that she mimics the pain in order to be relieved of her chores.

The children are approved of replying like quiet barbarians to this gerontocracy without heart or ideals, of resenting their mediocre parents for not knowing how to sell themselves to the rich. Doing evil, if education still identifies it, becomes the only way to escape what one of them calls "*a tide of disgust*". But *L'île Atlantique* only hints at this view of the crisis in values and family ties. The novel is primarily descriptive. And it proves to be, in the minutiae of its fifteen or so characters, screamingly true.

Whether the characters are children or adults, old-fashioned grocers or cantankerous teachers, a mother and daughter talking about roasting, or a

barman talking about seafood crumble, the observation, accuracy and humour are exceptional. Obsessed with child sexuality, Duvert's previous books did not predict this openness to all aspects of a complex, teeming and delicious social reality. Louis Pergaud's *La Guerre des boutons* comes to mind, as does the village saga of *Clochemerle*. Above all, we are reminded of Marcel Aymé, whose sense of petty-bourgeois intimacy, tonic crudity and laughing acuity Duvert shares. Anyone who is concerned, or amused, by the merciless way children look at our crumbling morals should delight in every page of *L'île Atlantique*.

Christopher Robinson (Scandal in the ink, 1999, page 163):

Gide's famous cry, 'Families, I hate you!' (as familiar to the French as Larkin's equivalent, 'They fuck you up, your mum and dad', is to the English) echoes in the work of Peyrefitte, Montherlant and Duvert, but the use which these writers make of the motif varies significantly. The closest to the Gidean position is Duvert, who like Gide denies that identity is a fixed quantity, and therefore presents his characters as in a state of permanent potential development, on which adults in general, and families in particular, exert a stifling or malforming influence.

Thus, in *L'île Atlantique* families represent obsession with things material: in the case of the Seignelet family obsession with food, for example. The children of such families are treated as material objects, to be organized, emotionally manipulated, even brutalized, as in the case of Julien Roquin. These negative forces themselves determine the nature and extent of the adolescent rebellion which they unintentionally nurture. Despite a touching desire to achieve some sort of togetherness, the band of youngsters, in theft, in mutual sexual exploitation, in murder even, replicate the patterns of behaviour which their elders have taught them. Only Julien, at the bottom of the pile, realizes what is happening: 'Each of them had fled from a sick environment, a family: they were a group of mutilated creatures, stammering, limping, there would never be any communication between them, no new gesture would be created. It was too late.

Joannic Arnoi (review taken from the Amazone website, 23 July 2003):

When it was published in 1979, this book did not attract the same audience as his previous books, particularly *Paysage de fantaisie*, which won the

Prix Médicis in 1973. However, the style of this novel is much more classical. Tony Duvert seems to have moved away from daring experiments and tells a story, in a fairly linear fashion.

The island of the title is a symbol: it represents a microcosm, a world in isolation, with its notables, its intellectuals, its grocers, its proletarians, its prostitute and, above all, the offspring of this society. Duvert proceeds in the manner of Dos Passos, moving from one character to another, regularly changing his point of view. He moves back and forth between the world of the children and that of the adults, fully demonstrating the extent to which they are hermetically sealed from each other. Sex is an important component of both worlds, rarely joyful, more often than not marked by the seal of predation.

Each sketch gives the author the opportunity to exercise his talents as a brilliant satirist, exploding mediocrity, perversion and brutality with an absolutely astonishing economy of words. The dialogue is particularly fascinating: its emptiness is reminiscent of Nathalie Sarraute or Robert Pinget, but who would have converted to the (pseudo)realist novel. There's not the slightest trace of fat in this scalpel-cut book, in which every word is laid out to the millimetre. But as Duvert is a dazzling artist, it's perfectly possible to devour his book like a disturbing thriller without dwelling on the perfect form that underlies it. Almost all the friends I had read it to first devoured it, before eventually returning to the story, the characters (ah! Madame Seignelet: the most dreadful mother in French literature!), the satire, the art, and so on.

L'Île atlantique is a masterpiece, a 'poem' in the sense of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, a synthesis of realism and the new novel, a book that is both easy to read and infinitely rich. It's high time we finally recognised one of the most important French writers of the twentieth century, who fell into purgatory (at least) in the 1980s because of his views on the relationship between adults and minors. In his defence, we might add that Tony Duvert is neither Roger Peyrefitte nor Gabriel Matzneff: he is not a hunter summoned to justify himself, and who invents hypocritical reasons. Nor is he a champion of childhood or adolescence, whose pettiness and bad faith he pursues. For him, young people are

adults in the making, already rotten with some form of social self-importance. And he hunts them down with a moralism that may seem paradoxical.

Jean-Yves Alt (<http://culture-et-debats.over-blog.com/article-314281.html>, 2 May 2005):

L'Île Atlantique is a novel about childhood. Tony Duvert paints a funny, charming and cruel picture of family life in some sub-prefecture, the life of the kids, the ersatz life of their parents, the way you bite into an apple and lick your lips.

The boys live simply, happily, with their frail voices, their natural language, while their parents die a slow death trying to survive, an agony that lasts for decades, with the memory of their cooled orgasms, their morbid, gluttonous or insipid perversions.

L'Île Atlantique revolves around what we usually call 'children', but who are not: they are complete, total human beings, living fully, magnificently, to the extent that the zombies, the living-dead we usually call 'adults', allow them to. Tony Duvert said in *Journal d'un innocent*:

"The adult is only the form that the child is forced to adopt in order to reproduce. And if hygiene means that instead of dying a few years after falling into the adult state, we live much longer in it, we must forget where the height of human perfections lies: intelligence, freedom, invention, sociability, community spirit, cheerfulness, kindness, courage, spontaneity, generosity, gentleness, mischief, emotional richness, solidarity, loyalty, beauty, etc.: in childhood. to be found in childhood".

The adults of the *Atlantic Island*, with the appropriate pejorative nuance, are seen through the eyes of a man-child; not the curious but innocent eyes of a boy, but the eyes of a man, well-informed and experienced, a man who would sink into the body of a child, who would practise looking like a child. A child well into his thirties, but who has not been spoiled, perverted, domesticated, moulded by society and families. This man-child then sees the world as it is, often funny, with a sense of humour.

But above all, it's a cruel, Ubuesque world, populated by families who are mind-numbing machines.

Families are fairly sophisticated machines. They ingest living, sparkling, funny matter: kids; and after processing, they spit out detritus, which has only one function: to transform itself in turn into a machine for producing detritus, and so on.

The principle of transformation is simple. Living matter is subjected to a variety of treatments, like hides in a tannery. First of all, the gouzigouzantes laughs, the guilguiliguantes caresses. Then there are the prohibitions:

"I don't want you to go out any more. I forbid it. Do you hear me? Do you hear me? You'll spend all day here. In front of me. And I forbid you to see anyone... in here! In front of me! All day long! And when you go back to school, it'll be the same! I want, you hear me, I want proof that you went there! We'll get you a special book and have it signed there! Stamped by the headmaster! Every single day! Do you hear me? And the rest of the time, here! With us! And the famous friends, outside! And at night! Lockdown!"

But the essential ingredient is still the lashings of the whip, the chains, the heelings and the caps. The slightest opportunity is a good one to play out the great scene where children become punching bags for their parents' amusement.

"Bertrand in particular had been a wonderful partner. He could have been tormented like a slave, a deportee, a dog. He resisted and bounced back, always rising to the challenge of others' stupidity and ferocity. He had become a big jerk who weighed a hundred tonnes, a short, stocky, grateful teenager. He'd be a technician one day, maybe an engineer, maybe in the atomic industry, if they slapped him around enough. What a promotion for his father.

Of course, it's not always a clean affair, there's blood, there are indelible scars (an old lady: her spinal pain was a result of a dip sixty-four years ago): but in the secrecy of the alcoves, none of that shows too much.

Admittedly, the family machine is not 100 per cent efficient: there are times when the kids are on their own, inventing a thousand ruses to escape, there are networks of resistance and mutual aid: there are even rebuses who refuse to let themselves be reduced to adults (for which there is only one solution: flee). But on the whole, the system is quite happy with the way it works. When the detritus has succeeded in transforming the child it was working on into a larva, it enjoys a cosy social status among the other detritus. And that's not all they enjoy; the thousand tortures they inflict, at their whim, on the little living creatures they call their children, are real orgasms for them. Ah, the beautiful beatings with chains, the spankings until they bleed, leaving at their feet shapeless masses of flesh, panting and bloody but submissive! What delights! It's such a source of pleasure that you can feel it rising and follow it through the barrage of insults that accompany and punctuate the blows! The pleasure is all the greater because it's all for the good of the child, of course.

But be warned: there is no question of sadistic scenes or full-blown pornography in *L'Île Atlantique*. It is a clinical description, that of the astonished but objective expert man-child.

It's hardly surprising, then, if you're not a pretty sight when you "grow up": they're all sick, with "those psychosomatic diseases that everyone gets these days, even in the best climates". The men are imbibed, alcoholic to the marrow of their brains, cowardly, vicious, perverse. The women, flabby, greasy, nauseous, are shrews, domestic tyrants.

So it was with Madame Seignelet who "had established forever by dint of screams, complaints, commands, sighs and slaps that she was tortured without respite. No one would have dared to doubt it, not even her husband. She sacrificed herself, worked herself to the bone, gave her life: don't believe it, you had a skullcap (...) Plunged into her armchair like a little potato (...) her stomach was well greased, her limbs quite limp, her brain quite spineless (...) She read flaccidly, and was always in a hurry (...).(...) She read flaccidly, like old people dozing in a chair, and she combed her hair with five fingers, pulling and ironing until it was unmanned, and scraping her greasy scalp with all her nails. She collected a sludge of sebum and dandruff which formed, under each nail, a crescent moon of sticky greyish lard, which she sniffed."

Fortunately, these adults end up dying, in almost general indifference, often of violent deaths, sometimes murdered by their spouse depending on the chance of marital hatred. And that's for the best: it's better not to prolong the agony of these wastes who have all reached the canonical age of 30, 40, 100, the stupid age par excellence.

And then there are the children, the boys because the few girls from the *Atlantic Island* are there almost by chance. They, at least, live when they're safe from the blows. They are innocent and fanciful, babbling in packs, having a hard-on as they enjoy their bodies, in complete innocence: they are not yet standardised, trained, and when they have "a vice", "a mania", they don't attach any importance to it because they don't know they have it. They enjoy their bodies with malice, with delight, are amused by their sex pointing out like a nose, by their funny bottom, and they wouldn't believe you if you told them it was dirty, a vice, sexual: only those for whom the training has begun to bear fruit feel the beginnings of embarrassment, of shame.

The shame that perverts them, the guilt that is injected into them like venom to transform them into adults. They then start to make fun of fags and

queers, while continuing to get their boyfriends on.

Kids enjoy the gang life, the opportunities to outwit their parents, the thefts they brag about to their pals, from petty theft to outright burglary, with death the outcome. But stealing is seen as an art, a sport practised for the sheer beauty of it, for the insolent mockery it makes of society. Robbery is never tainted by anything that might debase it: the feeling of ownership, of appropriating someone else's property.

The boys also enjoy their language, which contrasts with that of the adults who speak with a corpse in their mouth, where everything sounds wrong, who are just bad actors performing in a theatre so shabby that they are the only spectators. The boys, on the other hand, speak a language that is lively, clear and funny:

- Can you imagine the vioque eighty berges or something like that!

- Oh yeah, a hundred berges!" chuckled Julien Roquin. She was fucking schlinguating if she shat her trousers when we tied her up! Oh, the school! Ah, the other bastard did the right thing!

- They say it was the gag, that it choked her, not strangled her. So it's your fault, is it? No more than the one before! says Marc Guillard.

- But no, no!" said Th  ret. No! We barely put half of it in his mouth, we didn't even squeeze, we're not joking, listen.

- That didn't stop her from farting with her arse! Ah, the bitch!

- It's not that, it's the dentures," said Guillard.

- Dentures? What dentures?" said Ren   Th  ret.

- Dentures. Old ladies have dentures. When you gag them they swallow it and it chokes them and they snap. Everyone knows that!

Jean-Yves Alt (<http://culture-et-debats.over-blog.com/article-1307100.html>, 2 December 2005):

No, Tony Duvert is not dead. What a surprise it was to rediscover 'L'  le Atlantique' (first published in 1979) by this author, who was very well known in the 1970s but has since been totally blacklisted, on my bookseller's shelves yesterday. It's true that G  rard Mordillat has filmed an adaptation of this novel for Arte, which should be broadcast at the end of the year.

Games of massacre

In a previous republication of this novel (Points collection, Seuil, 1988), François Nourissier pointed out in his preface that the material of which this book was made... was not for everyone. Particularly the chubby, fresh hands of children, who were unlikely to read it. But beware of mothers who inadvertently come across this disreputable work, which gives off a mephitic odour: that of literature conveniently described as 'cursed'.

This lavish novel takes place over the space of a season, somewhere on the island of Ré or Oléron. Its 'hero' is not so much a child in particular (even if the reader senses that Julien is the object of the author's tender indulgence) as he is a young man.

a children's society set apart from the atrocious, buffoonish society of adults. But this rather informal fraternity of children from different socio-cultural backgrounds has nothing to envy, in terms of cruelty and pettiness, to the one from which it claims to stand out: with its range of stereotyped behaviours and brutal prejudices, of which the most fragile, like Julien, bear the brunt. The whole delinquent, penny-pinching gang goes so far as to commit the worst crimes: from the most savage muggings in local shops to murder, perpetrated in complete innocence of course.

François Nourissier was full of praise for the 'form' of the book, which displays a vertiginous satirical verve, with mothers in particular bearing the brunt, as well as a prodigious verbal invention worthy, at the very least, of Rabelais... Today, there is no doubt that Tony Duvert would be better off in prison... under the influence of the leagues of virtue...

Thierry Cecille (*Le Matricule des anges*, No. 69, January 2006):

The timely reissue, twenty-five years on, of Tony Duvert's "L'île atlantique", a nightmarish adventure novel and biting satire of a ferocious France, should encourage us to (re)discover his provocative and truthful work.

Tony Duvert (born 1945) published a dozen books, novels, stories and essays between 1967 and 1982. His reputation gradually grew, between scandal and admiration, and in 1973 he was awarded the Prix Médicis for his *Paysage de fantaisie*. But he chose silence, broken only in 1989 by *Abécédaire malveillant*, a

sarcastic collection of aphorisms and thoughts darker than those of his illustrious predecessors La Rochefoucauld and Chamfort. If Rimbaud's silence never ceases to puzzle biographers, we might be even more surprised by this one: it would seem that once a novelist has embarked on a career, nothing can stop him, until death follows (and even if the readers have already abandoned him...)! So what happened?

G rard Mordillat, talented director of *En compagnie d'Antonin Artaud*, celebrated documentary filmmaker (with J r me Prieur) of the Corpus Christi series, and novelist himself, has chosen to adapt for Arte *L'île atlantique* (1979), which  ditions de Minuit are now offering in their paperback collection. If this

It is also a kind of model, since Duvert makes perfect use of a wide range of novelistic effects and tools. The plot is simple: a dozen children and teenagers from different social backgrounds gradually escape their parents' control to form a gang that engages in a series of thefts, sometimes accompanied by accidental deaths, until the police restore order, both security and family order.

The island, meanwhile, symbolically represents both the confinement they are trying to escape, and the banality of any French sub-prefecture then (or now?), with its bourgeois neighbourhoods and populous suburbs, its shopkeepers and notables, its bistros and inns for Mother's Day meals, its Sunday church and luxury hotel for furtive adulterers. Beyond that, however, there is another space, one that might make some people believe that escape is possible: fields and forests, bushes and caves, sandy shores and the ocean. Because you have to escape, or at least try to, before being caught up by adults and adult life. A hesitant, chaotic, derisory or futile escape for some, a last gasp of revolt or hope before the slow death that is what we are witnessing. The vision we are given of these children is far from ideal, and there is nothing idyllic about their escape: they are sometimes foolish, cowardly or hypocritical, their actions may ultimately be no more than "a bucket of dirty water thrown through less mobile filth", but the fact remains that they escape the abjectness into which the adult world rots, no doubt because they do not yet hold any power.

Power, in fact, omnipotence itself, terrorising and most of the time sadistic, exercised through physical or psychological violence, is indeed what characterises the family (the *infamous infamy* rather), whatever the social class, who is at the heart of this painting, who is its target, frightening and yet close to what all of us, more or less, have known, know and put into practice? With the Viauds, the Guillardards and the Pellissons ("There's no doubt we're in France!" as a

strong line in *Les Valseuses* 1973 put it), we hit, we lock up, we hysterise, we whine, we indulge in emotional blackmail, moralism and post-Sixties-era cronyism. If you've had children, it's for yourself, not for them! They have no rights: their imagination, their sexuality, their language, their desires, they will have to conquer and preserve them at all costs, through trickery and pettiness, mute slaves...

who are also expected to be tender and pretty. It's hardly surprising that they wander around confused: from the moment they enter this world, they have been rendered incapable of freedom, of using a language that would enable them to understand the world and others, or of possessing a body that would give them pleasure. This is undoubtedly what Foucault, at the same time, theorised as 'subjugation': the constitution of the subject in both senses of the term through unconscious and repressed obedience to the norms of a disciplinary society, where 'bio-power' takes charge even of sexuality, which no longer has anything intimate about it - the family and the school being, even today, the most powerful auxiliaries of this unfulfilled, consensual subjugation.

L'île atlantique is the perfect novel form for a radical critique of the French family and its inquisitorial, destructive moralism. Rest assured, however, that this is not a heavy novel-à-thèse, quite the contrary. As if it were a tribute (or a farewell?), we might wonder whether Duvert isn't taking on an entire history of the novel, bringing together the achievements and ambitions of a number of models: These include Flaubert (the relative absence of the narrator, the frequent use of free indirect style, the use of ellipses and a simple past tense that 'freezes' a scene, the caricature of the different faces of stupidity, pastiches such as the pedantic and indigestible critical articles by Laure Boitard), Zola (the re-creation of social readings, whether in conversations - if you can call them that! between shopkeepers and customers, or the deafening, logorrheic diatribes of Mme Seignelet), Guilloux's *Sang noir* (evoking teachers and notables, that so-called sub-prefecture elite), Céline (the family scenes of verbal or physical confrontation rival certain pages of *Le Voyage* or *Mort à crédit*)...

L'île atlantique is therefore the perfect novelistic expression of Duvert's radical critique of the French family (both bourgeois and petty bourgeois) and its inquisitorial and destructive moralism, as set out elsewhere in *Le Bon Sexe illustré*, in *L'Enfant au masculin* and in numerous fragments of the *Abécédaire malveillant*. As he predicted, aren't we now witnessing the reign of the Mothers, with their procession of lukewarm repression, chattering hysteria, comfortable terrorising conformism and gentle castration? Likewise, he denounced the false sexual liberation that turns out to be nothing more than a new weapon of post-

Fordist capitalism, and, like Pasolini in *Salò*, staged the neo-fascism of the consumption of bodies offered up, martyred and tortured, in his terrifying *Paysage de fantaisie* (the

title being, of course, an antiphrase). Perhaps he had not foreseen, however, the force of our neo-puritanism, the hydra with a thousand belching heads of the various leagues of virtue or protection of this and that: his desire for young boys barely of puberty (picaresque beggars and occasional prostitutes in the superb *Journal d'un innocent*, the unpredictable child adopting an adult in *Quand mourut Jonathan*, the Rimbalidian runaway in *Récidive...*), the litany of erotic encounters (with its physiological or scatophilic obsessions) did not prevent Nourrissier, Claude Mauriac or Poirot-Delpech from singing their praises.

Would today's Médicis crown him again? We can only doubt it. Is this one of the reasons for his silence? Has he remained silent out of weariness, disgust, a feeling of what's-good? Or is it more a form of wisdom, or pride? "Some writers go into silence, give up expressing themselves and communicating. Do they think it's too deceitful to say, to believe, to make others believe? All intellectual progress makes you more capable of creating, but more reluctant to do so. It's like the abstention of good minds that have never given birth to anything." (*Malicious Primer*, article entitled "Silence")

Fawnes (book review posted on Amazon on 10 April 2010):

In many ways, this book is the culmination of Tony Duvert's work. An exceptional prose writer, he had often run up against the risk of being scattered, patchwork, a collection of tasty but disparate pieces of bravura. Here, he overcomes the problem and succeeds in unifying his novel. Three themes are employed to this end:

(1) firstly, and this is perhaps the most important, that of the social, and not just literary, denunciation of a bourgeoisie whose hypocrisy is a pillar, where children are beaten to forget their own turpitude, where people drink and lie. This failure of family values, even when mixed with liberal-libertarian ideology, heralds another, more massive and more general failure: that of the supposedly peaceful and consensual world we have to live in... and of its values.

(2) That of running away, which, coupled with the evocation of juvenile

delinquency, reinforces the social connection mentioned above, but is not reduced to it. As we all know, running away is always, in the end, a flight from oneself.

and at the same time a search for self. The children, and Julien in particular, are transformed from victims into explorers.

(3) That of insularity. On this island where the adults reproduce the mainland (interview factories, work, calendar holidays, values and customs), the children live in a kind of enchanted, magical and irreducible circle that only tangentially (and violently) touches the world normalised by law and morality. They are not afraid of going round in circles, because they have decided not to walk straight. The circularity of the island is a challenge to the linearity of the world.

Tony's lyricism and indifference to explanatory and reductive discourse, his metamorphosis of lived experience (in this case, the world of children) into something absolutely meaningful, and his writing style - fluid and evocative, as musical as it is possible to be in French - bring him surprisingly close to Joyce, to whom he also sends a few mischievous winks ("le square Léon Bloom"!). A truly great book!

Anne-Marie Vanhove, La grève des écoliers en Angleterre en 1911 : un chaos créateur jubilatoire (*L'unebévue* n° 32, November 2014, version augmentée de quelques photos d'archives).

Throughout Tony Duvert's novel *L'île atlantique* (1) there is a clear divide between the world of adults and the world of children. In an interview with Guy Hocquenghem and Marc Voline that appeared in *Libération* on 10 and 11 April 1979, Tony Duvert explained that he wanted to create relationships that were neither parental nor pedagogical. On the *Atlantic island*, there are groups of children, gangs under different names.

But I carefully show that these groups are failures. The gangs I show are completely dissociated, they are people who create a kind of embryonic sociability between themselves, when they have no way of doing so. These are kids who form a gang because they can't be alone (2).

There is no cultural model for successful relationships. And yet in *L'île*

atlantique there is a child he loves, Tony Duvert. What is this child like, ask Marc Voline and Guy Hocquenghem?

It's the character of Julien in *L'île atlantique*, a child anarchist who knows only one solution to problems he seems to understand much better than the rest of us, and that solution is desertion. He goes underground.

Does he not write, in *Quand mourut Jonathan* (3), that "everything that is collective is limited, and everything that is solitary is null"? Or, in *L'Abécédaire malveillant*, to "S for society":

The only model for societies is Hitlerism. Every nation has practised it, copied it under a thousand masks. The tyranny of a sacralised leader, of a cynical oligarchy, a political order maintained by force and fear, by a gigantic police force, army and propaganda. The reason of State is criminal. The individual, the citizen, is sacrificed to the financial powers and institutions that have been petrified. Alleged minorities are persecuted, enemies are denounced from without and within, and obscure civil wars are stirred up. Hysterical worship of work, surveillance of everyone by everyone, denunciation taught from childhood, dawn raids, countless people imprisoned for innocent crimes, apology for mediocre values and narrow-minded grandeur, dull marriages, dismal sex, the family as a mother-cop cell, support for religions, sects, falsified and censored information, nationalist apologies, inflation of the visual, pandering to the mind by the media, giant shows, rains of unculture, stunted creativity, general affairism, a plutocracy of idiots, perfect representatives of the little man they have debased and who votes for them: all countries are there and will always be there, bleating to themselves that they are not. The best worlds only know how to put on a good show. The doctor, the educator and the computer scientist replace the truncheon and the militia foot. Gas chambers are called schools and only kill slowly, softly in the flowers. This horror is smeared in pink, blue and baby white. Society is crime itself (4).

But reading *L'île atlantique* reveals a jubilant creative chaos! On this island on the Atlantic coast, boys : Louchon dit encore le mille pattes, Alain Viaud, René Théret, Joachim Lescot, his cousin Hervé Lescot, etc. and above all Julien Roquin. Aged between seven and fourteen, they

live a clandestine, independent existence. Coming from families where everything is at odds, from the son of a market gardener to the son of a prominent man, their gang goes on a pilfering spree, followed by full-scale burglaries, with all the consequences that follow. Bertrand Poirot- Delpech's

review in Le Monde on 6 April 1979 was a delightful description of these spasms of reading, this reappropriation by children of life in its various material, social and psychological aspects, this other way of beating time:

The Atlantic island could be the island of Ré. Same location, same climate, but above all the same population, both maintained and deranged by summer invasions. The main town, with a population of twenty-five thousand, in fact has a population of twenty-five thousand, no longer restrained by the fears of the parish priest and what people will say. When these ancestral fears reigned, children found ways to defy them. Now that the taboos are wavering, they're having a field day. The old adage has come true: God's children must be taken, well and truly, for wild ducks. Those whom Duvert has gathered together in gangs and tracked down listen only to their instincts, caressing without any taboos, pilfering, stabbing and, on occasion, murdering old ladies. Scruples and remorse have disappeared from their consciences, and from their vocabulary. Even among themselves, one would look in vain for traces of the chivalrous spirit that well-meaning collections credit young people with, as if to reassure their parents. [...] The author lets his feelings about this jungle shine through; he blames it on the affluent, the fifty-somethings with their 'moustaches' who, on holiday, mimic the freedom confiscated from real teenagers. He blames the notables for trapping young people in charity. Parents are suspected of hating their offspring, of only looking after the food and washing, of only believing in "talion" - "you have to pay" - and "taloche"... Children are allowed to retaliate, like quiet barbarians, to this gerontocracy without heart or ideals, to resent their mediocre parents for not knowing how to sell themselves to the rich. Doing evil, if education still identifies it, becomes the only way to escape what one of them calls "a tide of disgust" (5).

Yes, indeed, to immerse yourself in L'île atlantique is to discover or rediscover all the pleasures of a disaffected childhood:

- the pleasure of saying dirty words you hardly know,
- the pleasure of being stroked,
- fun and complicity between children and animals
- enjoy recounting his exploits, real or imagined,
- the pleasure of comparing your exploits with those of others,
- pleasure of playing,
- pleasure of completing,
- the pleasure of running, moving and moving freely in space,
- the pleasure of shouting and screaming,

- pleasure of rebelling,
- a pleasure to watch ,
- pleasure of doing nothing,
- the pleasure of sticking your fingers up your nose,
- pleasure of fighting,
- pleasure of lying,
- the pleasure of smelling it ,
- the pleasure of not washing and smelling strong,
- the pleasure of imitating,
- the pleasure of unfettered friendship,
- the pleasure of making jokes and puns,
- the pleasure of explaining things about sex to a friend,
- the pleasure of exchanging objects,
- pleasure of the uselessness of petty theft,
- pleasure of derouling adults,
- pleasure of insolence,
- the pleasure of thwarting surveillance,
- pleasure of feeling the strongest,
- the pleasure of confronting the possibilities of desire,
- the pleasure of absolute freedom.
- and pleasure, pleasure, pleasure and much more...

This echoes Jean Vigo's film *Zéro de conduite*, shot in 1932 at the Saint-Cloud college where Jean Vigo himself spent part of his school life, and released in 1933. Deemed "anti-French" and, under pressure from the organised *Fères de famille*, the film was not given the green light to be shown until 1945, after the Liberation. And yet, what poetry! The children's revolt against the narrow-minded discipline of the school always gives them the possibility of a joyful outcome, from the pillow fight that turns into light snow to the famous image of their flight across the rooftops, towards the beauty of a serene sky. Their potential for insurrection is carried by the play, which is constantly present, subversive and excessive.

We all know the power of the creative insurrectionary potential that comes to the fore during major workers' revolts. But for children, historically, this has been extremely rare. While I was looking for a way to continue the reflection begun thanks to Tony Duvert, I found on my bookshelves, in an 'old' issue of the journal *Révoltes logiques* (6), from 1976, a text that dealt with an old, minor, ephemeral, forgotten struggle, which this journal wanted to revive and bring back to life, that of a revolt by schoolchildren, in 1911, in the north of England. I remembered that the magazine *Vacarme* had also published this text in its issue 26 of January 2004: 28 years later, the same text had resurfaced. And

behind these two magazines, a collective.

Révoltes Logiques is the Centre de recherches sur les idéologies de la révolution. The journal, called "Cahiers", takes its name from Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, from the poem "Démocratie". Rimbaud likened the crushing of the Commune to the exploitation of the colonies by a France that loudly proclaimed the values of the Republic:

The flag goes to the filthy landscape, and our dialect drowns out the drum. In the centres we will feed the most cynical prostitution. We will slaughter logical revolts.

To peppery, soggy countries! - in the service of the most monstrous industrial or military exploitations.

Goodbye here, goodbye anywhere. Conscripts of good will, we will have a ferocious philosophy; ignorant for science, cunning for comfort; punctured for the world that goes on. This is the real march. Onwards and upwards!

For the other magazine, *Vacarme*, there is also a collective: the *Vacarme* association, which has around thirty volunteer members, in partnership with *Les Prairies ordinaires*, a publishing house based on political and intellectual affinities, spearheading a policy of minorities.

Now it's my turn, as a lifelong reader of reviews, to present a long-standing struggle in the psychoanalytic review *L'unebêvue*, so that its trace doesn't disappear a little more each year, basing myself mainly on the elements described in *Révoltes Logiques*.

Over a hundred years ago, in August 1911, the British ruling class had to deploy troops and warships to Liverpool to crush an almost insurrectionary general strike. The city's mayor warned the government of "a revolution in the making". From June to August 1911, a formidable strike movement demonstrated the workers' desire for higher wages and better working conditions.

It was a mass strike, as Rosa Luxemburg so brilliantly theorised, a strike whose development marked the end of the progressive phase of capitalism and the appearance of a new revolutionary period:

The mass strike [...] sometimes sees the wave of the movement invade the whole empire, sometimes divides itself into an infinite network of thin streams: sometimes it springs from the ground like a living spring, sometimes it is lost in the earth [...] all these forms of struggle cross or rub shoulders, cross or

overflow each other: it is an ocean of eternally new and fluctuating phenomena (7).

The hot summer of 1911 remains a landmark in British social history. 5,000 soldiers and hundreds of police were sent to Liverpool in August 1911, while two warships aimed their guns at the city. In response, the workers engaged in a kind of "guerrilla warfare", erecting barricades and barbed-wire defences. Two people were killed, and faced with the threat of a general strike, the authorities panicked. As one witness to the Paris Commune put it: "women with their hair down and half-naked rushed into the streets to destroy and pillage".

Against this backdrop, at the start of the school year in 1911, the schoolchildren's strike began at Sainte Marie Catholic School in Hull, when 13 of the older boys abandoned the younger ones in the playground. As soon as it became known that they were on strike, the news spread and before the afternoon classes started, it had reached several schools in the east end of Hull. Immediately there were crowds of children outside the schools shouting "Get out!" or "Yellow!" at the pupils as they returned to class (8). Then the municipal schools also went on strike. From Dundee to Southampton, via Liverpool and Dublin, more than 62 towns were affected, particularly in industrial sectors, deprived and oppressed regions. The strike lasted 15 days and took on considerable proportions. Hundreds of

of children marched in the streets, thousands of children defied the school authorities. The press played down the facts, presenting the movement as a parody of an adult strike and the social unrest of the summer of 1911 mentioned above:

The current strike epidemic has affected the younger generation and, in order to be fashionable, schoolchildren have decided to put down the tool. It all started at Bigyn school, when the pupils, in solidarity with their fellow pupils who had been punished, decided to abandon the classroom and march through the streets shouting and singing (9).

In the past, children drew their inspiration from adventure stories and the most romantic episodes of history reported in their textbooks. The illustrated press and the cinema put them more in touch with everyday events. The conduct of the strike revealed a great familiarity with the methods used by railway workers and dockers during the strike (10).



Striking children, Hull, 1911.

The strike scenario was more or less the same everywhere:

Yesterday there was a veritable hullabaloo. No less than eight schools were involved and it is calculated that by the afternoon several thousand boys had mutinied. The unrest began at Cowgate School, where there was a walkout in the morning and the leaders of the movement were seen brutalizing those who refused to join them.

to follow [...] a gang went to the High School and, armed with sticks and projectiles, demonstrated (11).

Just as the pupils were returning to class, around 10 strikers appeared armed with sticks and iron bars and other similar weapons. They threw stones at the school windows and the policeman on duty had great difficulty in controlling the disorder (12).

Liverpool:

When the schoolchildren in the Edgehill district were let off at break time, they went on strike and demonstrated through the streets [...] there were broken windows and smashed lampposts, and the 'good schoolchildren' were caned (13).

At West Hartlepool, about 100 boys came out:

A warehouse behind a hotel was looted and a few bottles of beer and whisky were taken away by the strikers, along with boxes of cigars. A few boys were

arrested and charged (14).

Everywhere, either in the form of declarations presented by strike committees to teachers, or on banners, or by writing them with chalk on the pavement and walls, or simply by chanting them in demonstrations and meetings, strikers expressed their demands:

- school-leaving age set at 14
- shorter courses
- potato picking holidays
- no work at home
- the abolition of the belt
- free pencils and erasers.
- "Schoolchildren ask for one hour's free tuition and one shilling a week to attend classes".
- "The schoolchildren are asking to start at 9.30am to finish at 12pm and resume in the afternoon at 2pm until 4pm, and if these conditions are not accepted they say that Alderman Costelloe has no chance of being Mayor of Gateshead next year (15)."
- "That monitors be paid a penny and that all pupils leave school at 13.
- "50 boys walked out and demanded the removal of the attendance supervisor and an extra day off apart from Saturday.
- the abolition of the cane: "Apparently the socialists had done some work among these young jokers (16)".

These demands were based on the specific conditions of British schoolchildren subject to corporal punishment and the particularities of the education system: the monitorat. They also reflected the class background of the young rebels. The abolition of attendance is explained by the practice of giving pupils an attendance medal: 4 years without absences a bronze medal, 6 years without absences a silver medal, 10 years without absences a gold medal. Parents attached such importance to this that they obliged their children to attend school sick. The school also issued a character certificate with a special mention of absenteeism and breaches of discipline, which the children then had to present to their prospective employer. The demand for a salary for the monitor was aimed at abolishing the assisted status of many children from poor families. As for the demand for a shorter school day, it concerned the obligation for children to support themselves and therefore to work to help their families outside school hours.

It has to be said that the main activity during class was to recite the multiplication tables and read the Bible, which unleashed the wrath of the mistreated poor children. They were also inspected like cattle or furniture for sale: at the slightest trace of dirt, the teachers would make them leave the classroom by swearing at them and sending them home to wash in cramped hovels. Sometimes they came barefoot, poorly dressed, sometimes families pawned their warm clothes during the summer, and charities marked shoes and clothes to prevent families from selling them.

The children bathed naked, as they had no equipment, and on the school fete day they could not take part in the competitions.

And it's precisely during the strike that we see the naked children bursting into laughter, as if they were taking their revenge.

This strike led to a relationship of hatred between pupils and teachers, and vice versa; the repression was severe:

While the children were at recess, it was discovered that around thirty children were missing. After investigating, it seems to me that it's not fair to call it a strike. It was insubordination. When I returned to school on Tuesday afternoon, I caned all the children who had been absent (17).

The English word for strike is the same as for strike. Teachers used to pit pupils against each other.

The government put forward economic arguments to put an end to the strike: the absence of children from school would greatly reduce the government's subsidy; in fact, the absence of a child meant a loss of around a penny, a penny and a half, which penalised families.



"Children imitating dockeurs, London, 1911".

Despite everything, this revolt was a tremendous celebration of freedom. Press photos from the time show happy, smiling faces, and although the newspapers were cautious, their accounts of the events describe the strikers in such a way as to suggest that they were "celebrating freedom". "At Sunderland, the children, all barefoot, carried a huge tree branch", which the *Illustrated Chronicle* seemed to think had a mystical significance. Schoolchildren in Pollock, Glasgow, also marched through the streets with tree branches, "in

banging on tin cans" (18). In Airdrie, too, hundreds of children brought whistles and tin cans to the streets to bang on, and in Southampton they formed orchestras with harmonicas and a huge metal bathtub as a percussion instrument. In Manchester, "large numbers of children gathered in the vicinity of Oldham Road station, and retreated onto the wooden fences and advertising hoardings" (19). In the industrial districts, children wrote their demands in chalk on the pavement or handed out leaflets, but above all they went through the streets singing to the sound of whistles and harmonicas "One, two, the boys are on the march" and "Come away and follow me", the most popular strike song in the whole country. Not all strikes were violent. In Hartlepool, the boys walked along the beach and had picnics. Elsewhere they went swimming in the river, sometimes they just sat around talking, they played soldiers and marched singing patriotic songs, in Northampton the strikers went blackberry picking, everywhere they had fun composing songs, words and music. They showed imagination and originality, testifying that "despite the stifling school environment, their minds had not been destroyed by the grey monotony of the classroom and still contained ideas like the paint box of colours".



Police outside a school in Shoreditch, East London, during the schoolchildren's strikes of September 1911.

But it was the parents, and especially the mothers, who were responsible for education in working-class families, who took control. It seems that

that parents were supportive in only one town, Dundee; elsewhere "the boys could enjoy the sympathy of their fathers who understood their feelings but did not interfere in school matters". "The most active strike breakers in many places seem to have been the mothers. Not only did they put pressure on the children when they returned home at the end of the first day of the strike, but in many cases they intervened more actively, dragging the children along for the next few days, and in a few cases, setting up counter-pickets outside the school gates. For example, an attempted strike at East Wall National School, Dublin, was very quickly broken up by the mothers "who had assembled in force armed with all sorts of weapons and stood shoulder to shoulder with the police to protect the loyal children (20)".

Press accounts across the country tell of how mothers confronted the children's pickets and in many places were the only authority to whom the children would surrender. In London, at Bath Street School, an army of mothers entered the school, dragging "their recalcitrant offspring before the headmaster" (21) and at Radnor Street School, in another part of the borough, an angry mother was seen in the stairwell bringing her resisting son with her: "I don't give a damn about strikes! (22) ". The children certainly feared their mothers far more than the policemen on guard at the school gates, and without them they might never have gone back to school. "What a change this morning:

parents brought their children to school, others threatened their offspring with their fingers to make them understand what awaited them if they persisted in missing school (25). "Mothers also intervened in London. Processions of women could be seen on all sides leading their recalcitrant young hopefuls to school, and it became clear that the strike was in full swing (24).

While the women had pushed their husbands to strike during the summer, playing a leading role, actively supporting them, demonstrating and fighting with them, they broke their children's strike. The school was not seen as the school of the cops and the bosses; on the contrary, this attitude showed the extent to which the working class put its hope in knowledge.

The children's movement of 1911 was exemplary in that it did without parents, especially mothers. During a strike, the children "fired their mothers": "Free for a few hours or a night, or a few nights (25)". This strike produced the following inscriptions

new equality in freedom and a new sphere of visibility. Children have created new relationships between worlds. In this way, the revolt was profoundly political: it reincorporated the political into the social, shattering the spheres of private domestic space and social space.

Does this mean we should declare war on mothers? Tony Duvert makes it clear in his interview:

I think we need to wage war against mothers; we need to take an interest in this very particular aspect of contemporary society where children, for the first twelve years of their lives, are brought up in a vacuum with asexual individuals, species of worker ants. And there is a war to be waged, not against women in particular, against mothers or against grandmothers, but simply a war against the exclusive cultural rights of the family, increasingly passed on to this sort of human sub-product into which women have been transformed. And I say that insofar as I am interested in life in society, I would like people who are going to become adults to be in contact with human beings who are less crippled than those who have been turned into women.

War on mothers? Schools have a major responsibility in turning women into transmission belts for the capitalist norm. In the July 1882 decree on school hygiene, we read:

The school can and must give sufficient attention to physical exercise to prepare and predispose boys to the future work of the labourer and soldier, and girls to

the care of the household and the work of the woman [...] the manual work of girls will aim to inspire in young girls [...] a love of order; to make them acquire the serious qualities of the housewife and to warn them against frivolous and dangerous tastes.

In concrete terms, this warning was reflected in the presence of a "*ouvroir*", or sewing workshop, reserved for rough sewing of the kind that mothers had to do, mending and making babies' and children's clothes, and the removal of the library, replaced by a room for housework where the rudiments of cooking and ironing were taught. For the boys, the hierarchy that was established

In the factories, drawing and even reading became the activities of a small middle class. Drawing was replaced by wood and iron workshops, where even more than industrial work, the focus was on DIY at home. "Children were no longer just taught to be future workers, but also to be mums and dads. The circle is closing (26).

At that particular moment in 1911, something paradoxical happened that needs to be highlighted: the identification of children with the adult world: this mass movement of children was undoubtedly rooted in the mass movement of workers on strike at the beginning of 1911; and simultaneously a disidentification, the consequence of a process of subjectivisation of children who had torn themselves away from the place assigned to them, that of being nothing more than future cannon fodder, future workers, future reproducers.

NOTES

1. Tony Duvert, *L'île atlantique*, Les éditions de minuit, Collection double no. 33, 1979.
2. Tony Duvert, "Non à l'enfant poupée: un entretien avec l'auteur du *Journal d'un innocent* et du *Bon sexe illustré*", Interview by Marc Voline and Guy Hocquenghem published in *Libération* no. 1532 and 1533 of 10 and 11 April 1979.
3. Tony Duvert, *Quand mourut Jonathan*, Les éditions de Minuit, March 1978, p. 117.
4. Tony Duvert, *Abécédaire Malveillant*, Les éditions de Minuit, October 1989, pp. 113-114.
5. Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, *Le Monde*, La revue de presse, 6 April 1979.
6. *Les révoltes logiques* n°3, third quarter 1976, Cahiers du Centre de Recherches sur les Idéologies de la Révolte, "La grève des écoliers", pp. 77-86. 7.

Rosa Luxembourg, *Grève de masse, parti et syndicats*, petite collection Maspéro.

8. Hull Daily News, 13 September 1911.
9. Llanelly Mercury, 9 September 1911.
10. Birmingham Daily Mail, 14 September 1911.
11. Paisley Daily Express, 15 September.
12. The Herald, 13 September.
13. School Government Chronicle, 16 September.
14. The Times, 15 September.

15. The Illustrated Chronicle, 15 September.
16. The Northern Daily Mail, 15 September.
17. TheDaily Post, 7 September.
18. TheGreenock Telegraph, 15 September.
19. TheHerald , 16 September.
20. TheIrish Times, 1 September.
21. TheIndependent , 15 September,
22. The Northern Daily Telegraph, 13 September.
23. Hull Daily News, 13 September.
24. The Illustrated Chronicle, 15 September.
25. Tony Duvert Marc Voline and Guy Hocquenghem, *Libération* 10 and 11 April 1979, in Un homme parle.
26. Anne Querrien, in the review *Recherches* n° 23, June 1976, "L'enseignement: l'école primaire".

THE MALE CHILD

Essays, 1980.

Jean-François Josselin (Le Nouvel Observateur, 5 January 1981)

★ Duvert plays with fire

"What is funny is always pure", writes Tony Duvert. *L'Enfant au masculin* is therefore one of the purest books ever written. And, of course, one of the funniest. Because this funniness and purity are rooted in a third virtue: anger. Real, healthy, vivid anger, justified if only by the multi-faceted hypocrisy of the prevailing morality, whose current permissiveness is as much a mask as a fashion. In a similar tone and register, Duvert had previously attacked sex education and its official manuals, which he felt were far more pernicious and devious than the silly rules of good behaviour of our ancestors. The result was *Le Bon sexe illustré*, a thundering little book whose accents cannot be stifled.

Now, with this equally thunderous little book, Duvert tackles our society's false tolerance of sexuality and its curse, homosexuality; a tolerance that we can be pleased about, for example, when it grants literary prizes to works that not so long ago would have been sold under the table, but which we must be wary of if we know that its ultimate aim is recuperation, profit and bargaining. Listen to my difference, listen to it well, it has become an advertising slogan for our national radio station...

Tony Duvert is a distrustful man who takes a hard line. And not just anywhere: in the most sacred taboos of our civilisation, childhood and motherhood. Some of you may remember the motto of the playground, when it's time to roll around in the dust and get into flowery shouting matches: "No parents, no business". Well, Duvert respects nothing. It's because, irresistibly, he considers himself the best of mothers, not the one who "manages her child's body" with "we" but the one who maintains a sentimental and sensual relationship with his child that borders on pedagogy and incest. With a clear preference for boys. And yet,

Duvert: "Surveys have shown that the majority of mothers prefer to have a boy. (I really do feel like a mother like any other.) Other surveys show that mothers absolutely do not want the boy in question to become a fag. (That's what

separates me from the other mothers.)"

Duvert plays with fire. We'd like to burn him. And it wouldn't be so difficult. All you'd have to do is explain, in a patient and slightly weary voice, that despite all the freedoms we allow him - and we all know how understanding our age is - little Tony loses himself in his delusions of persecution. But what Duvert rightly exposes is the paradoxical repression that undermines permissiveness. We close our eyes and, for the young homosexual, anything goes as long as we don't catch him with his hand in his neighbour's pants. The consequence of this benevolent blindness is to direct the young homosexual in question towards "gratuitous, wild, sinister, dangerous gay places" where he will be "exposed to maniacs, bullies, loudmouth thugs, the police, the pox and the cockroach". And then, if things go badly for him, there are two obvious conclusions: either the young homosexual is less than seventeen years, eleven months and thirty days old, and we feel sorry for him enough to severely punish those who dared to attack him; or he's over eighteen, and, firstly, he's no longer young and, secondly, however rotten, beaten up and broken-hearted he may be, he's actually found what he was looking for.

Rage, when contained by irony, does not inspire pity. Duvert is angry and ironic. So much the better He will not be spared (nor has he ever been) but he knows how to defend himself. It's worth pointing out that his book is the opposite of an obsession. Our little ones have nothing to fear. This big bad wolf won't be taking little children who can't sleep with him. He teaches them freedom, how to shake off myths and complexes, how to play and enjoy their bodies.

"There is only one way to discover someone's sexuality, whether big or small: by making love to them", he says. A scandalous book? Yes, like love. A dangerous book? Yes, like life itself. Cruel? Yes, like society. A perverse book? Yes, a perversity proportionally inverse to that of modern 'good' education, whose disapproval has as its ultimate avatar silence, or even indifference. And yet there is this dull fear: "If my son is gay, he will be unhappy, because I walk all over them.

With his fearlessness and his 'difference', Tony Duvert has probably not played the best card in the game of life. But that's all right. By way of compensation, the Good Lord, who is not a dog, has given him the weapons of a great writer.

Roland Jacquard (Monde (des livres) number 11132, 14 November 1980): The hijackings of Tony Ouvert

What could be more natural, when you've loved a book, than to want to share your enthusiasm? In this case, however, it's not so simple, because the book in question deals with a subject that upsets families, outrages the virtuous, disturbs the most permissive and even shocks the professionals of scandal: pederasty. More generally, he calls for sexual freedom for minors, who everyone agrees have only one right: to be protected. Tony Duvert, on the other hand, is more the kind of person who would turn his back on them. And to question the disastrous passion that leads parents to want to "reproduce" in their children at all costs.

Insolent and subversive

So, the follicularist, who loved his essay, wonders whether it would not be better to be a bit Jesuit, to discuss the author's theses - sympathetically, of course, but discuss them all the same - to weigh up the pros and cons, to be afraid of the abuses that such otherwise generous thinking might cover up and, skilfully, to insist more on the qualities of the style - it is truly dazzling - than on the value of the ideas. In conclusion, with the usual reservations, our reviewer would stress the real interest of such a daring work, but would (still) deplore certain excesses. Well, no! We won't beat about the bush to proclaim that *L'Enfant au masculin*, by Tony Duvert, is one of the most intelligent, insolent and subversive books of this year. Even those who would be put off by its subject matter will be forced to recognise the author's special flair, his almost infallible sixth sense for ferreting out the hypocrisies, deceptions and duplicity behind the rhetoric - conservative or revolutionary, conventional or spontaneous - that all too often replace the education of the child, i.e. the learning of its freedom, with its training.

"I've had this respect

Tony Duvert would have made a remarkable psychoanalyst. I say this, of course, *cum grano sallis*, knowing what psychoanalysis is today, but I really mean it. It's true that, from his fifteenth year onwards, he went to good school, so to speak, with a Christian neuropsychiatrist who vowed to put him back on the straight and narrow path of heterosexuality from which he should never have strayed. Never in my life," says Duvert, "has anyone hated me more or tried harder to break me. After two months of a torturous treatment, he tried

to commit suicide. "I dedicate this memory to the bastards of the same ilk who preach respect for minors to me today. One-eyed moralists, I was that minor and I suffered that respect. I'll recognise you, rapists, in whatever disguise you may take: that voice is never forgotten."

One more word: despite the bitter passage you've just read, *L'Enfant au masculin* is a funny book, even if not all the stories it tells are.

Christopher Robinson (*Scandal in the ink*, 1995, p 160-161):

(...) Duvert's texts are ostensibly as shocking from a conventional viewpoint as Roy (Peyrefitte, 1979) or parts of the (*Propos secrets*, 1977) but their moral basis is not in the least ambiguous. In Duvert's fiction, positive characters accept their own sexuality, whatever it is, and enjoy it. Negative characters, particularly representatives of 'families', distort their own sexuality and that of others. Duvert revels in sexuality itself and turns sexual freedom into a prerequisite for, and symbol of, social liberation. In his view the whole system of permitted and forbidden pleasures is symptomatic of the repressive socio-economic order of a profit-and-loss orientated society, and his first essay, *Le Bon Sexe illustré*, is an attack on both the social and sexual principles involved in such repression. His second polemical essay, *L'Enfant au masculin*, which deals more specifically with homosexuality, is a logical extension of the arguments of the first, attacking what he calls 'heterocracy' and the way in which (as he sees it) parents impose heterosexual behaviour patterns on children as a norm.

The two works taken together are a modern *Corydon* (Gide, 1924). Duvert takes Gide's argument for the naturalness of pederasty and extends it into an argument for the right of every adolescent to explore, enjoy and develop their own sexuality with whatever partners they may choose. This

sexual liberation is much more thoroughgoing than that proposed by Gide. Whereas the latter denies sexual pleasure to women, Duvert preaches freedom of sexual expression to both sexes, at all ages, in whatever combinations. And far from insisting on the difference between pederasty and other forms of homosexuality, Duvert presents them as a spectrum. At the same time the role of the mentor is more closely defined as an initiator in rebellion: as a partner in sexual freedom, the pederast opens the adolescent mind to new categories of experience and thought. Adolescent sensuality is thus not subordinate to

conventional morality or emotional ties, but neither is it seen as something to be exploited by interested adults for their own ends. Its release is a prerequisite for learning how to be free from the constraining categories of contemporary social values.

One practical consequence of this is that descriptions of sex acts in Duvert's fiction have a very different status from those in Roy. There is no fixing of roles according to age - the narrator of *Journal d'un innocent* is as likely to be penetrated by his young partners as to penetrate them - and their tendency to construct a hierarchy among themselves based on machismo is a subject for critique, a set of pretensions to be dismantled within the privacy of the bedroom. What we often have in Duvert, for example in *Le Voyageur*, is what we also find in Hervé Guibert's *Fou de Vincent*: an insistence on the details of the sexual act itself coupled with a fragmentation of the text which focuses the reader away from the participants as individuals, such that the text becomes a general reflection of, and on, pleasure (or in the case of *Fou de Vincent* obsession) rather than an invitation to specific possession. A reader might be excited by the descriptions of the acts, but, unlike Roy, the form of the text prevents him from voyeuristically possessing the actors. Furthermore, *Journal d'un innocent* actually defuses its own tendency to pornography through the short essay on the subject which it contains. This argues for the powerlessness of written pornography as against the power given to the model in pornographic photographs, who exercises control over the spectator without having to submit to him. The problem of how to combine the pleasure principle with the educational function of the mentor, which Gide never solved in theory or in practice, is thus resolved in Duvert by making sexual self-expression the basis of the learning process for the child or adolescent, and the principal bridge between individuals regardless of age, without limiting the validity of sexuality to one-to-one relationships (...).



A SILVER RING IN THE EAR
Detective novel published in 1982.
 Longuet

Michel Nuridsany (Le Figaro, 30 April 1982): Tony Duvert: a sombre joy.

"Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille", a highly unusual novel by Tony Duvert (winner of the Prix Médicis in 1973 for Paysage de fantaisie), widely considered to be one of the best writers of his generation, was published by



Editions de Minuit on Wednesday. This is a shocking novel in some respects, but you have to go beyond that to discover Tony Duvert. He is a writer of great breed.

The book opens with the death of the grandfather, the famous psychiatrist Brisset. And as it is clearly a murder, it is investigated. Given the context, the man's clientele, and the leading figures from politics and the church he sees in his practice, the investigation proves to be long, difficult, and very difficult.

delicate. In the end, however, the culprits are revealed. After *Quand mourut Jonathan* and *L'Île atlantique*, has Tony Duvert written a crime novel? Yes, if *Les Gommès* is one. Not otherwise. Let's just say that here the detective story only adds to the derision of a tale conceived as a game of massacre.

Living in Neuilly, an eight-year-old child, Marc, "bursting with beauty like an idol", reigns over his family like a "shady domestic deity". Surrounding him, sure of his rights and impunity, is the small world of the upper middle class, as sinister as in Mauriac's novels, but portrayed with a causticity, a scathing verve and a black joy that belong only to Tony Duvert. There is a vigour in this novel that was also the price of *Bon sexe illustré*, a book published in 1974 that could be described as 'scandalous', but which struck me, on rereading it today, with its heady demands that are both harsh and extraordinarily tender. Tender for early childhood, for which Tony Duvert demands autonomy and freedom, hard for the rest of humanity.

It is this same demand that underpins this book and, over and above its biting style, gives it its strength. We know, we feel, that the author is only interested in children under the age of eight. Almost all the rest is nothing but conventional magma (and perhaps even more so than the others, those who display the greatest liberalism), generally monstrous with stupidity and self-satisfied smugness, to be wary of, fought against, protected against or laughed at. And God knows how much is laughed at in this often very funny novel, where all the characters except one (little Marc) are ridiculous, sometimes downright grotesque. They are not always immediately odious, but if you scratch the surface a little, their more or less polished ignominy is quickly revealed. The detached irony with which Tony Duvert stirs up all these beautiful people adds to the impression of unreality given by the reality he has chosen to show us.

In fact, the whole book is bathed in a climate of strangeness, almost dreamlike, like his first book *Récidive*. But here, the finest psychology intertwines with the most unbridled zaniness, as if nothing really mattered, as if real life and reality were elsewhere. Only in the territory of childhood.

This ferociously light-hearted book marks a turning point in the already important work of a writer who almost never gives interviews and about whom nothing is known, except that he lives in relative seclusion, exclusively from his pen, which is to say more than modestly, and that there is no study of him in the review 'Critique', even though it is close to Éditions de Minuit.

Let's hope that this novel, which is still quite scandalous, but funny, brilliant and subtle, will enable the broad public he is aiming for (without pandering to them) to discover the rest of his work, especially *Récidive* (1967), perhaps his finest book, *Portrait d'homme couteau* (1969), *Paysage de fantaisie* (1973), not forgetting *Le Bon sexe illustré*, which is fascinating but needs to be

read with a fair amount of resistance. Like all Duvert, in fact. It should also be read with an open mind, because here is a literature that is totally risky and that steps out into the open, unprotected, in its aggressive vulnerability.

Gilles Sebhan, *Retour à Duvert*, 2014, page 150-153.

As it happens, 1982 was also the year of publication of *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille*, Duvert's last novel, which Schérer himself calls an amulette and which many critics saw as a rather empty parody after the great novel *L'île atlantique*. A young investigator named Julien Sorel is both mistreated by his superior, Commissaire Rénal, and by her boyfriend, who comes on to him disguised as a criminal to satisfy his masochistic fantasies of submission and kicking ass. Julien leads the investigation because Dr Brisset has been found murdered in a middle-class house where a tyrannical, sunny eight-year-old reigns supreme. In this fable, masks come and go, a little like Genet's *Balcony*, but in a farcical tone that has been taken as a way of taking the easy way out or giving up. Yet it seems to me that this book has more depth, in its challenge to the great figures of society, through this play of masks and roles, than has been given credit for. Above all, the central figure of the boy, who asserts his paradoxical freedom by demanding to wear a silver ring in his ear and a dog collar that's not too tight, is the emblem of a reinvented society. Around the same time, Duvert wrote an unpublished text in which he offered a rewriting of *Bluebeard*, a parody showing children taking power, climbing on dressers, screaming and martyring adults who had become powerless. The moral

cul par-dessus tête was also linked to a protest against literature itself, the literature that Duvert had taken so seriously and for which he had paid such a high price. Sorel, Rénal, the detective novel, Genet's theatre: selling off icons with a sneer.

Of course, it was risky. It's also possible that this novel was built on a great deal of sadness. Like an impossible autobiography. In my first essay, I noted Duvert's comments in *Libération* about a project entitled *La Ronde de nuit*. At the time, I saw it as the forerunner of a novel that never came to fruition, one that Duvert was to work on for many years, and of which I'll say more later. It is possible that this *Ronde* corresponds more to *Un anneau d'argent*. For the record, Duvert said: *I'm preparing a big book that I'm calling La Ronde de nuit, which will forcefully reintroduce homosexuality and paedophilia. I'm trying to show what I was myself, that is, a child who had a very early sex*

life, I take my toddler when I started myself, at seven-eight. I'm going to pull him along, if I have the courage, until he's about sixteen, follow him around, drag him along, I don't know what to call it. And it goes without saying that this mini-fag is going to be a terribly unhappy individual, which pleases me in advance. And I want to do this book like Guy des Cars, for an audience like his, to make them want to read the story of a queer kid.

There is therefore an autobiographical background to this story. The eight-year-old boy, who is much less pure than his family would like to believe, is perhaps in a way the young Tony, just as the murdered grandfather represents what needs to be got rid of. The character's name is Brisset, like the psychiatrist in the 70s, and he is indeed a famous psychiatrist in the novel. We see his lack of insight, which leads to his own demise. We can imagine Duvert's dull joy in demolishing in his book, one by one, the grotesque figures of a society that made him suffer, and in showing how violence is practised everywhere, and even within the family. For example, the older brother rubbing himself voluptuously in the shower, imagining the torture he would inflict on his father. There is something akin to a game of massacre in this book. But the party is short-lived. Although Duvert was careful to address it to the general public, the book will not find its readers.

Another sign of literary dereliction: Duvert had the feeling that Jérôme Lindon didn't like this parody novel. All it takes is one word, or the absence of a word, for us to know that the book is a little below

expectations. But to think that it was the drying up of his inspiration, I don't believe it. Quite the contrary. Tony was going to start again with a project that would turn out to be a sea snake. But he was bitterly disappointed: there was no miracle formula for selling books, and Duvert must have begun to see how far he had to compromise in order to be heard. The 80s did not smile on him. Duvert was going out of fashion.

MALICIOUS ABECEDARY

Collection of aphorisms, 1989.



Josselin, Jean-François (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 1989) :

Life is a novel, by Jean-François Josselin.

Surprise us, Tony!

"Mr Duvert's 'Abécédaire' is deliciously malicious

If God doesn't exist, anything goes. So be it. Is the opposite proposition still valid? If everything is permitted, God does not exist. Or maybe not. Reading Tony Duvert, who attacks the Lord, his works (us), his pomp (or even his morals) with a youthful ardour, one might even doubt it. Tony Duvert is one of the chic authors of Mr Jérôme Lindon, director of Editions de Minuit, one of those terrible authors, like the children of the same adjective, who mistreat their publisher with warmth. Is Mr Lindon a masochist? Of course not. He is simply in awe of Tony Duvert's talent. And rightly so, Mr Lindon. Tony Duvert belongs to that species of underground writers who don't hide away in the provinces or in Marrakech, but who don't live in Paris, which amounts to the same thing.

Yet Tony Duvert is not far removed from the world, and is even interested in the vagaries, the ridiculousness and the contradictions of our society. About fifteen years ago, he published a luminous - and therefore scandalous - work on the teaching of sexuality: "Le Bon Sexe illustré". Scandalous because it attacked with joyful ferocity the enlightened, progressive and permissive minds that were trying to define with common sense and generosity how far we could go too far. Alas, Tony Duvert maintained that beyond that, it was even better and more exciting. And he called a spade a spade, Tony Duvert. And finally, this lover of children didn't shy away with the fascist coldness that endears us to the exquisite Michel Tournier. No, he said, for example, that when it comes to indecent assaults on minors, toddlers are sometimes not above suspicion. Ségolène Royal is going to turn a blind eye to that (Ms Royal - if you'll excuse the pun, Sire - is the author of the most inane book of the year devoted to the ravages of television on our dear little minds...).

blondes because, she explains, soap operas deprive their childhood sweethearts of their childhood). Sue Ellen, Columbo and the whole gang, out the window!

And now back to Tony Duvert, a perverse and delicious writer whose four or five very fine novels, such as 'Le Voyageur', 'Paysage de fantaisie', 'Quand mourut Jonathan' and 'L'Île atlantique', are not to be forgotten. It's fair to say that we're beating about the bush here, because we're not talking about a novel or an essay by Tony Duvert here, but rather his latest book, 'Abécédaire malveillant', a collection of aphorisms, things seen and read, petty remarks, professions of bad faith and various provocations. And, let's face it, it's pointless insofar as, at least for some time to come, even if God isn't dead, anything goes. This amoral and invigorating 'Abécédaire' would even be a pamphlet against windmills if, fortunately, we didn't find Tony Duvert's iconoclastic elegance at the corner of every page. It tickles where it doesn't itch any more. So we laugh and smile, we don't do drugs. But we laugh heartily when pessimism dances past us: "*Man is only good alone*", says Tony, in other words deprived of any possible victim. Or: "*Lady D has rediscovered 'Peau d'Ane': she dresses in the skin of a princess, and the donkey is inside.*" Or again:

"*There's a stupid way to have the right opinions. Or always: "All children are men. Few adults remain so.* At the end of his "Abécédaire", Tony Duvert sketches out a theory: forget Rousseau and Judeo-Christian civilisation, everything is going for the worst in the most despicable of possible worlds. Indeed, even "Nature is on the right". In his rage to convince us of the general evil, Tony, horror and putrefaction, suddenly appears to us as a good person, a very good person indeed. And we'll read his explosive little texts as we savour those throat candies whose medicinal virtues have evaporated with time. For the pleasure of it.

Patrick Grainville (*Le Figaro*, 4 December 1989):

A writer with a flamethrower.

Tony Duvert kept quiet for eight years. And this silence reassured his rivals. Let them tremble! For the rat is back and he's spreading the plague! The hope of 70s letters is resurrected with a breviary of despair. I had stuck with *L'Île Atlantique*, a rather large, rebellious book about a wild boy who runs away from home.

I have to admit that Duvert amazes me these days. Here he is chopping up aphorisms, cutting them with a chisel, the French way, and quite ferociously!

This writer who storms against traditions, laws and conformism ultimately rallies to the most classical vein, the one that delights old gentlemen, exquisite literati, the guests at literary evenings (...)

In any case, we'd like to thank Duvert for his picador-like rictus. It's an invigorating pleasure to rediscover this abominable bull terrier, with his stiff coat bristling with stench and flooded with drool. It's a terrific read that shatters all good feelings and blows the lid off all the balloons about happiness and the Bicentenary. What a carnage of clichés! Duvert treats the most ecumenical virtues and the most consensual values with a flamethrower. You wicked writer! Walk in wearing armour and on tiptoe! And read him on the sly, with an electric lamp, while he sleeps with one eye open.

Jérôme Garcin, "Au diable Duvert", *L'Évènement du Jeudi*, December 1989 - quoted in *Retour à Duvert*, 2014, page 153-154.

Gilles Sebhan: "When he published his *Abécédaire malveillant*, there were bound to be a few critics who were delighted. Patrick Grainville, for example, wrote in *Le Figaro*: "[...] It's an invigorating pleasure to rediscover this abominable bull-herd, stiff-haired, bristling with stench and flooded with drool. It's a dreadful read that shatters all good feelings and blows the lid off all the baubles about happiness and the Bicentenary. What a carnage of clichés! Duvert treats the most ecumenical virtues and the most consensual values with a flame thrower. Nasty writer! Enter in armour and on tiptoe! And read him on the sly, with an electric lamp, while he sleeps with one eye open."

In this review, you can feel the fascination for the monster. Already the monster. As for the fascination, it will be little shared. Duvert is long gone. Only crows would criticise his darkness. Jérôme Garcin, then aged twenty-three, buried an era with him. In *L'Évènement du jeudi* (7-13 December 1989), in an article entitled 'Au diable Duvert' ('To hell with Duvert'), we read a little exercise in ordinary hatred:

"After seven years of scowling, disillusioned silence, Tony Duvert has published a book which, if it did not bear the retractable stamp of the author of *The Good Book*, would have been a great success.

Sexe Illustré (Illustrated Sex) would seem to be the final, feisty pochade of a

retarded 60-something in the Turkish-style toilets of Vincennes university, where the battered walls still bear the obscene graffiti and angry tags of a now obsolete revolt. I imagine that finding Tony Duvert's *Abécédaire malveillant* worn out and worn out immediately puts you in the category of reactionary bigots and austere killjoys. No matter how hard I try to understand the aversion this forty-five year old writer, winner of the 1973 Médicis prize and inveterate paedophile, feels towards humanity in general, women, journalists, musicians, writers, priests and the French in particular, I can scarcely understand, despite the sincere enthusiasm of my friends, the reasons for his systematic, and therefore tiresome, use of scatological vocabulary, the obstinate use of which evokes the sad comedy of repetition. Duvert, against all odds, cannot belch without slipping haemorrhoids, turds, mucus, manure, phimosis, diarrhoea and a few buboes into his usually fairly simplistic reasoning, as well as into his rather agitated prose. This is no longer a libel, it's a septic tank. Duvert, who is not a gallant man, gives himself over to fudgy factum, without an ounce of humour - apart from the puns of an acne-ridden potato. Since he can't digest his times, he vomits them up. Biologically, that's healthy. Literarily, it's debatable. [...] Only the impubescent, with their 'majestic' bodies, find favour in this *malicious Abécédaire*, which suffers from its own excesses and ultimately turns against the author, a nervous atrabilaire with a sometimes scathing style. "I have a terrible tendency," warns Duvert, "to ask for money from anyone who speaks well of me." At least, after this article and a difficult end of month, I'm not in danger of being extorted."

Jérôme Garcin is twenty-three years old and has a bright future ahead of him. He's got an easy shovel and takes his role as gravedigger seriously.

Christopher Robinson (*Scandal in the ink*, 1999, page 221):

(...) For lesbian separatists, the synonymy of sexual and cultural separation from any form of male tradition is axiomatic. Logically a comparable integralist equation, at least as regards heterosexual female or gay male literature, ought to exist too. But it is one thing for lesbian or bisexual women

to see themselves as part of a sexual spectrum, another to place themselves on an equivalent cultural spectrum. A contributory problem is the lack of sensitivity to the sexual identity of their opposite-sex counterparts among female and male homosexual writers. Whilst links between women writers' views of female

emotions and sensuality are plentiful, whether they are separatist lesbians or heterosexual feminists, there are relatively few comparable links with male writing. It is true that the concept of the sexual continuum implicit in Christiane Rochefort's work can equally be found in Duvert, whose arguments about the social imposition of gender roles in *Le Bon Sexe illustré* are designed to show binary divisions of the male/female, adult/minor type as reflections of the basic unit of social control possessor/ possessed. But although reference to adolescent female sexuality does occur occasionally in his fiction (e.g. in *Le Voyageur*), there is a distinctly misogynist strain in his writing too, which is not confined to the portraits of mothers, but surfaces in, for example, the sexism of the article 'Garçons' in *Abécédaire Malveillant* (...).

CHAPTER 02

Rare and unpublished letters and texts

LETTER TO CLAUDE NAVARO - 4 August 1963

In 1963, Tony Duvert was in his final year of secondary school. He was awarded 1^{er} accessit in the general philosophy competition. The prize was awarded on 27 June 1963 at the Sorbonne in the presence of Georges Pompidou, then Prime Minister. During the summer, he took a mountaineering course at Moulin-Baron and then at Chamonix in the Hautes-Alpes. Begins a correspondence with his school friend Claude Navarro. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

I don't think (despair) exists. Even suicide is a last resource of hope: so despair is a symbolic figure that signifies disgust, weakness, waiting: states full of hope, as you know. I don't believe in philosophical despair either. Cf. *La Nausée (The Nausea)*: all we can reasonably say is that Roquentin is feeling blue, and that a certain form of irreducible stupidity is getting to him... Despair is like an idler's coquetry, and I'm talking about lived and cultivated despair. Because it's one of the things we don't like to fight against: it also resists phenomenological reduction, which is why it's a touchstone of existentialism.

As far as I'm concerned, it seems to me that despair, whatever its origin, is a precious commodity that is rarely possessed in its pure state (e.g. the foolish despair of an animal that is tied up or suffocated). As you can see, despair arises from a conflict between what is wanted and what is experienced. The sense of hope - the sense of what's wanted - gets sidetracked, neglected in favour of anything else. This is simple: but you need a special disposition to enjoy Kierkegaardian despair. Too bad: it's a despair that doesn't exhaust you, and the only one that doesn't make you ashamed. I don't have much time, so I'll stop here.

A word of explanation for the delay in this letter: I found yours after five days in the refuge (it had arrived on the first day at the centre) and with flu (descent of the Pelvoux in the rain). My course at Moulin-Baron is over. So far I've done 11 races, including 6 or 8 'drooling' ones. Now write to me in Chamonix. I'm sure you'll get a quick reply.

Best regards
Tony

LETTER TO CLAUDE NAVARO - 28 August 1963

At the end of August, Tony Duvert will join his parents in Vinzier, near Evian. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

Vinzier, 28.8.

My dear Claude, it's been a long time since I've seen anything from you in my mail. Delays, change of address, whim? I don't know, but I wouldn't mind hearing from you. As far as I'm concerned, after my second course in Chamonix (where I got all the information I needed to take the instructor-guide exam next year, and then, later, the aspirant-guide exam), I've joined my parents in this little deserted village a few kilometres from Evian, and I'm getting ready to go home (by 1^{er} September) to study philosophy, physics and maths at Sc Ex (for the PCB), climbing (in Fontainebleau, weather permitting), and above all, piano. I'm planning a long-term project: building up a repertoire rich enough to take on one or two international music competitions in a few years' time, such as the Geneva competition or the Clara Haskil competition (which has just been set up). As you can see, I have no shortage of projects or ambitions - not to mention that famous licence de Φ : I wonder (without worry) when I'm going to find the time to do Propé-Lettres, or rather to retake enough Latin and Language to pass those exams. I hope that on your side, the benefit of your (solitary?) holiday is to have been able to overcome this painful decision in which you found yourself facing a future, you would say, not very engaging for you. Talk to me about it if you like - and try to answer me too...

Best regards
Tony

LETTER TO CLAUDE NAVARO - 5 September 1963

Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015. Excerpt from ?

Villeneuve-le-Roi, 5.9.

My dear Claude, I only received your letter of the 20th yesterday afternoon; it was addressed to Chamonix: now I had left Chamonix on the 17th, and this letter must have hung around in the trainees' mail for a fortnight before they decided to send it back here. So I'm writing without expecting an answer to my letter from Vinzier: don't answer it. I only hope that you have received it, because it is

is addressed to Quiberon, where you may no longer be. Perhaps you are not in Athis at the moment either, but warming yourself with whisky in the mists of Scotland...

I really enjoyed your letter, except that I didn't understand half the words in everything to do with your boating activities. What jargon! It's the first time I've read a letter with the Larousse in hand. You share the privilege of sailing

with Jean-Marc Gelin, who is doing a course at Les Glénans. Finally, all you need to do is climb mountains (will I be able to indoctrinate you?) to become a complete sportswoman, which is much better than knowing *L'Astrée, Paul et Virginie & Matière et mémoire* by heart...

Talking of mountaineering, I'd like to tell you about a firm project for this year: some outings I'm going to undertake with 2 or 3 Yeti friends to Fontainebleau (to do some climbing). They'll take place every 3rd or 4th Sunday, maybe more often. If you're interested (I'm looking for proselytes!) let me know. The only equipment you'll need is a pair of sturdy trousers (jeans) and rope-soled running shoes. The route, etc. I'll give you the details if you like. I highly recommend these outings, of course, both for your muscular and physical benefit, and for the mental airing it will give you after a week at Fénelon. My fellow yetis are very nice.

LETTER TO CLAUDE NAVARO - 13 July 1964

During the summer, Tony Duvert took a second mountaineering course at Moulin-Baron and continued to correspond with Claude Navarro. In particular, he discussed his reading of Paul Valéry's Mauvaises pensées et autres. From 23 August, he continued his holidays at an UNCM camp in the Calanques de Sormiou (Bouches-du-Rhône). Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

Villeneuve-le-Roi, 13

Dear Claude, I received with mixed pleasure the mention of the family vault where you say you spend your holidays. You must at least be enjoying the peace and quiet of that place. Don't be surprised if my replies from Chamonix are capricious: barring bad weather, I'll only be passing through the post office irregularly, being always, if not in the heights, at least on the mountain pastures, among the cows fond of tents and edelweiss. But don't let that discourage you from writing, on the contrary. Isolated in the busiest massif in the Alps, I'll enjoy reading you, as often as possible, I hope. And if you happen to be passing through Chamonix, drop me a line... (at least one

week in advance). I'll be using the municipal showers for the occasion.

The friend I'm going with, an excellent climber, isn't particularly the intellectual type. But this is accompanied by an incommensurable lack of culture ("the eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me"....) to the point where I sometimes feel like turning into a schoolmaster (whip in hand). That's saying something. I've got a poorly shaped, poorly filled head, but I've got good arms - after all, that's all you need for a second-in-command. What's

more, he's very ill-mannered (he has no idea what 'good manners' are) and conceited, but excessively suggestible (including, and especially, by me?!). A fine training session in store...

All of which is to say that I'm all the more delighted to receive your most mundane letters. I'm not asking you to write a detective story (you certainly don't have the idea). Nevertheless, before interrupting this all-too-brief letter, I offer for your meditation (sic) or your boredom this 'bad thought' by Valéry: *Every thought is an exception to a general rule, which is not to think.* And this one: *We only really think of ourselves and that we are ourselves when we think of nothing.* And finally: *A serious man has few ideas. A man with ideas is never serious.* I could go on and on, all in the same (black?!) ink. Do you like it? Do you know this book? I'll end with a good motto for a mountain man: NON CADIT QUI NON ASCENDIT (1)... Best regards. Tony.

- 1) If you don't go up, you don't fall down.

LETTER TO CLAUDE NAVARO - July 1964

Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015. Excerpt.

Civilisation, you say, has benefits that holidaymakers (as we say today: but how can we say: vacateurs, vaqueurs?!) don't forget. Well, I'm one of them. After returning from the refuge yesterday, my first pleasure (after the beer) was a shower at the Chamonix municipal baths. Then I got dressed like a civilised person (i.e. in a swimming costume...) and 'crushed the bubble' in the sun. It's true that I spent the night, a very good one, without a mattress (punctured) or duvet (soaked). And I slept very well. Hence: three days of tiredness = modern comfort. And today: window-shopping, slow walks from café to café, tasting fresh food, sleep, etc... For a valiant mountaineer, that's not a very heroic schedule, is it? And tonight, my brute has gone to the cinema. In the tent, as I write to you, I'm enjoying a delicious solitude, a happy solitude (two words that, for once, go well together).

By the way, do you know how kind it is of you to write to me so often and so freely? The weather here, let's talk about it, is fine, or nearly so, and that's great, because my mood follows the slightest variations in the weather. All I have to do is consult the weather report (a serious one, here) to find out whether I'll be happy, gloomy or in a bad mood the next day. Practical, isn't it? A little hairy moth has just entered the tent: it's landing on my stationery. I'm telling you this because you have to imagine its eyes, red as gooseberries, and measure the naivety of the pleasure of doing nothing, a pleasure so great that it

illuminates the worst banalities.

One point in your 2nd letter particularly caught my attention: the end. First of all, you experience the difficulty of talking to someone you don't know what they think (variant: you don't know if they think...!) isn't it rather the difficulty of daring to speak without worrying about what the other person thinks? No doubt because our correspondence is still on the borderline between good-natured civility and trust, i.e. between saying what we think the other person wants to hear and saying what we want to hear. Finding the right tone is difficult, taking a step backwards is stupid, taking a 'leap forward' (a Chinese PC slogan, I think?) is risky. And then there's the need to be reassured about the person you're talking to. As far as I'm concerned, I attach a lot of importance to what is written (even when I'm lying on the floor with a Wonder battery in front of me). Unlike some people, I believe that a lot of things, from the harshest to the freest, 'come across' very well written when they are unbearable, even unseemly, *to listen to*. That's why I don't care much about conversations, serious or otherwise, and why a nice sincere word makes me smile when I hear it. You can only talk to others when you're alone... So write.

Another point about your letter: you're afraid it will arrive 'cold'. That's the problem with writing: anything written is dead, and any reader kills the author of what they read. You should be the only one reading what you write to others... If you take the risk, too bad. But I think we need to think about this: the real moment in a letter is when you write: the other person, imagined, present, guides the form and the choice of content. I can imagine a correspondence in which each of us would write but... refrain from sending the letter we receive, as if it were a mirror, or a new impetus for writing to ourselves. You'll say that the other person's part in it is very small. No: but it is a catalyst, rather than a partner. An analyst of love could say the same thing. All relationships with others are alike; like the sun, which we need but never look at.

I hope these ideas will please you or reassure you or... well, there's a choice - and, until I read you soon (and go to bed) I send you my love.

Tony.

LETTER TO CLAUDE NAVARO - 15 January 1966

Letter from the "sphinx" in which Duvert very mysteriously mentions writing Récidive. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

Paris, Saturday

Dear Claude, I wasn't too surprised by your card. I'm familiar with this kind of reminder, at New Year, to friends who no longer deign to reply. I've done it often, without any illusions about the result, without any conviction,

simply because I had a few names in my address book that I wanted to fish out. Just to see. I imagine that you did it in the same frame of mind: in a way, it's my response that would be surprising, not my silence. But, since by remaining silent without explaining myself I am at least responsible for a rudeness that is always hurtful, I must apologise. Here goes. For quite a long time I have taken paths where I like to be alone, so easy is it to corrupt them, and the more pleasant a company is - yours is very much so, it is even rare - the more it distracts me (1). I haven't locked myself up in a tower, I'm not an explorer in chambers, I don't belong to an aristocracy of solitaires: on the contrary, I'm in the street - and in the street, however beautiful, vast or long it may be, there are only passers-by: and even those who are solicited for a night, you don't see them twice.

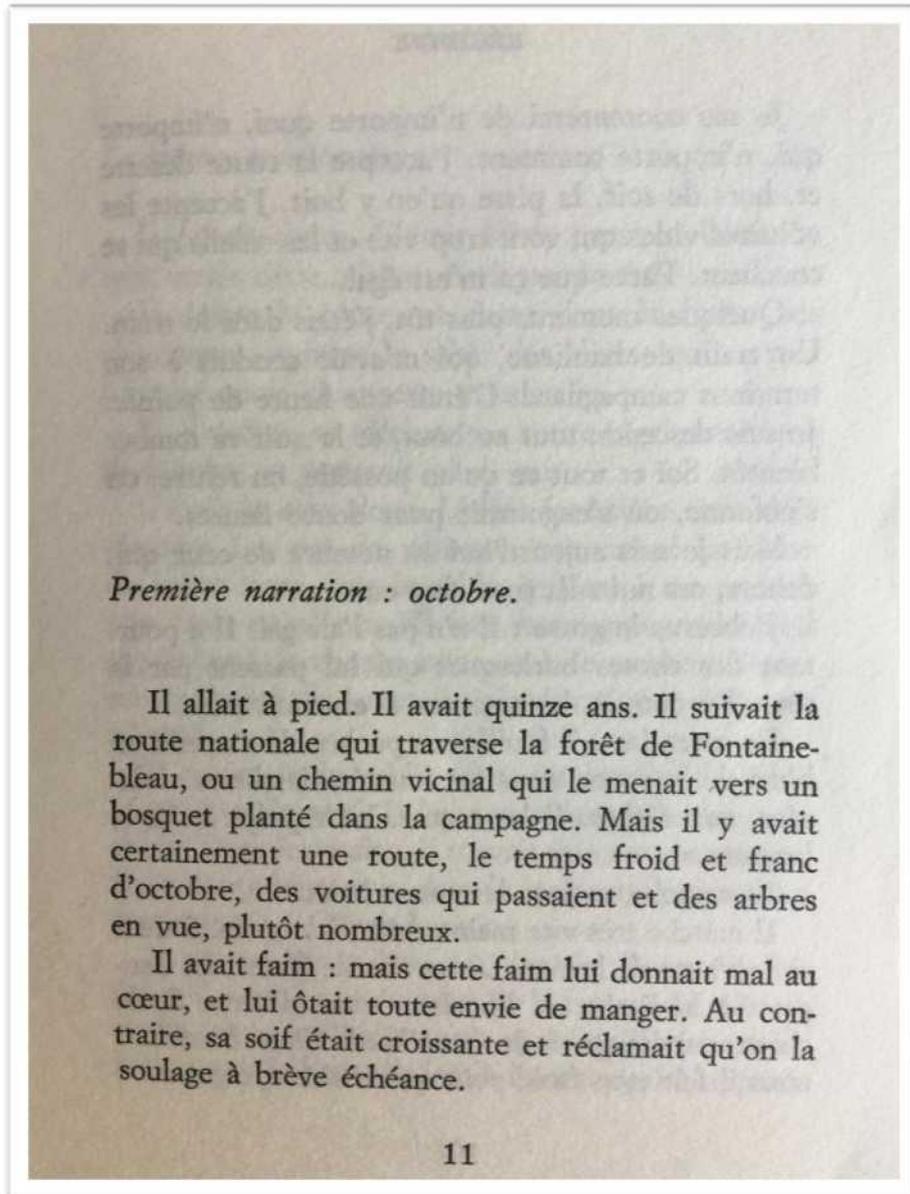
Why should I? That's my business. My silence, towards all those I knew and even towards those whom, among these acquaintances, I held in high esteem, corresponds to a deliberate break between an easy and sleepy way of life, which would have led me where the others are going, and another which I did not seek, but which I have the courage to need, and which contradicts the first. With no haughty intention of originality, mortification or improvement, I have moved from a situation that was well established and clear to another that is far removed from the one I considered comfortable. I'm not trying to do that. Nor am I trying to tell you in clear words what it is, what it means. I work a lot. Not my studies, of course, not the piano. It's work that's all my own, that I've created for myself, that's difficult, pleasant and necessary, and that can, must and does bear fruit. Excellent, tasty, and shareable. I won't tell you anything more about this work. It took me years to perfect it. There's nothing philosophical or artistic about it - phew! - it's not about a way of life. It doesn't create a system. It doesn't bring me any money. It doesn't make me part of anything. That's enough to keep your mind from wandering, so you can focus on the only thing I'm suggesting: a question mark.

As for our meetings, they were certainly very pleasant. But I don't have time for you or anyone else. I'm not to be trusted: I'm not extending a hand. Perhaps it will come back, the taste for scattering the days into precious crumbs. For the time being, I'll stick together as long as it takes. I don't play at building myself up, at contemplating myself, at questioning myself, at searching: no perverse way of appearing. I don't probe, I don't break anything. I make inventories that no one else dares. I realise that none of this is very clear to you. Maybe it's confusing, maybe it's worrying, maybe it's unusual. This is because I have said nothing, done nothing in the past to suggest that I was waiting until I was ripe for a similar effort, and that I was preparing for it, and only for that, in secret, and because I am saying nothing here to suggest to you the content, the nature, the purpose. Everything might make you think that I'm

justifying rudeness out of selfishness. It's a key you're entitled to use, and I don't want to disabuse you of it, it's too difficult. But everything is simpler, more obvious and more direct than you might suppose. I haven't explained my silence to anyone: to you I say at least that it is not contempt or laziness. I find it hard to see how I can get back into the habit of meetings, chats and confrontations that are a kind of deception. On the other hand, it would give me great pleasure to read you, and I would reply in kind, if you would write to me. Letters are a good way of avoiding fool's bargains and exchanges of counterfeit money. My address remains unchanged.

Best regards
Tony

(1) "So it's January 1966. The author of this letter is Tony Duvert. He was twenty years old. He is in the middle of his first story - *Récidive* - which is also one of his most beautiful. *Retour à Duvert*, p. 44.



Source: Original numbered edition.

LETTER TO CLAUDE NAVARO - January or February 1966

Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015. Extract

I sent you a question mark and you sent me back an exclamation mark. We can play like this for a long time: I can see on my machine, which could lead to interesting exchanges, the signs = + % & () / and also £ or \$, which aren't bad. Joking aside, it was a great pleasure to read you - not the pleasure of a sadist who puts a mouse in a cheese box without any cheese, but that of a mentally disturbed person who receives a sane and intelligent letter in its very disorder. You contradict yourself page after page, but with the beautiful equanimity of people who want to say something and get caught in the trap of accepting it: cubes have six sides, so the truth is a harlequin. Here's my subject; I'm gleaning its various attributes from your letter (excuse me for quoting you) :

- he gets on people's nerves;
- it's used as a dustbin (I'm more than happy with that);
- incomparable c... (sic) write to him in all seriousness, like a game;
- and stick a ? on his head (you could also have used: an ostrich feather - an abbot's crook - a swan's neck - an iron cane - an acanthus leaf profile - a shower head - an underwater diving tube - a hunting horn - an acoustic horn);
- it is perplexing;
- it's a zoo animal that isn't one;
- he stands at the crossroads like the cops;
- but, sphinx (?) he asks questions like an Ifop pollster: Who is he?

Is he at least docile enough to be put on a lead and walked in the street? Or does he have to be caged? And then, what name should be written on the label? Sphinx trivius? Discussor exulcerans? Insanus ridiculus Navarii? It's a great pity to catch a fish without being able to name it, without even knowing if it's edible. That's a scientific problem I'm not going to help you solve, and no matter how hard you try, the cat's not hungry.

Let's break it up. It took a lot of courage for you to reply to my letter: I would have received a similar one, I would have, as they say, sent the author back to his beloved studies, even if it meant coming back to him when he had become approachable. Difficulties don't frighten you, Claude: too bad for you: I won't spare you any. It's just that the 'hateful I' that swarms around you interests me a lot: it seems to me to have strong arms. Besides, I don't see how this I can be

hateful, and I am surprised to see you join the fiercest Christianity in this contemplation. Je is good, especially if you write it as a game; what is it? It's a bunch of bits of string in a ball: everyone pulls a little on what sticks out, and the I belongs to the person who pulls the hardest: it's unpleasant, but if

everyone lets go, the I just rots in the rain. And I imagine that you're right to reproach me for having pulled too hard on the string that you had the imprudence to put back between my legs: low blow, unexpected traction - some people have very bad manners.

Let's talk about something else. Your letter finds me in that remarkable and exceptional state called the satisfaction of duty done. And why is that? Because it's eleven o'clock, the time I get up, and I've slept very well. There are some strange people who do lots of complicated, selfish, illicit, extravagant and shameful things just to get their eight hours' sleep every now and then. This is the immediate fruit of my unacknowledged activities, and if there were no other, that would be something. Now that I've achieved this goal, I can give myself a break when I wake up, for a few hours at least. That's why I'm replying without delay, that's why I like your letter, that's why I'm finally indulging without any remorse in the incontinence of style that you've noticed. For a few hours, I can be a character, give a line, and my typewriter is no longer any use to me other than playing that game: I leave my trivium and go for a drink. The sphinx takes a break. He no longer asks questions, but he doesn't let go of the answers to those he has asked either.

So, Claude, take advantage of this *otium litteratum* to receive a letter without problems, without mystery, without jolts; a letter that you throw away because you've read it and exhausted it, not because it annoys you. The next one - in other words, the reply to the one you've sent me - will no doubt be less buffoonish. My contradictions are cyclical, not simultaneous, which only means that I'm slow. So forgive me for this meagre honey; I'll gladly take Valéry's suggested motto as my own: "*Je déçois.*"

My friendship
Tony

RÉCIDIVE

Il saisit les jambes du petit, les replia au-dessus de sa tête, se ploya contre ce corps en boule et l'encula.

Brutale, la profanation fut profonde, douloureuse au cadavre. Le marin s'était pétrifié. Tout d'un bloc, son sexe restait impassible — comme s'il eût craint de défaire les chairs. C'était, rigide, une artère qui les joignait. Patient, attentif, le marin s'efforçait d'infuser à ce corps la vie qu'il en avait éteinte avec un drap.

Il avait eu besoin de cette mort pour oser enfouir dans les entrailles tièdes sa présence entière, si solitaire qu'un vivant l'eût rejetée. Puis il pourrait partir.

Il se tint longtemps ainsi, les yeux clos, le sexe lourd. Enfin il se retira. Il remit les jambes du gosse en place et rabattit le linceul jusqu'aux pieds. Puis, tourné vers le lit, comme la première poignée de terre qu'on jette sur un cercueil, il se finit à la main.

Nov. 1965 - Mars 1966.

Source: Original numbered edition.

LETTER TO CLAUDE NAVARO - May 1966

*Last letter from Tony Duvert to his friend Claude Navarro. Around this time, Tony and his mother began living alone in the house in Villeneuve-le-Roi. This first face-to-face relationship lasted until 1968, when his mother moved to another suburban town on the same Paris-Juvisy railway line, to Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois or Saint-Michel-sur-Orge, while Tony moved to Paris, where he initially lived in the hotel En mai, having finished *Récidive* two months earlier, which he would never say a word about to his girlfriend, since he would never even formulate his secret of writing a book, as if it were the most unspeakable of activities, as if writing could only be a mystery factory, he gave himself a break, his last before disappearing. Claude would never hear from him again, except in the newspapers. Source: *Retour à Duvert*, Gilles Sebhan, 2015, page 47 and bibliography on page 277.*

You will admire, dear Claude, the speed of my reply and the placidity of my writing. It's because I'm letting myself become numbed by the ignoble life of pleasure that I lead, and also by the imbecility of my revisions. I was pleased to receive your letter. I'm still amazed that you think you're so stupid, when you have such a clever way of doing it. It sounds like mortification: "Brother, you have to die"... You're playing the naïve, the fool; what pride! You think I'm a myth: you're also showing me a mythical Claude. You have to resign yourself to simple solutions. For example: turn on the light - even if it doesn't illuminate anything. You'll see. I hope you enjoy it.

An aside. You ask me 'seriously' what I think (brilliantly, it goes without saying) about morality and language. Very fashionable subjects, but very badly treated by those who have appropriated them. I don't know what to say. It's too difficult, I'm in no hurry. The 'season in hell' you give me is a return to the sources of... morality, and language - sources that have nothing Bergsonian about them. Language counts for someone who can't do anything with 10 fingers, except keep 3 to hold a pen; and morality counts even more for a disgusting character like me. But I don't have an opinion on what matters to me. Genet writes (roughly): "Many people think, who *have no right to do so*." I don't share the fashionable Foucaulteries, the search for 'the' system at all costs; I no longer like to 'decode' or understand, I don't believe in any 'a priori'.

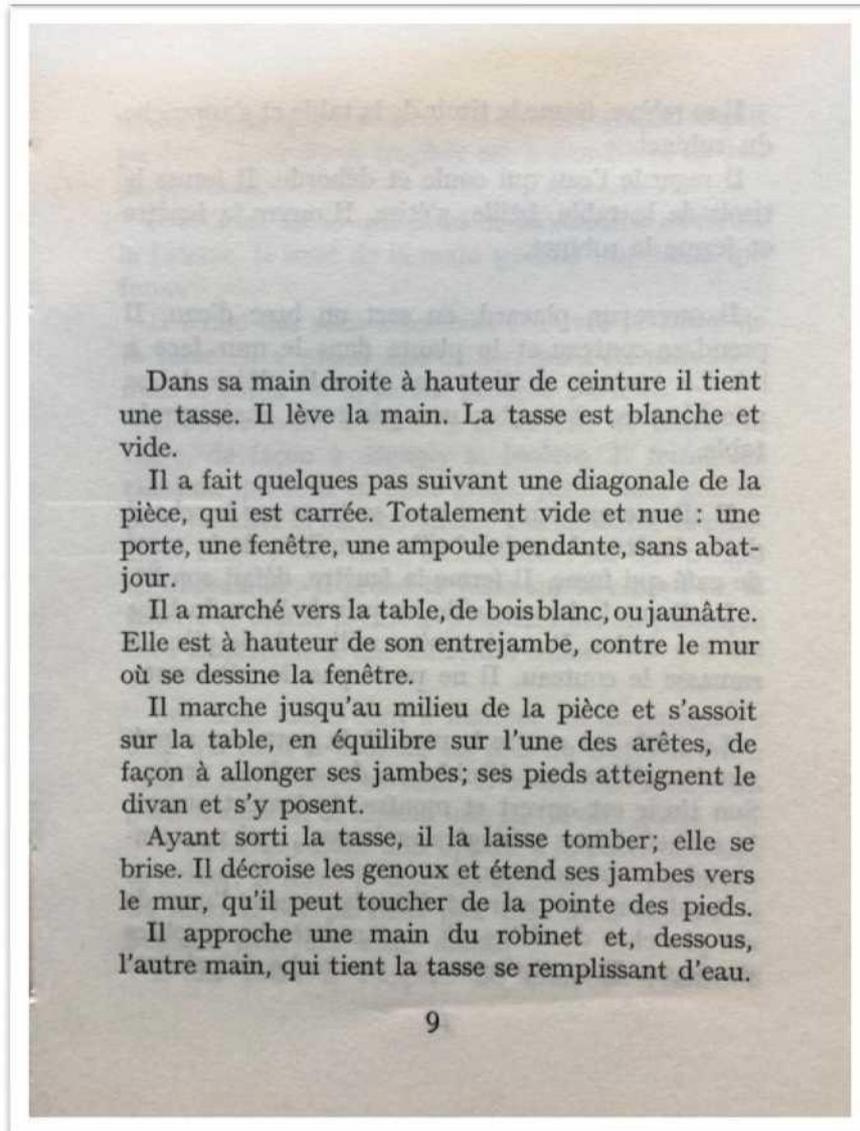
Morality and language are unhealthy blood, to be allowed to flow, like an abscess, until it finally turns red. This means that there is an urgency to life that precedes reflection, and that 'gives you the right' to reflect. Above all, it gives us a taste for patience, a mistrust that is far more ferocious than

doubt, a certain talent for living without concepts, an impatience to collide, to shatter: thought is only born of a broken man. Only, for it to break, there are these two shells, armour and splints to remove: morals and language. Once naked, one thing is enough. Who is capable of taking that risk? Not many. Especially not those who talk about it in our illustrious university. Few writers, few artists. Quite a few anonymous, unknown, pathetic people who don't even know what they're doing. People with no conscience, who don't compare themselves.

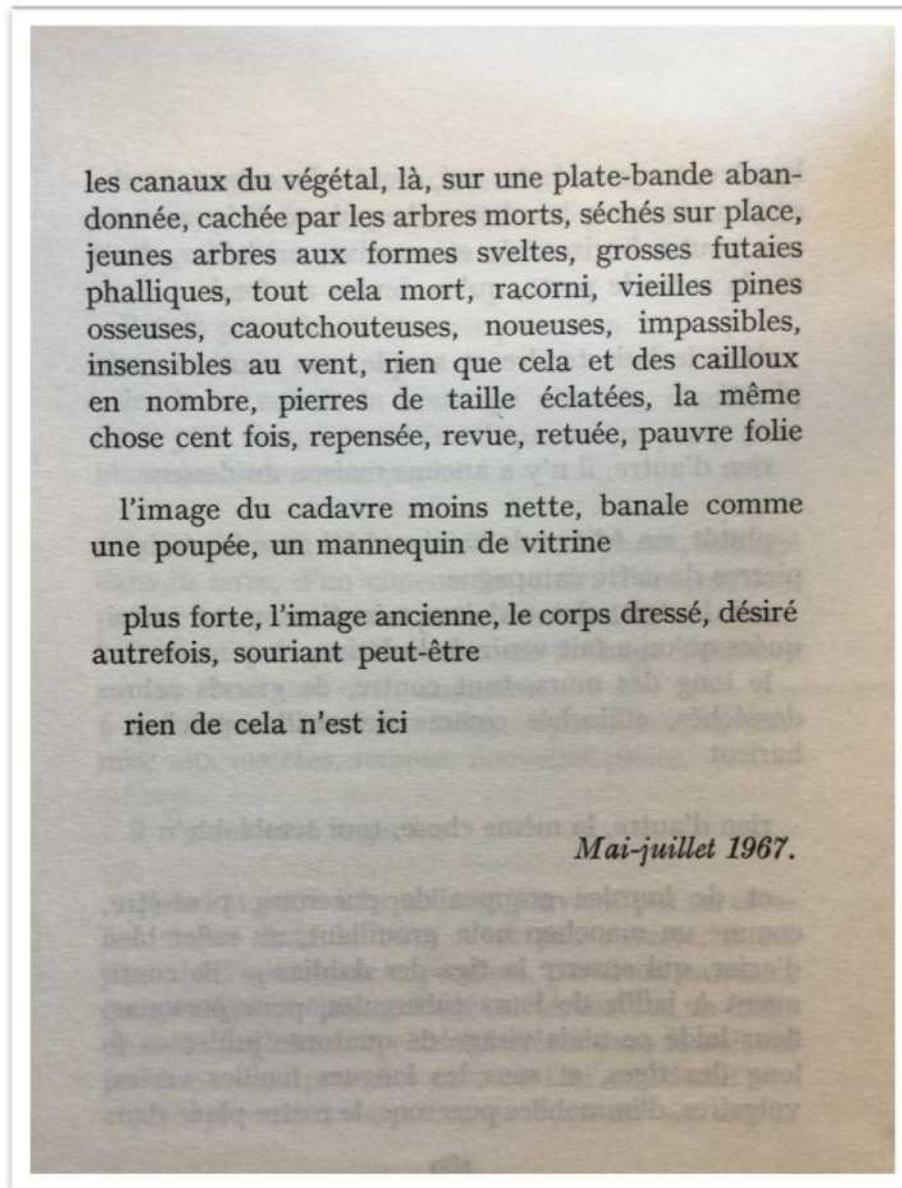
Best regards
Tony.



Ballade à Fontainebleau, 1966

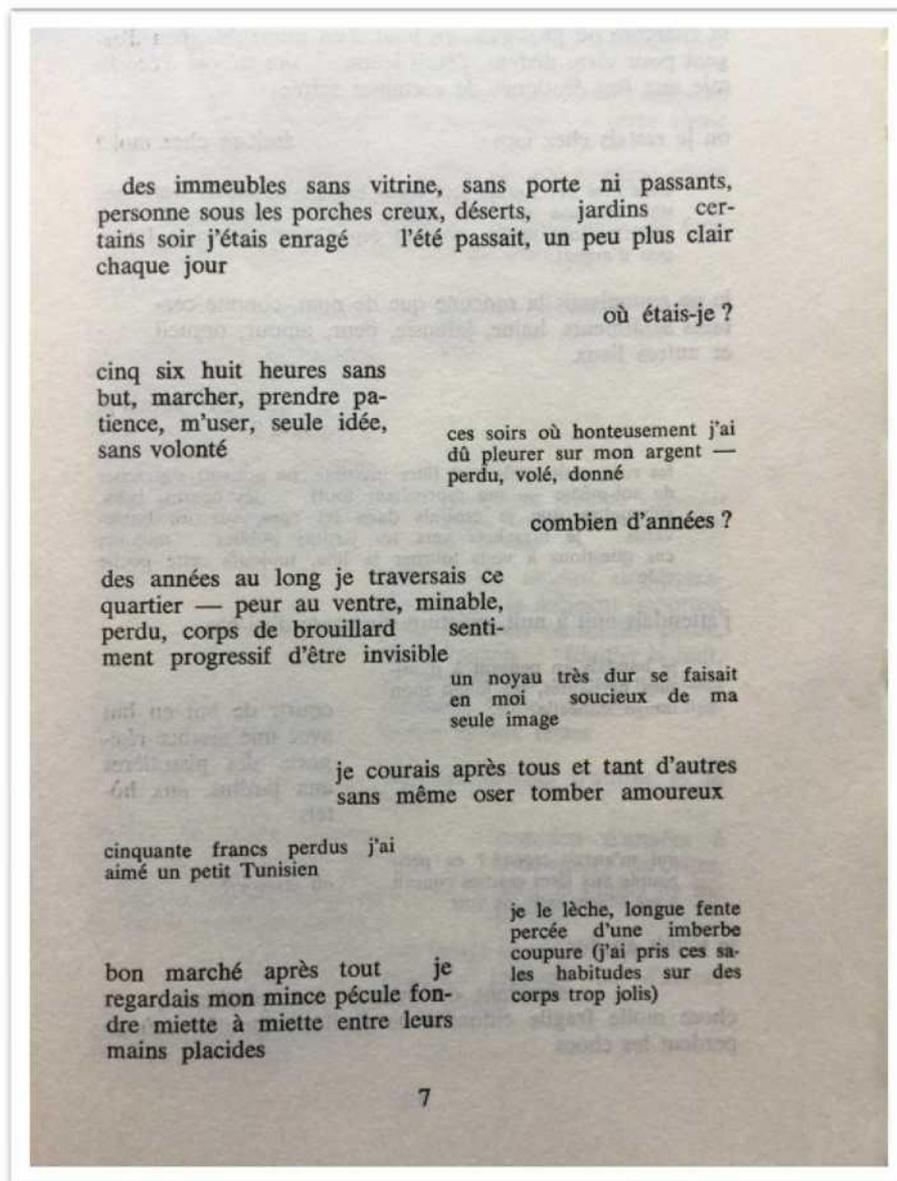


Source: Original numbered edition.



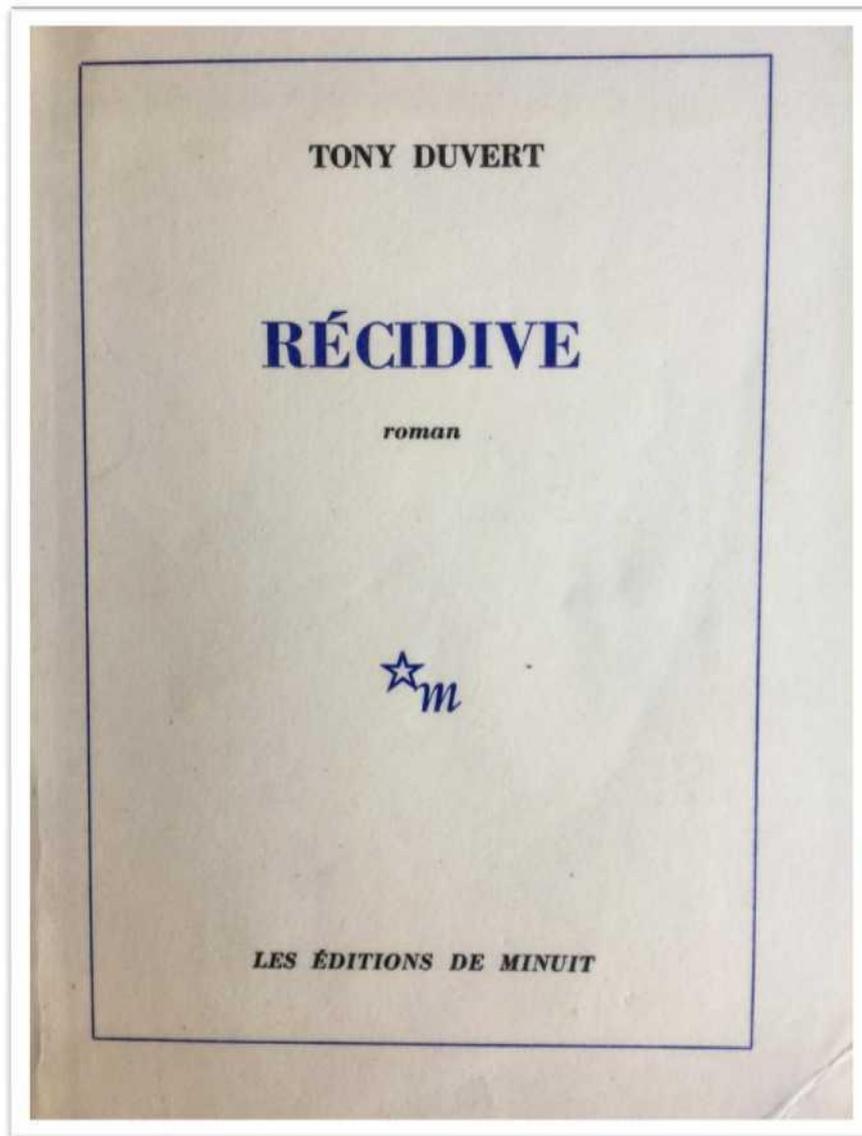
Source: Original numbered edition.

BEGINNING OF THE DRAFTING OF THE *RESIDENCE BAN* - September 1967



Source: Original numbered edition.

Tony Duvert's first book, *RECIDIVE*, was published in autumn (February 1968) by Jérôme Lindon. It is a transposed version of the story of his runaway and attempted suicide.



Source: Original numbered edition.

END OF DRAFTING OF RESIDENCE *BAN* - March 1968

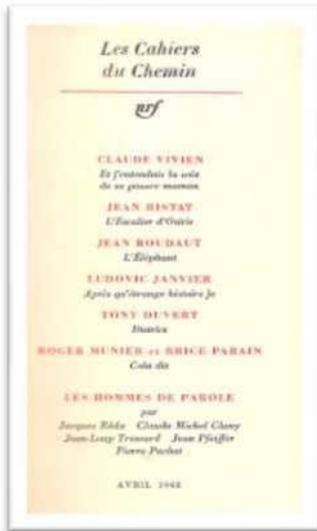
caramélisé qui sentait mauvais je descendais les sept étages j'ouvrais la porte il restait derrière à s'essuyer les fesses et se raccommode je sortais je grattais la chiasse sous mes pieds dans les graviers dont se couvrait l'esplanade qui environne la gare je recomptais mentalement mon argent satisfait d'avoir si peu dépensé pour tant de bonheur je m'éloignais tranquillement les immeubles immobiles portes fermées fenêtres muettes le pavé inégal la pluie était calme je pensais au gosse qui était si petit doux et maladroit comme mon fils je me sentais mal je rentrais chez moi la lumière était allumée ma femme m'attendait elle me voyait tout défait suant exalté elle regardait les traînées de merde sur mon pantalon ses yeux se crispaient ses seins s'affaissaient la bouche durcie la narine étroite elle criait elle bat des pieds avec ses talons hauts sur les carrelages et les parquets elle claque les portes comme des gifles sa voix est perçante ses talons martèlent ça résonne loin c'est une furie un couteau une usine je n'entends que ça je la hais je la tuerais mes fillettes sont malades je ne peux lui dire mon dégoût je vais me coucher je passais dans les rues désertes je cherchais mon reflet dans les vitrines je me voyais marcher les deux mains poings fermés au niveau du nombril les deux pouces glissés dans ma ceinture d'imperméable en un geste de flic j'étais sûr j'avais le temps j'avançais les réverbères s'éteignaient c'était un jour

Septembre 1967 - mars 1968.

Source: Original numbered edition.

DISTRICT - 15 April 1968

Source: *Les Cahiers du Chemin*, No. 3, 15 April 1968. This text was extensively revised, with the chapters presented in a different order, before being republished in 1978 by the publisher Fata Morgana.



District

I. CHANTIER

Trucks, cars. Houses are being built. The wounded are being evacuated. Silence falls. And night. Some of the wounded have diarrhoea and squat in a corner. Children played. A few days passed.

There were mounds of ochre sand. For making pâtés. The cot was built, but not quite. It did not have

There was no floor for the children to fall on, no cellar, no ground. No earth under the nursery. Children go to hell.

The signs that had announced the buildings were taken down. We didn't burn them: we carried them in a wheelbarrow to a shack made of pressed, screwed and riveted sheet metal. Snow covered the hut. Under the brazier, the snow melted, rolled along the ground and dug a gutter, evacuating the gravel that accumulated further on, near the taxi stop.

Another day. We were getting used to it. We'd approach the building. You'd run your hands and fingernails over it, leaving a bit of blood. Our blood is white and earthy. Their blood gnawed at the glass, wood and plastic doors, and they hummed under our caresses as we went in and out, leaving sweat behind too.

In the afternoon, the women screamed and went to the hairdressers to have their hair dyed red. Then the heads were dried and sucked out of the magazines. The whole street passed in front of the shop. Customers inside looked at customers outside, or strollers outside looked at strollers inside. We went home. It was dark.

The street was quiet. Cars went by, children. Newspapers were sold. No one stopped.

Chairs were pushed aside, cutlery was placed on tables, gas and electricity were set alight.

Wood, metal, fabric under the hands. A sort of fire in the heads that

sagged on white pillows, hollowed out in the middle by a puddle of grey. Like newspaper ink, sweat from hands, boiling beef, clothes hanging from hangers, resting on chair backs.

The floors creaked. It was raining. The shutters were closed, the blinds lowered. The lights no longer shone. Except for those of the trains on the horizon, their windows flashing. Time to fornicate. Cigarettes by the beds went out, and in the carriages ashes fell with the jolts of love or rail, onto grey clothes, hands, jowls, sheets. In the silence, which they did not break.

Another lorry was being unloaded. Long, straight black pipes were stacked like logs in the red or orange mud, the colour of dung and blood. On top of them, we'd put others, cantilevered, shorter and angled. And then there were the brown guys with the sharp noses, opening their bowls, pausing, pissing on the pipes.

We laughed in the street at night. Young voices. With vocal chords that are soft, mewling, and others that rasp their laughter, they mingled in each throat. Other voices responded, brief, high-pitched laughter, a woman's croaking, around the sighs of the male voices. It all drifted away, like the tiredness of having laughed too much, the sternum, the diaphragm distended, torn by laughter - going further, beyond the muddy streets, frozen by fluorescent tubes, beyond the windows, beyond the building site, over there, where there was a dark pit, twenty metres deep.

There was no more laughter anywhere. We waited for the day.

It was daylight. Children were shouting. Others were crying. Laughing. It was the same cry. It was the children. You could hear them.

And the voices of mothers, hard, bitter, strong voices, of women in black coats, navy blue, anus brown, grey hair, black hair, anus, spoken voices with wrinkles, eyelashes in the wrinkles, flaccid openings from which sounds and liquids emerge.

The pipes were buried. The ground had been opened up, a muddy, orange vulva, the slug-coloured earth oozing in heaps near the holes, the pipes would carry gas, or water, to the middle of the site, where people talked, where children ran.

Quiet everywhere, no noise, motorbikes, trains, planes, jackhammers, bicycles, jaws, doors, you couldn't hear a thing.

But sooner the merchants called, the shops were invaded, emptied, people went into the shops, came out with their booty, left mud on the windows, their mark, they would come back, they were happy, the streets were filled with buyers on foot, in vehicles, dogs on leads, people who had to leave the shops, people who had to leave the shops, people who had to come back, people who were happy.

children in hand, meat and bread in hand, and the purse.
These were women who had their hands full and were coming home.

II. PEOPLE

A bookshop. It's also a toy shop. The children come in and out in their turn, but more briskly, jostling each other, without hiding their greed, pleasure or dismay at spending money. They look at the children's books in the window, the toys between the books and above them, the pens in open white satin cases, the lamps that shine a bright white and yellow light on the red crepe paper on which the books, toys and pens are placed.

A guy is looking at the window. He's not old yet, but he's dressed in black, his skin is grey because autumn has fallen, a sudden, pale, too mild autumn that worries him. He's old if the children are young, because the children aren't looking at him.

In the bookshop, the shop assistants are handing out sweets, liquorice, sugar things that smell like snow, but the snow isn't falling, in autumn it's the leaves. You can't see the little coins between the children's fingers.

The guy thought he'd like to sell things to children. There are a lot of them, because it's the end of the school day, which is next door, and when they come out of class, they walk past the shop, come to buy primers, look at the plastic machine guns, the bears, the daggers.

The man's coat is closed. His hands are in his pockets, fiddling with a packet of tobacco. One hand, rather. The other, in an empty pocket, is hugging itself. His ribs ache. The children come and go. Pain in the bones of the legs, and in the lower abdomen, in the penis. The children have no penis. A lizard sleeps between their thighs. He thinks about that lizard, about making it wake up and run across the grass. They don't think about it, the lizard will run on its own if it feels like it, at night, under the sheets, or in their heads, the little beast will run who is just a little dragon, now asleep, the guy thinks about her, no more blood in his head, his blood digs into his belly like hunger, weighs there like hunger, burns in his belly, his whole body is already the colour of ashes.

He looks at the children's faces, recognising the features and ugliness of their parents. He sees old faces through the children's heads, the wrinkles, the marks, a human figure takes shape, appears in this white worm flesh. He doesn't like children, has nothing to say to them, nothing to say about them, he hates them, he needs them.

Dirty little adult faces, dirty little vices, dirty little stupidity, meanness, cowardice of little adults. But they move. Adults

walk slowly, chew, love, suffer, sleep slowly, adults think, children move. Elephants are slow and flies are fast, thinks the guy, and that makes him laugh. In front of the shop window, he thinks he likes flies and listens to them like little puppies chirping around him.

The children shine in the light of the shop windows. He likes this light. He smiles, it's night, the street is empty, the children are scared, he likes that fear.

III. WINDOW

After a few years, the white paint on the ceiling has become dirty - radiators, tobacco. The walls are lined with objects that, having accumulated for too long, are no longer likely to be looked at. Sitting down, sitting at the table, lying down - these are all tasks that reveal nothing, object or presence. The floor, wiped clean, is nonetheless marked by the footsteps that have walked on it, by the sharp, hard objects that have fallen and cut into it, by the stains of liquids, wine, water, ink, sperm. Every groove in the floor is frequently stripped of the small debris that mark your home. Clothes hung on door hooks, placed on a chest of drawers, straddling files, rolled up on the floor, no longer belong to anyone. The room admits that you are not alive. Its space loses all geometric rigour, appearing to be the fruit of a conventional and haphazard arrangement; the solidity of its topography is diluted, every span of which had been furnished with a memory, a glance, even letting the eyes wander over those places that no use, ornament, dangerous projection, deterioration, scrofula, had brought out of invisibility. It becomes a corner of shadow, reduced to the prescribed dimensions, where you are like a cyprin in the aquarium, a narrow globe decorated with vulgarly coloured pebbles, where you turn a hundred times in the tepid, sparingly measured water.

So you leave your bed, chilled by the morning, to approach the furniture where the clothes are, naked and bent over; you don't look at them, too eager to be supported, enclosed by them - the clothing becomes a truss, repressing an overflow of being, from which pain and pride would be born, and emanating only a little perfume of grey, shameful sadness. Your body has gone limp; the only stiffness on your arms and thighs is a horripilation of the epidermis: the shivering caused by the cold. Shod, tied, vaguely washed in terms of the parts of the body that need to be shown to your fellow men, you gradually stand up on your legs.

You look at the walls and ceiling with an early-morning gaze, incapable even of disappointment - indifferent presences, like a metro bench, a café zinc, a waiting-room console, a street paving stone, that can't do anything but make a difference.

your weariness. You feel more acutely the gradual fading and slowing down of the blood in the arteries, which harden and relax under a flesh that has become nothing more than a heavy envelope on a painful, badly erected frame of bones that fit together awkwardly, cartilaginous and heavier with each passing year. You hesitate for a moment before pressing the door button with a hand that isn't there, because you no longer remind your body of yourself. You think that you work eight hours, sleep eight hours, wait eight hours every day, and you look at your watch to see that before you leave you might have the leisure to sit on the edge of the bed, take a packet of cigarettes out of your pocket and smoke one slowly. You decide to take this break while thinking about what you're going to do five or six minutes later to get out and get downstairs to go to work - down there, and first in the metro, under the street, under the others. You toast your cigarette; you watch the minute hand out of the corner of your eye. You feel satisfied, little by little. Then, in spite of yourself, even though you know the answer and are tired of this daily examination, you look at the window, which is like the face of your life. Without the slightest shiver of bitterness, doubting just a little the clarity of your view, you check that instead of a window there is only a wall.

IV. EXIT, END

A party has come to the square. Girls, old ladies, bitches and sows wallow in watermelon peelings. The masquerade is a Babel: drummers, cigar-chompers, churners, suckers, suburban wiseguys, belly-button decorations, swaying, stomping. Wine and sunshine. During the rut, they stick their index fingers into the natural orifices that indicate the women and the hens that are about to lay their eggs. It's a strange time of year; the leaves are falling fast. And these outnumbered smokers, with their heels up their arses, bang their balls into the split tree trunks that rise up with all the rigour of Sunday.

The priests begin their procession, broom in hand, host in ear, making their way through the streets, blessing the asses. Bowls of cider on the urban zinc to get their fingers wet. And the cockades! Triumphant in the waltz, the women with their Auvergne profile growl, lined with copper and filings, knives pierce, large children are thrust into the sacked guts. To enclose the rabble, they had horse-drawn carriages, which pooped on the underpants-less kids and cut every path leading to or from the square. Seated in the carts, the emergency sextons, in imperial falbala, wear their mustaches of honour on the brides' necks. The crowd erupts in cheers. It is very difficult to cross the square.

As long as you jump over the trolleys, you can.

And suddenly, straight ahead, the street is deserted.

But really silent. Iron shutters on the shop windows; wooden shutters on the windows; the houses, as if abandoned, seem to demand the rain, the fireworks, the bottles, the nibbles that we expel, palm raised, before going back under the eiderdown to, tomorrow, have black liver.

You know you've just passed the crowd of owners, the candied jubilation where the wine flows; you know that, behind them, a few hundred metres away, the city begins; you know that, ahead of you, for two or three kilometres, there are shacks, factories, rubbish heaps and curved roads. And the street, straight as a drawbar, which you walk along leg by leg, will join up with these roads.

The houses are crowded together, to the left and to the right. Shrunken in the middle of courtyards with little beds of roses between the stones. Wisteria on the bars of the gates, they smell of the dirty laundry of the orphanage. They have stoops, these shacks, with three grey cement steps where small flints cast sunlight, a marquee of tiles or cathedral glass and a doormat as red as the vicar's hair, on the threshold.

Further on, there are no more houses. It's after one last "bougat", his market garden, the coal stalls, the enamelled sheets of pastis and sodas, the black cat in the cellar staircase, the bicycles on the millstone. Then there were the big empty plots, sometimes enclosed like gardens.

The weeds are up to their bellies in it: rosehips, scrapes, catnip, branch fences where the black tendrils of bindweed dry on the peeled bark, torn posters in the shape of cones, powdery thickets where the undergrowth burns, hedgehogs, holes, pits for larceny, old ox bones - there's plenty for children to play with, to rummage through, to kill each other.

In some of these plots, hidden by the elder trees, are low huts made of canvas, cardboard and string, the dwellings of widows in chasuble, the huts of gardeners and tramps, now dead, where you can go naked, with your knickers down, your shirt high under your armpits, white and quivering, your belly wriggling, all strained, when it rains - rain is the mother of all vices.

Sometimes, too, sheds open onto the street, warehouses, carpentries, with beams, cliffs, sawdust, carcasses of walnut chairs decorated with balls and goat's feet, rusty locksmith's workshops, forges, rabbit skins, old rags, a battered van for the morning round, collection of tyres, elsewhere, green cracked bottles, angular metal acrobats, grayed pottery, Great War canteens, witch-hair bundles, barbed wire, oyster and solens shells, mouldy cassocks buried under the worms' wriggling, Sunday paintings, ropes, etc.

of piano, spoiled ribbons, pumpkins bursting with soup, anthills, Breton cupboard doors, red bindings of prizes for excellence, sheep's jaws, soles, pots,

windows, brown and boiled suitcases, gaping with flowered paper like a hotel room, unknown manuscripts, tied with leg twine, shreds of carpet, underneath, woodlice, earwigs, centipedes, grey slugs - big school hats, hollow plaster gnomes, detached saints, polychrome virgins, country tears, snails that mate and drool, pedal car chassis, blond hair, sharp eyes, splayed incisors, childhood memories.

Beyond them begin the factories, which mark the place where the railway tracks run through the wastelands, at their deepest points, out of the houses, towards the marshalling yards in the suburbs. And there are mailboxes, made of rain-bleached plywood and zinc cracked by the postmen's claws, perched on posts in the clouds. Finally, over there, all ahead, the sky is pale blue, almost grey, like provincial eyes.

V. MARKET

Maybe it's a cylinder shaped like an umbrella stand. Or one of those big bags in which you take home your shop purchases. Or a large shoebox. Or a green, red or yellow plastic planter, or an upside-down truncated cone with a base about thirty centimetres in diameter. In any case, it's a container. It's full. It's grey and covered in dust: the cigarette ashes we've regularly emptied into it.

You unfold a newspaper from some time ago that you no longer want or need to read. It's crumpled and creased, no longer legible, and looks as it always has: dirty paper. The contents of the wastepaper basket are poured over it.

The streets are empty. As usual, because the old men and women, in the early afternoon, are lurking behind the curtains, knitting, reading the morning paper; the shops are closed, no one is walking in the street. No one is out in the sunshine enjoying it.

The heap of rubbish on the sheet of paper is roughly the shape of a turd, long moulded, with a bulging centre; and its matter has all the incoherence of digestion.

Now that the market is over, the traders have gone, and before the road sweeps and burns, little people in grey knitted shawls and military medal trousers, greedy, sleepy heads, chapped stomachs, black bone hands with horn plates, old people prowl the square, pushing children's cars or soapboxes on four wheels salvaged from their grandchildren's skates. They gather wood and

The shavings from fish and meat packaging, the crumpled cardboard boxes, all this makes up the fuel that they pile up, each to their own.

The turd has a beginning and an end. The first thing to be ejected from the bin, the box or the bag is the lightest stuff: bits of gaseous paper rolled up in

your fist and growing to the size of it; matches burnt at the end and blackened, blunt by the fire, for a third of their length; cigarette butts twisted by the pressure applied to them to extinguish them, crumpled with transverse folds where the paper has sometimes cracked to reveal filamentous excrement. This is also the orange peel floor. Not all of them. These are very small, lifted with the thumbnail, slowly cut into curved strips on small oranges, with a very thin skin that stuck tightly to the fruit, it carried away small pulpy yellow cankers. Light, intertwined peels; pick one up and you've got a rich garland, which immediately unravels into two or three strings.

This is the fish corner. A smell of dirty genitals. People flock here because the merchants abandon the unsold tide on the spot, among the fir branches gleaming with scales and the glaucous puddles of crushed ice. But the dogs, the cats and a few old men have already taken away the best of the debris. Half-eaten heads remain, the suppliers have already taken their share, and the flies. There are also guts, purple, red and brown pipes, slimy pockets that stick to the soles of your shoes, but where you can sometimes find a beautiful slug with pink or yellow spawn.

The layer near the central bulge was disappointing. All we found to throw away was a large quantity of tobacco packets. The Gauloises, which had been twisted, were dripping brown juice, and the pipe had been wiped on them. Of grey, ordinary corporal, packed, they yawn like empty coal sacks. They are mounted one on top of the other, propped up by matchboxes, a blue biro (gnawed at one end, strong canine and premolar marks, drooling with hardened ink at the other), interlaced with threads torn from the edge of a worn garment, grey, brown threads that unravel, releasing flames, threads with knots like bad wool, sudden strangulations, loops, and whose ends get lost in the heart of the tobacco packets.

Opposite the fishmongers, there's nothing interesting at first glance: it's a stall for hosiery, soap and other hardware merchants. But if you lift the cracked sheets of strong paper, the bristol advertisements and the flattened cases, you'll find strings. White, hairy strings. Hours untying all those knots. Twine is used to tie lots of climbing vegetables to their stakes, to make belts, braces, ties for shutters that slam against walls during the day and against each other at night. They replace the elastic bands on grey woollen socks, with two or three twists.

In the fat of the thigh, this keeps the stockings in a channel of flesh where they graft themselves. They were first used to tie down what was brought back from the market. The centrepieces of the edifice: large pieces of thick white earthenware plate. A long comb with spaced teeth, heavy with soot. A book - cheap, bought as toilet paper in station kiosks, torn out of five, ten, twenty

pages in the toilets, then kept in the pocket: after a dozen journeys, it is reduced to a hollow cardboard box. In this case, a few pages remain, torn halfway and at an angle, with khaki fingerprints.

Other pieces: two empty tubes. One is flat, punctured at the base, the film of paint covering the aluminium is white, with no inscriptions. The other has been rolled up to its mouth, the spiral is brightly coloured, touched by sticky fingers whose prints have collected dust, sheep and lumps. A bouquet of flowers, marigolds and anemones, discarded long after the wilt. Black corollas, curled up as if under fire, and dripping with liquid rot; the upper leaves are little dry rolls of mouldy green; those at the bottom have the softness, the equivocal shine of a piece of rotten meat; the stems are sticks, the tips of which have been subjected to water like an acid, which has reduced them to a cage of longitudinal needles empty of any pulp; This one has sunk to the bottom of the vase, along with other leaves, one or two pebbles that had been put in to keep the flowers in a certain direction - a greyish-black dregs, diluted in a little tap water; this bottom of the vase is poured into the basket, it makes a small plastic and compact heap on top of shreds of emerald green cloth which, as the traces of sewing and well-marked folds attest, belonged to a suit lining.

Fruit and vegetables are the best. The season is rich, putrefaction goes quickly, and there are several kilos of vegetables on the ground for anyone who wants to pick them up. Tomatoes, leeks, radishes, chicory, turnips, Brussels sprouts, pea pods. Apples, pears, grapes, peaches, whatever their state: the fresh part makes the midday dessert, the crushed or rotten part provides a compote for the evening, well cooked and recooked with the sugar of the commune, or another, or without sugar.

It's a covered market, tarmacked from end to end. The council stops its lorry, the sweepers come down, it's about time. There are large cardboard boxes and plastic bags next to the clothes seller. Further on, a pair of laces, new in its ring, the shoe seller smokes and smokes again, and drops his cigarette to serve the people, and his cigarette falls to the ground, pierced by saliva, barely smoked, so he lights another one, and puts it back down to talk, give change, open boxes, and it falls, and two packets pass through it, each one will be good to smoke for us when it's dry.

The dung is dwindling, enriched by a variety of tiny objects, mixed up in a mud with a metallic sheen. Mysterious fragments, like this little wedge of red plastic, this short metal pipe, these transparent crystals that could be broken glass beads. A microcosm of staples, screws, tinfoil, fly and collar buttons, metro tickets, little balls of yellow cotton, whales, pennies, balls of hair plucked from brushes - all of this could only be inventoried under a microscope, like the tests for radiolarians, diatoms and foraminifera when the green mud of the

ponds or the plankton of the shores have been calcined.

They set off, fresh-eyed and stiff-headed. The wheels squeak, the brooms scrub, a fire of planks sizzles on the pavement, blazing higher and higher, they go up the streets, each one on his own side, they have laid out on their booty the waxed cloth that twenty years ago they had stuck on the kitchen table, when they had children, the thick white wooden table, and the sun, without heat, shines hard, it is completely yellow.

VI. A POSTER

I have every right to stop in front of a poster, a large photo, and try to understand it. It shows a sofa. On the left, the wall; on the right, the end of the photo. A naked body, flat on its back on the sofa.

A groove divides the back, running from between the shoulders down to between the legs. In front of the spinal groove is the nape of the neck, tilted slightly towards the outside of the poster: we can clearly see an ear from the front, and less precisely the profile of a face.

The mouth and chin are hidden by the shoulder in front; the curve of the back hides the other shoulder.

The hair is higher than the rest of the body: the highest point, although the head is not erect, but in the continuation of the furrow that cuts the back lengthwise; the hair is at the end of this furrow, but it is the perspective that makes it seem higher than everything else. Even though they really are.

On either side of the groove, half the back. Because the naked body is lying on the sofa in such a way that the soles of the feet protrude from the poster, and an oblique line is drawn fictitiously from the crotch to the head, from the bottom left corner of the poster to the top right corner. The feet, which are almost joined, are slightly apart. The hair is a black or dark grey patch, representing blondness, and from the hair to the feet, the body is oriented like a compass needle pointing north on the right hand side and in front.

And the blue tip of the compass, which is magnetised, and which is red on other compasses, is the head of the subject being photographed, while the white tip, which is sometimes blue, is the feet.

They look dirty. You can only see the soles of the feet, which are dirty. In fact, you can also see the right outer edge of the right foot, almost in profile. As for the left foot (far apart from the other, at second glance), you can only see the underside. This is because the body is lying on its stomach, oriented as we know it. The right leg is shown almost in profile, while the left leg shows almost the inside of the knee, with the calf visible almost from behind.

These dark areas, which suggest the dirtiness of the feet, are unevenly distributed. The sole of the right foot is indicated by a very dark line, a black sole. On the bottom of the left foot, there is an almost black area, the underside of the toes, the detail of which is poorly captured by the giant photo, or confused in the overly greasy print. In any case, the toes are black.

The middle of the foot is clear and smooth.

The shading of the feet and head, and the grey shading of the hollow of the lumbar region, while the foundation is very light, suggest that the photographer's interest was focused on the part of the body between the lumbar region and the calves. The light comes together there, although at first glance it doesn't seem to, since the darker parts, apart from the soles of the feet, are not black, but at most a slightly grey.

The whole poster is a very elongated rectangle enclosing a body that is also very long. This elongation of the body is an effect of perspective, so obvious is the disproportion between the length of the legs and the length of the back, which seems short.

It appears so because it is curved like the wood of a bow when the bowstring is drawn, or rather would give the impression of being curved in this way if we imagined the bow, not vertical, as we hold it to draw, but horizontal, or better still oriented as the body lying on the sofa is exactly. In this way, the middle of the bow's convexity would not be halfway up the wood, but rather in the furthest third - shortened, like this very back - the last third from the end of the bow, from the soles of the feet.

The whole, as I said, is stretched out over a space that is also stretched out, and gives a rather pleasant impression, which is only an impression, of length and considerable slenderness.

The body rests on the elbows. We can see the right arm (not the forearm), which forms an acute angle with the torso (the profile of the torso), and we can see a little of the hollow of the right armpit, not enough to show the fleece, if it exists. The upper arm

This elbow is planted almost vertically in a sofa cushion, the material of which is not very supple, because this elbow, like the whole body, does not hollow it out.

This position of the arm (we can assume that the other, invisible arm does the same) straightens the torso, like a peg, just as a peg or an arm would straighten the torso of someone lying on their stomach, naked or not, reading a newspaper or brochure, and straightening their torso by standing on their elbows, with the sole aim of putting that distance between their face and the printed object which allows easy reading for those who are neither farsighted nor short-sighted. This raising of the torso explains the convexity of the back

and the hollowing of the lumbar region.

The middle of the back, as I said, is of remarkable clarity; it is hairless. The libidinous observer notes that the grain of the skin is very fine, the flesh itself hard and tight. This back seems asexual, although its length, its vigour, its suppleness even, and the narrowness of the hips give it a rather masculine air. We don't see enough of the face, though, the length of the hair is too ambiguous, we don't uncover enough of the torso (hidden by the right arm, for the part that interests me here) - to clarify, by examining the secondary sexual characteristics, such as the beard, moustache, nipples, sideburns, sideburns, the sex of the body whose back we see.

The position also contributes to this ambiguity. It could be the back of a young girl or a young man of fourteen or sixteen, waiting on a sofa for some kind of treatment that requires this posture. I wouldn't dare assume anything else.

Moreover, there is not a single detail - printed text, company name, registered name, slogan, invitation, harangue, advertising suggestion - to give meaning to this immense photograph. The various passers-by who pass by this poster are not interested in it, and I, who have examined it, cannot even approximately interpret its curious symbolism.

VII. THE AMERICAN BAR

So many stories. You have to look in the whisky trail. There's this rumbling, that's a given. Every three minutes you hear rumbling. More like scrap metal being silently dragged across the sand. Silently. They're carrying scrap metal. Iron. Chains. The sand carries men.

We listen to the scent of whisky. All he has to do is talk, and we'll listen, a little better from glass to glass. It speaks. Don't talk. We walked on the sand, dry, or not so dry. Dry, little by little, slowly, so slowly that you don't hear it drying out under your feet either. Yes, the noise continues, the

noise, soft, completely peaceful, which is not in our head, which is silent, the noise does not resound there, the noise resounds beside, we know that it resounds, but we do not hear it, which remains far from our head, in the fog which carries irons.

Men walk, tell me where you're walking, I'll tell you where you're going, who could do better, your path is reasonable, the sand erases the tracks, little by little, long before you reach the end.

It's cars making that noise. Just cars. With men in them, making the jeeps groan with their feet. There's even a flame, along the bar, along a coppery wall.

We were expecting it. The flames are licking the walls, it's their duty, everyone's duty, to wear down the walls with their teeth, the teeth are white, it's their duty to be white, and liquid, it's their duty to fill themselves with saliva and spit it out like an oyster, like drooling flames, because the flames don't rise, like lightning, they fall. And there they are. They run down the half of the wall where the cannons have made yellow and black wounds, to the ground, and lose their colour and their heat in a cascade, until they become cold and black and white and liquid like ice cubes that burn your fingers when they have melted in your fingers.

To play, we fiddle with the ice cube in the glass, take it out, the ice cube is a cube, I think, which is shaped like a cube when it is melted, shaped like a tongue and a throat, the ice cubes vanish one by one like rice, it looks like it in a blur, All that's left is a puddle of oily yellow blood from which these liquid, tapering flames escape in long gullies, making an Asian sizzling sound, the yellow of gold, will-o'-the-wisps in the fog, there on the table. We raise our glasses to our mouths in fits and starts, devouring them, the sand from each glass spurting out of our nostrils like when we play with our children in the dry sand, and our whisky-haired children are already burying us, the earth is coming out all over us, its colour green and black, a mask of fat is running like lava down our bodies, so we burst out laughing and having fun with the children pinching our knees.

The roar, I saw the propellers, above us, the helicopter in the soft red night, passing over our heads, our thousands of heads rise up, see the bombs fall and burst out laughing, then dive into the glasses where, I say, the bombs burst, chunks that cut into our thousands of faces from which the mud flows, we are not responsible, the helicopter turns around its propeller, I threw my glass, a shard hit it, it falls, the sand swallows it. The sand swallows the fire, which crushes the metal and the skulls, which burns the metals and the colours, with a heavy mouth with closed eyes that is wide open, which yawns, dozes and devours and falls asleep on the sand on the table to digest. We didn't do it on purpose, it just happened.

I can't tell if it's day or night, there's a range of light, and beyond that it's no longer daylight, in the night fires light up the night, it's done on purpose, it's the others who are doing it on purpose. We can't see anyone, the table is smooth, my glass is cracking, a warm night has fallen, from far above, over our heads, whose heads? There's no one there any more, the black ball of heat has fallen, every time the sun is red a meteorite falls, and we're in the dark, fire is pouring out of it, a fire as thick as a garbage dump is spilling onto our feet, no, it's other bodies that are roasting and dancing under the meteors, we're standing in front of our glasses and we're fiddling with the ice cubes that rise up in the glasses

and come out one by one as light knows how to do. Who could be afraid of alcohol?

VIII. LUPANAR

One breast, a skylight slams shut. The corridor, the entrance hall, perpendicular to the street, is open to the wind. There is a white tiled floor, hollowed out by passageways; grooves, black scratches that remain so even if you scrub for a long time. The night.

Near the threshold, there is a naive puddle of vomit in the shape of a tongue: wine, claret mixed with juices and whitish, glandular globules; vomit on the way in, on the way out. You've stepped in this puddle and got your fingers wet with it; purple marks stain the tiles; palms, index finger trails on the walls, whose paint is orange.

Through the skylight at the end of the corridor, the shadow of an inner courtyard rises. Through the door opposite, the bluish flashes of a sign on the mezzanine floor of the building opposite. It's windy in the street, which has a steep slope: it gushes into the corridor, rattles the skylight, makes the doors creak on their hinges, which every two metres hollow out the left-hand wall - left-hand when you enter.

These doors are painted a darker orange than the walls. Or it's a patina imparted over time by the bodies that collide with them.

The tiles in the corridor are poorly cemented. In the wind, or with a movement of the stone, invisible footsteps remove them from their recesses; they clatter together, but the banging is drowned out by the draught, all that can be heard is the sound of coins being shaken in the rumour of a toilet flush. Pieces of paper, wet with rain, the corridor sucks them in, they get stuck in the doors, they settle down, coming from the street, the gutter, the tarmac pavement, people have passed by, sewn into their coats, hands in their pockets, they crumble useless papers and throw them away, at the cost of a short hoofing.

The ceiling of the corridor is unpainted plaster. In the shadows it looks immaculate, with no cracks, splits or stains. Yet flakes of plaster, loosened by the damp from the water pipes in the ceiling, crumble to the floor every time a tap is turned on, causing the pipes to vibrate.

The puddle of vomit is no longer purplish; the blue sign has faded. The liquid seems mauve, puerilely pink, fluid. There are a few reflections shining on it from the crossroads at the top of the street, where three streetlights illuminate benches, a public works prefab and a vespasienne under a few maple

trees.

Along the vertical slabs of the vespasienne, made of mossy slate or deeply blackened zinc, a small trickle of water flows, singing like a spring. And the mosses gently receive the water and the light.

IX. METRO

You sit on a bench; it's not a seat, but a sign suggesting a resting position: half crouched, femurs horizontal, back square, or arched towards the knees, pelvis oscillating between these two weights, balance beam out of order. Migraine. An absence of head, with a migraine in it. A wheel in place of a head, neck, temples blazing old, face swallowed, head under heels, walking, rubbing, prowling. Periodic explosions, muffled dances, the sound of a cleaver, squeaks that make each vertebral horn sound up and down.

The metro is sexualised. Men's gazes lowered on women's legs: only to feed the solitary vice of the stumbling metro.

And then, in the pit, in the middle, there are rails, two by two, head to toe. Heads aching under these wheels, weighed down by bodies far above.

You can start from between the rails, rise up from the depths of this pit, go up onto the platform, choosing a small staircase at the end of the platform; walk along the platform to the other end, where you will find a corridor.

A possible corridor, where the bodies move with a characteristic friction, akin to that of bottle crates being slid across a lorry bed. Grouped by six, eight, twelve, they follow the corridor, pass through gates, sway in front of blue enamel panels, until they reach a vast tunnel.

Immediately a cry seizes them and makes them vibrate. There is a blackish, pyramidal, collapsed mass (a pyramid whose base sucks in the top, which refuses to do so and springs upwards, falls again, the sinews of the overwhelmed neck are uncovered).

under the skin, wrinkled like a lizard's belly, streaked with a rhomboidal grid where the dust of time settles, damp with secretions), a heap of tarry matter, against a wall, but thrown back towards the centre of the corridor by the curvature of the vault - and out comes a cry that sounds like a song, uttered with closed eyes - nefarious, so pure that we vibrate one by one.

It is a woman who utters these cries for money, which tear fabric and flesh: and sometimes a coin falls to the ground, close to the source of the cry.

A woman sings. A voice so beautiful that the corridor is out of all proportion. The corridor is a hollow half-cylinder, lying along its length, where a song jostles, clattering on the white earthenware tiles that envelop the vault. A

long viscera, a long chest where men and women walk suburbantly.

The corridor ends in a cesspool. Clusters of men flow out of it, spilling onto each of the stone footings between which the pit opens, where the pit opens, where the rails are.

People stop here, follow the pit along its length and fall silent. There are pleasant silences, and more and more smiles from the young women: with charming modesty, they show the washing, the desserts, the bras they are using; and we smile in turn, a little anxious, confused, because we know we are unworthy of such kindness, so pretty, so stubborn.

Posters are vast sheets of concave paper on which our words run. Movable stains that make a fixed drawing (it would represent a whore after the removal of her ovaries, or, if you prefer, an eggshell when a spoon penetrates it: this is experienced). Spoon-shaped gazes tinkling slowly in the glare of the posters.

X. PUBLIC GARDEN, NIGHT

Our gaze is beaten by lines that interfere, a hell of wet, gelatinous lines, where the buildings are obscene lips, closed, hardened, ready for sucking, and the sky falls and falls again.

A few steps away, trees, a limestone gutter where the river flows geometrically. Tar, metal, belly wrinkles, it's the night that plunges in. Some streets, between the fields of standing stones, lead to the river, to the banks, where the lorries turn.

Two people walk as if on the edge of the water. Sniffing the slime of the water. Side by side, touching. Around them, through them, an appearance of a vigil of arms, bayonets, cannons, all at sunset. Under their arms the

river comes and goes. Up there it fills with scrap metal, the clouds are convulsively shat upon, spurting and freezing, sperm in the cold water as well. Convoys roll by, between each call of the metal each step measures its silence.

Five o'clock in the morning. They cross the bridge. The lampposts bend towards the moving water, with its layers of shimmering white and yellow spindles. They are on the other side of the river, towards the garden, just them, the stone is grey and it's cold.

Two of them on the bank, sitting on the mooring bollards, phalloid mushrooms, funereal stools, their iron gleaming, greasy, crying out for ropes and scraping wood against the stone, silt that the water deposits, flesh that turns the trees green with sleep in the early morning, the wind rushes through their icy legs, stripping them bare.

Engines revving at half speed, bird calls suddenly erupting in panic, cars driving louder.

This piece of unwashed sky refuses to lie down, in the pasty dawn it sleeps with the river and thinks nothing of it, old flat-tailed lover, soaks in the rippling waters like the wall of a vagina and its spine cracks and dies.

They walk. Grey, purple in the grey, a play of mirrors reflecting the glow of the concrete at its highest point (there, at the edge, so close they walk, right next to the water, the two of them, beside each other, wherever they go, from one end of the loop of the river to the other).

They enter the bushes, blue trees, coming and going, they kneel in the bushes, licking their faces - the two of them, they are happy.

This bush is enclosed in a flowerbed that emerges from the sand with other bushes, rusty flowers that ooze little frigid liquors, exuded along the black metal gates. The square is closed for the night, they are there, under the shadow of the leaves, which is dust that drinks everything up.

When footsteps sound on the asphalt, from a distance, they separate. The flowerbed is empty, not glistening, with the juicy liquor of the potting soil, where the ants get stuck.

At the back of the square, the parapet, at the bottom, upside down, the bridge, the river swimming, because it's going to be daylight. It's summertime.

THE WORD AND THE FICTION, about "Libera" - May 1968

Source: *Revue mensuelle Critique*, May 1968, tome XXIV - number 252, twenty-first year, éditions de Minuit, founder Georges Bataille. Manager: Jérôme Lindon: Jérôme Lindon. This text was revised when Pinget's novel *Libera* was republished in 1984.



APPROACHES.

As we know, Pinget's novels, one after the other, use uniform material: the same characters, the same places. More to the point, in each book we find certain names of places and people that appeared in an earlier work. The stability of this material seems to link Pinget's different novels: one might think of some cyclical intention.

But (in this respect at least) it is not. It's not a question of unifying, in a big way. It's difficult to create a series of books, but it does provide an invariable and representative sampling of characters "in the making", whose tribulations take place in the same region. The topographical and patronymic paraphernalia only seems to remain at Fauteur's disposal as a possible form of future books: it's a reserve. The fact that there are distortions and contradictions - deliberate ones - in these successive interlockings is not worthy of interest, because verisimilitude and continuity are not in question: the only things that matter are the names. And what they designate will be all the more subject to variations, allusions, falsified quotations or not, as these novels do without an "objective narrator" - the ordinary pole of traditional narratives. Those who say 'I' in Pinget's novels, of course, stubbornly cling to a series (more or less altered, fragmented, augmented) of pre-existing vocables: but this is to create a fixed point for themselves, by explicit reference to previous fictions. Narratively, in terms of invention, they take only this minimal advantage: to make them supports for their discourse, pretexts for speaking. Here, what is defined is a fine apophysis in the indeterminate, an assertion of the I-don't-know.

Le Libera is therefore a stand-alone book. In it, an anonymous narrator recounts an anecdote-gigogne in which words are recognisable: proper nouns, read in *Mahu*, in *Quelqu'un*, in *L'Inquisiteur*, etc., and which above all serve as clues, interchangeable reference points for series, little or not, of the same name. - and which serve above all as clues, interchangeable reference points for

series, whether or not they are real.

The story is made up of personalised words, gestures and all sorts of alluvia that swell and twist the narrative.

"Contradictory statements are reported by someone... who has not revealed his identity to me", says Pinget of his *Libera*. In fact, the narrator does not 'narrate', nor is he explicitly responsible for the fiction: he reports what is said (the origin and nature of which will vary, even if they remain centred on a limited number of subjects) - he therefore claims to be in the position of an auditory witness. This is the most hypocritical role of all: on its own, it would encourage the multiplicity of narrative levels; by convention, it already justifies it. And, by chance of associations of ideas (the expressive power of a scene, a way of speaking, an oral rhythm...), the narrator memorises, rather evasively, past events, imaginary perhaps; he is somewhat involved in them as an actor: but he does not have his own version of these events and seems to remain outside a fiction with which, as we shall see, he nevertheless maintains a troubling relationship.

As usual with Pinget, the discourse hesitates, twists and turns, the speaker questioning the veracity of what he is evoking and attributing to this or that named, known human support. These doubts and flip-flops are, of course, not sincere or psychologically plausible. The resources, failings and scruples of memory are stylistic devices which, by introducing disjunctive copulas into the discourse, link together versions of the same fact that are not so much contradictory as antagonistic - for they hardly ever destroy each other, they oppose each other: and, in a more or less marked contrast, they contribute to the tension of the book, to its "driving" unity.

To understand the role played by this shifting discourse in the composition of the book, it is useful to outline the presuppositions of such a work. First of all, it should be noted that the old novel was also 'woven' by successive contrasts - but with great care in the manoeuvre, and the subjection of these oppositions to the credibility of a plot; a given situation was 'painted' - then the opposite situation ; Behind the scenes, we had a little box of fatal events and other brazenly portrayed characters, thanks to which, by means of a "coup de théâtre", we could reverse the action; we'd start over two or three times, creating twists and turns and a progression. A puppet show that's out of fashion today, but that continues to amuse children.

With Pinget, the coup de théâtre is merely verbal: it is the appearance of

the *or*, the *or else* - and, more generally, of a sensible contradiction,

The plot is then subject to the movements of the writing, rather than being the driving force behind it. The plot is then subject to the movements of the writing, rather than being the driving force behind it.

In both cases, the tension of the book, its entire composition, its way of being, continues to be based, schematically, on a system (prepared or abrupt, unusual or ritualistic) of clear, avowed oppositions, of coherent or more or less coherent sequences: which implies a priori a stability of each term, a verisimilitude of the fiction - hence a certain form of realism; we would say better: a novelism of representation. Here, the relationship between the written word and reality remains one of relative subjection: we are dealing with figurative literature, an instrument for evoking the "outside text".

Pinget accepts this system in order to fight it, on the terrain of the book itself; the fiddling, the falsifications, the pulverisation of reality that we witness in *Le Libera* must constantly refer to an implicit mythical model (reality) that they pervert and thereby make feel more tyrannically necessary. The novel is the story of this conflict.

The exceptional interest of *Libera* lies in the fact that it shows a writer who chooses to erase the novel by grappling with its demands, its arbitrariness, and even its dumbing-down journalistic aspect. A writer whose narrative effort aims to destroy in minute detail the literary diktat on which the whole discourse is based. In short, a fiction that the spoken word constitutes and, violently, that it erases; the appeal of the work lies in the perfection of this inspired, violent, controlled, tonic game.

For Pinget, the novel's anecdotal form is merely a necessary burden: "I am not interested in everything that can be said or signified", he writes (Preface), "but in the *way it is said*. And once this manner has been chosen (...), which is therefore a prerequisite, it will impose on me both the composition and the substance of the discourse. The function of the anecdote, of the story told and of its meaning are reversed; this reversal is played out and replayed, and even dramatised: but it is not taken for granted, we settle into the operation, we do not envisage a post-problematic work (only within the "new novel", Beckett's last works - *Comment c'est*, *Têtes-mortes* - seem to explore this beyond).

It is true that Pinget's realism is often parodic - but it is there. The

humour pretends to belittle the representative function of the narrative; it discourages interpretation of the book in terms of meaning. The thread of words

slices a fiction made on purpose a thousand times over (all subservient to the need for these cuts), into two movements in counterpoint, which coincide and interact. The counterpoint of these movements remains fairly simple in principle, but in its execution it is rich, prolix, tangled, meticulous, revolving - similar, in its circularity, to that famous engraving by C. Escher, which depicts one hand drawing another that draws the first. But in *Le Libera*, we have to imagine that one of the hands erases the hand that draws it; there is no possibility of the hand that draws destroying it or the hand that erases creating it. The work will be the end and the place of this logical drama.

A lively technique of confusion, interference and slip of the tongue organises this complex with great fluidity. It's a devious fluidity of speech that embarrasses itself with anecdotes in order to make itself appear, and becomes increasingly burdened until it is suffocated (think, by contrast, of *Bing's* "white voice"). The story we try to tell in *Le Libera* has the function of revealing the voice that carries it: we speak to be there, so that there *is a* voice.

To speak: because there is no question of writing. For the novelist, the spoken word has all the characteristics and all the attractions of an infra-language, inconsistent, mobile, unaffected above all by the written, organised, received, legislating context. It has its own vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric; its essentially transductive logic allows the narrative to be organised in a way that is both incoherent and continuous. Here too, Pinget's reason for choosing this genre is a concern for realism, coupled with expressive intentions (cf. Preface, pp. 3-4, *passim*).

But this language, whatever its origin, is well and truly written: and it does *its work*: an illiterate narrative, versatile, unforeseen by the author, and which models, secretes familiar visions - banal situations, words, gestures seen a hundred times over. A narrative which, were it not for its irony, would border on populism, even miserabilism. It no longer masks anything; what it knows how to say and keep quiet cracks, swallows itself up. But a flow of safety and unreason takes its place, building, through its gaps, its weaknesses, its returns, the real novel we will read. It is the flourishing of the continuous line of certain drawings by schizophrenics - such as those of a lady Laure Pigeon, a spiritualist, who would figure well in Pinget's material alongside the ladies Lorpailleur and Lozière - where we see, for example, a pretty human form made of a zigzag of

bluish writing, undulating, amiable, moving about

slowly, and can be read, barely deformed letters, abstruse text. A double journey, a double whim, a familiar silhouette, a language of strangeness.

The Libera's discourse, thus determined, commands the creation of a fiction made for him. Alone, heavy and airy, the word builds; It springs forth in an architecture that ignores architecture, obeying the singularities that inform it, a diaphanous and meticulous Babel, whose pictorial example this time would be another engraving by Escher, which shows us a delirious system of doors, staircases, corridors and terraces, worked out against the grain in a rationally unreasonable route, where blind silhouettes trace a unique path, each fragment of which, in itself banal, is rigorously irreconcilable with the others. A labyrinth of interlocking impossibilities, *Le Libera* is nothing else.

I've already alluded to the convenient convention that holds the whole thing together: 'they' report things, 'they' make things up, 'they' seem unsure of what they're saying. We revel in mistaking bladders for lanterns; we visit two or three dead ends in this way, and the book falls apart.

A theme, a meaning, animates this journey into uncertainty. Pinget's simple, repeated, constant theme is an indisputable "morality", like: life begins badly, goes badly, ends badly - to which we can add: *nothing can be said or felt well*. The interest of this theme is certainly not philosophical, but aesthetic: it contributes, with the bitterness it arouses, to the narrative 'tone'. It is a fundamental source of metaphorical speech, bittersweet humour and brief violence; it designates the *point of view* of the narrator, who is tossed about in the absurd: not an existentialist absurdity, but the aggressively funny, *nonsensical* absurdity that results from his own speech, which seeks him out, accuses him and ridicules him. So what I used to call a 'thesis', even in the weakest sense of the word, is not the core of the book, but its native soil: it commands a form, an organisation, a language that erases it. As with Beckett, 'meaning' is a novelistic form; it does not and cannot have any intrinsic value; it is not the aim, the object of the book, but its axiom, which is only as good as what it generates. It is only in this sense that I speak of the 'meaning' of *Libera*: to go towards the book.

This relationship between the spoken word and its ideological 'undersignification' was more apparent and simpler in novels like *Quelqu'un* or *L'Inquisiteur*, where the only reason for speaking was to digest oneself: you spent your life there, liquefying over and over again. It goes without saying that

this disintegration is our

This self-destruction, this self-destruction of our becoming, is what we do to live. And *L'Inquisiteur* shows this with superb clarity: in an interminable anamnesis, an X... (to whom the label deaf-and-retired valet applies) draws up a meticulous inventory of what he has done, an inventory that includes exasperating descriptions of the château de Broy, where he worked, and its furnishings; The whole thing is interspersed with intangible allusions to the owners of the place, about whom the *interviewee* remains virtually mute, while, page after page, this silence that speaks volumes imposes on the reader, in a few concierge-like deductions, the derisory and unverifiable anecdote of old fags with sex parties and millions. So this château de Broy, with its miserable mystery, is like an empty safe. And it doesn't matter whether the discourse is a memory, a fantasy or the gradual creation of a lie to oneself. In *L'Inquisiteur*, we discover his life made up of full nothingness and empty being, in a vast metaphor of destitution. A meaning that is there only for the beauty of the image it has created.

The old queers, or their ilk, are to be found in *Le Libera*: they lurk behind the suspicious anecdote that governs the book: the rape and murder of children. They lurk behind the suspicious anecdote that governs the book: the rape and murder of children. Which is why nothing is funnier than this book.

Pinget's humour is also a fact of language, as much as an *a priori witticism*. A fact of spoken language: this language, which Pinget says is better suited to the demands of sensitivity, has the advantage, when written, of preventing any dramatisation of expression: it is conducive to lightness, flexibility and repetition; we have already mentioned its fine "structuring" virtues. In *Le Libera*, it constantly defuses the morbid theme of the book by stating it, which can no longer be considered as an indication of a black meaning. Or rather, this meaning is perverted: we don't think it any more than we are oppressed by it: we enjoy it literarily, that is to say selfishly. Like a stroller on the banks of the Seine who hears the cries of a drowning man: he sits down on the parapet, he listens, it's very beautiful, he listens until silence, until the drowning is consummated. Woe betide the unfortunate person who takes this cry seriously and interrupts the concert on the pretext of saving a life. A life, a drama, serves no purpose other than to give these dangerous pleasures to its witnesses. The thousand and one chatterboxes in *Libera*, all preoccupied with accidents, murders, rapes and other news items, know this well. In other words, the narrator knows it; his voyeur-discourteous mind never stops conjuring up

tragedies, multiplying them ad infinitum on the basis of a suspicion, a rumour.

A voyeur who only sees what he tells. Who only tells what he has heard or could hear. Who has heard too much to fix his mind on a privileged image - and not enough to be satisfied. To have satisfied this passion for what hurts.

We cannot stop at this hypothesis of a narrator endowed with a particular psychology, which would explain the nature of *Libera's* preoccupations. For this narrator (I will continue to use the word for the sake of convenience) is a pure fabrication of the reading.

When, in a book that says "I", we don't see any information that would allow us to classify this "I" as a fictional "they", we tend to attribute a genetic intention to the discourse; we say that it is the whole of it that is (that makes) the narrator; from then on, page after page, the reader tries to gather from this monologue the clues, however meagre they may be, with which to compose a character, a figure, a main character, who will take responsibility for the discourse.

But this archaeological mania is illegitimate, in *Le Libera* at least, because there is *no one*. Needless to say, if no one assumes the fiction, then "it's the author": because his word is specified in a foreign discourse that annihilates his origin. As for the supposed narrator, he or she is merely the fake, illusory product of a fiction that borrows the "I" to constitute itself.

Le Libera shows the extent to which the first person, if it is denied its former introspective, autobiographical implications, can, far better than the "he" (which always presupposes someone enunciating it), erase any human referent to the fiction, any pre-existing presence in the novel, a presence that would remain "alongside" the work to ensure its unfolding, guarantee its credibility, or to allow itself to be drawn little by little by the narrative as if by a slowly discovered mirror. On the contrary, the "I" becomes the person of indeterminacy, of silence, of absence, and, curiously, it objectifies the book by abandoning it to itself. A collection of "dead-end voices", *Le Libéra* is a deserted novel.

LIBERA TECHNIQUES.

Under cover of generalities, I have mentioned a few striking aspects of Pinget's novel. Once you've accepted the above, you're interested in the book itself. Therein lies its fundamental success: in the techniques

that create fiction. It is certainly not my intention, in order to show them, to undertake a summary of the work, a summary which would either be too simple (and therefore of no demonstrative value), or too long. Rather, a fairly close examination of a few pages of the book will give a sufficient idea of the techniques used throughout *Libera*. I apologise for the cumbersome way in which I have had to handle such a lively text - to which please refer (pp. 7-27).

The book opens with a statement that immediately calls for a context: "If Lorpailleur is mad, there's nothing I can do about it."

The proposition "la Lorpailleur est folle" would stand on its own; it would be a declarative like "la marquise est sortie à cinq heures". But its inclusion in a conditional shifts the affirmation to an "I can't help it", which means :

- that the person who says 'I' is not responsible for the utterance, which is an external, suffered fact;
- that Lorpailleur's madness is a hypothesis, deduced from something that has to be said. To add that the word "Lorpailleur" is enough to send the reader back to a whole context of fictions, sites and characters, which weighs heavily from the outset on the book to come and greatly weakens interest in the possible anecdote: everything is known in advance.

We can see the extent to which this single sentence constitutes a generative, dynamic element: and we can consider that the "exposition" of the novel ends here. Everything else will flow from it, depending on the initial assertion.

First of all, tell us why "La Lorpailleur is mad". It's because the novelist-schoolteacher insinuated that the narrator was involved in the murder of the "little Ducreux". On the one hand, it shifts curiosity towards a new narrative axis; on the other, it justifies the irritated tone of the first sentence: or rather, let's say that this irritated tone has given rise to a development that exploits it.

It is obviously the spoken pace of the beginning that now generates an interlocutor, in a simple repetition of the initial, give or take an incision: "If Lorpailleur is mad," *I said to Verveine, "there's nothing I can do about it.*

Caller = conversation. Here it is. It includes the narrator's obsession with having Lorpailleur locked up. The conversation also includes the pharmacist Verveine's reply. There are references to Mlle Lorpailleur's family: "a sister in Argentina, the rest dead and buried".

The conversation is set in the chemist's shop. This was almost inevitable, since up until now the satellites of the first sentence have been associated by proximity and extension. The centrifugal movement is going to become more pronounced, with the "I" taking up the anecdote of the Ducreux affair to circumstantiate it, one step at a time: the fact, the victim, the witnesses, the parents, etc. All these details, the privileged elements of the story, are going to be the focus of the second sentence. All these details, key elements of the variations to come, should be noted: "the four-year-old Ducreux was found strangled in the Furet woods"; this happened "a good ten years ago", in July, "a bad month for us"; the same month as another murder in 1873, "a man named Sennet shot dead by his brother-in-law". Witnesses (in the Ducreux case) saw "the boy leaving the courtyard at around ten o'clock in the morning". There was - and this counts for a lot - Miss Cruze "cleaning her window panes". The dead boy's parents are bakers. They have had "three children since then, little Laure, little Frédéric, little Alfred, all very nice".

An interesting link reintroduces the initial speaker, Verveine, and her Lorpailleur-folie context: "It's all very well to say that they've had three children since then (...) these things mark you for life / said Verveine". In this way, we will often see an utterance that we would initially think should be attributed to the narrator, being taken up after the fact by a third person, who only serves as a link between two themes, in a fairly regular coupling of speaker *a* - utterance *a*, loc. *b* - utterance *b*, etc. The narrator, in turn, will be the one to whom the narrator is referring.

So here we return to the first topic of conversation, the seed or root of *Libera*, Lorpailleur, who "lost her mother years ago" - a reprise (there will be several examples) and extension of the small kernel deformations that accompany the entry of a proper noun (here, on the name Lorpailleur, it was "everyone dead and buried"). The teacher is "still in mourning (...) on her bike on the way to school at half past eight".

La Lorpailleur on her bike, with her mourning crêpe that "will come up against her face in a gust of wind just as a lorry rounds the bend",

is immediately the subject of a short, aggressive affabulation: the narrator sees her "dead on impact, there, lying on the pavement".

Each of the elements set out so far : Lorpailleur-folie, Lorpailleur-accident, the Ducreux affair, the Ducreux family, will henceforth, as far as the sequel is concerned, be the nucleus of various developments which will

alternate and influence each other.

This is the first example of the kind of interlocking or permutations that are going to be used constantly. We see Mademoiselle Cruze doing her windows again, as in the statement about the Ducreux case, but this time the young lady sees Lorpailleur on a bicycle, not the little victim. In the same sentence, the first example of the series of metamorphoses that will be so important throughout *Libera*: immediately after seeing Lorpailleur on her bike, Miss Cruze sees, as in the first version, a kid "coming out of the yard", but it's now "little Alfred" (we don't yet know the name of the dead child, but we do know that Alfred is one of the other three). These two examples are tiny, but they nevertheless mark the first 'slippage' in the discourse, from which the fiction arises not so much through developments in the strict sense of the word as through reciprocal and distorted borrowings from one paragraph to the next.

The narration returns, still in the irritation-aggression tone, with the vision of the teacher falling off her bike. But here she falls without the help of the lorry: "she falls, she jerks and screams, (...) she drools, you can see she was mad / said Madame Monneau". We see a combination of the two statements: Lorpailleur is mad - I imagine Lorpailleur falling off her bike, in a single, convincing scene of an epileptic seizure, all assumed a posteriori by a new speaker.

And immediately, by association, the same scene: "she was lying on the pavement, the kids in a circle at a distance" - but we're back to the version knocked down by a lorry; the lorry driver is there, and the narrative assault is completely successful: "the doctor (...) bent over the dead woman, feeling her, examining her, and found that she was dead". In passing, the information "his sister lives in Argentina" reappears, augmented by : "... apparently with an actor". The couple of strangers, sister plus X,..., born of gossip about an invented accident, plays an important role in what follows.

We had a clear-cut, continuous, fictional episode: Mlle Lorpailleur's road accident. Naturally, this scene, which is too clear-cut, calls for the first *or*, which knocks her down and introduces something else: "Or if she hadn't died on the spot / Or if the lorry had simply passed her, she would have arrived at school at twenty minutes to nine".

That hour gives rise to a new quotation: "Madame Ducreux kept an eye on little Alfred playing in the courtyard". Remember that, in the first version of the story, Mademoiselle Cruze saw the former's brother at about ten in the

morning; the second time, she saw little Alfred at about half past eight. This time, the same Alfred was seen by Madame Ducreux at half-past eleven; in all three cases, the kids came out of the courtyard.

In this particular case, it is impossible to say whether this kind of repetition is, strictly speaking, a metamorphosis of a primitive statement or an embryo of development by analogy; We are dealing with banal, everyday scenes, which in truth could well be repeated in this way, including variants, for good - if at least we were in a stable time, that of a narrative, and not the floating time of a word that fabricates the event over the course of a few fixed ideas - and if each of these repetitions were not presented by the narrative as a unique phenomenon, independent of its counterparts.

In any case, Madame Ducreux sees her Alfred, then she sweeps up, "suddenly seeing little Louis ten years earlier as she sweeps behind the armchair". Louis is the dead boy.

Here, the first stage of a scene that is repeated: "Ducreux (her husband, the baker) called his wife to the shop, the employee was not enough, it was half past eleven, all the ladies were feeling for bread"; and the extension of another, already set up: "Little Alfred was going away, the mother, like a madwoman, left everyone, she went to grab her child in the courtyard, he had hardly moved, he was making pasties near the fountain".

The next paragraph, which is very characteristic, consists solely of a delicious quotation of five scattered elements previously mentioned: "While these ladies were feeling the bread / seeing Lorpailleur on her bike coming back from harvest / hasn't it been ten years since her mother died / dragging her mourning around like this, dragging her dead everywhere / you won't tell me she's not a bit crazy".

Association, the Ducreux affair reappears, enriched: "we had assumed everything, a kidnapping, no more, no less" - to which is added a pretty thought, which introduces a suspicion that will become very sensitive: "is it normal to have your child strangled, what was behind it, what sort of people were the Ducreuxes associating with, no, it's not normal". Note the frequent changes from indirect to direct style, and in other cases from the conditional to the indicative, shifting the narrative constantly from the imagined, or reported, to the real, to the present: it's as if, in a fog of words, a few words were suddenly caught, held, considered, revived, bending the course of a fiction that didn't seem to anticipate them by their sudden facticity.

The process creates a new articulation: "Which would have meant that once the customer had gone out I would have been back at Verveine's. And Verveine seeing me coming back wanted to divert the conversation". And when Verveine saw me coming back, she wanted to divert the conversation...". The antecedent of this "What would have made" is undoubtedly the thought: it's not normal to have your child strangled (so I'm going to "go back" to where I was talking about it, to continue discussing the matter).

Conversation with the pharmacist, the first context of the book. The "sister in Argentina" reappears in the discourse: but it is attributed to the speaker himself, who also calls himself "an old cousin retired from the railways" - and specifies that he "would have invented others" (relatives to satisfy the pharmacist's curiosity). This assertion is enough to make us doubt everything from now on, in other words, to add the *lie* clue to what was already labelled *subjective speech*. In particular, if there is a sister in Argentina, she remains unemployed; since two people can claim her, she is no longer recognised as a legitimate owner. This is the disadvantage of the process: by too often passing an attribute from one person to another, we detach that attribute from any possible subject: isolated, floating, it wanders around the text until someone reclaims it; as we shall see later, this is precisely the case with this sister in Argentina.

We know that Verveine remains the common factor in the Lorpailleu-Ducreux affair. There is a slow shift from one to the other, starting with Lorpailleu and her madness. The speaker says that his mother remembered seeing La Lorpailleu's grandmother "fall one day and writhe around drooling". Of course, she saw this because the text had just "decided" that Mademoiselle Lorpailleu had had an epileptic fit: heredity was established. But, according to Verveine, it wasn't that, but rather a

accident. This statement shifts the focus to the initial fabrication: Lorpailleu hit by a lorry. Once again we see "the kids in a circle around the accident victim" and "Miss Cruze washing her windows". Only the pharmacist said that the teacher had "a strong constitution". This statement obviously weighs heavily on the new version of the scene: Lorpailleu will only have a "slight bruise on her shoulder" - since the narrative, unless it breaks off at the drop of a *hat*, is closely modelled on its immediate context.

We have already reached a state of the narrative which, while remaining related to the implications of the expository sentence, is now dependent on the creations deduced from the cells that this first sentence has generated, and on

the interaction, subject to neighbourhood attractions, that these creations have either with each other, or with any of their formants.

Continuation of the conversation with Verveine, who has moved on to the Ducreux affair; it is said that "the Ducreux boy was not abducted" - denying a supposition made earlier; that his brother, Frédéric, "looks a lot like him"; finally, and this is the most important point, the dead man is referred to as a "little boy with his throat cut" (on page 9, he was strangled).

A weak link ("quant à...") leads back to Lorpailleur. The contusion on page 14 (which concluded the last version of the accident) is now, according to "Madame Monneau", due to a fall: "when she fell from a chair to wash the windows she dislocated her shoulder" - a combination of Verveine's assertion (dislocated shoulder) and the posture, the occupation, in which Mademoiselle Cruze has appeared each time so far. This doesn't stop the text from adding a contradictory statement: "I think she simply let herself fall off / her bike when she saw the lorry, either out of fear or out of calculation, (...) she's so bad". It is clear that the story, which revolves around the idea (if not the fact) of a fall, could be circumstantiated, in terms of its causes and consequences, by an indefinite number of possible variants; those adopted obey the text already written and, although contradictory, each refers to a known version of the event. Here, the repetition is extended by the statement of a reason ("she's so bad"...) which in fact reverses the origin of the statement. Remember that at the beginning of the text, we started with a Lorpailleur on a bicycle in mourning (this stubborn mourning was presented as proof of her mania), a lady whom the narrator wished no more and no less than to be run over by a lorry; then he saw her dead - and finally only injured;

But now she herself has become responsible for the imaginary scene: she is the one who, out of pure malice ("it was all to get the driver arrested"), made people believe that the lorry had hit her. This is the final stage in the displacement of the fiction, which is now assumed by the person who was originally the victim.

In any case, Lorpailleur certainly no longer has much to fear from lorries - which nonetheless remain there as a convenient cause of any accident whose existence would be decided by the narrative.

Another loose connection ("that day..." - the day of the accident) leads back to Madame Ducreux. The Lorpailleur-Ducreux organisation is, moreover, regular, and this sensitive alternation is a good enough justification for the text

to dispense with any real "logical" linkage from one sequence to the next. Madame Ducreux, who that day was, of course, "cleaning the window panes, mounted on a stool" (in the various versions of the window washing, only Lorpailleur had the right to a chair! It was, admittedly, only to fall off). And she "saw little Alfred (...) go through the courtyard gate, she grabbed her little one, her husband was calling him to the shop, it was half past eleven".

Literal repetition of page 12. This is indeed a seated scene. So here, to disrupt it, is a new or, which introduces a modified version of the thing. We still see the husband Ducreux calling his wife at half past eleven, but at the same time Madame Monneau, coming out of the bakery, sees "Lorpailleur all stiff on her bicycle, she was on her way to school, half past eight". Quite apart from this contradiction, it should be noted that, before calling his wife, Mr Ducreux was discussing "an estimate for the shed to be built" with a mason, who we'll talk about later.

This brings us to Mademoiselle Lorpailleur "all stiff on her bike". That's the end of one paragraph. The beginning of the next one shows the same person "getting up, patting her dusty skirt, fiddling with the bike". The fall is the gap between the two paragraphs; neither the lorry nor the epilepsy seem to be involved. As usual, the children form a circle, but it's around "the driver of a lorry parked in front of the Café du Cygne, completely drunk on the pavement". It's a complete pulverisation of the initial scene, Lorpailleur-renversée-par-un-camion: the fall is on one side, the victim on the other, the witnesses elsewhere, and finally it's the lorry driver's turn to end up on the ground... In this way, all the little components of a scene become

Only their simultaneous appearance in the same paragraph reminds us that they used to work together on a single scene.

In keeping with the alternation already denounced, here is the Ducreux affair again, in a short account of the picnic during which the tragedy is said to have taken place. It describes little Louis, who at one point leaves his parents and wanders off into the forest: "a farmer picking ceps" has seen him. "He was the only witness, but a witness to what, he had only seen the boy go into the forest (...) but at the inquest there were a host of witnesses who had seen the boy in the morning, who had seen him the day before, who had seen him the week before at the bakery, who had seen him born, who knew the parents, the grandparents, the cousins, the whole lot, but the murderer was still at large". Here and there, reflections and parentheses of this kind justify the floating nature of the narrative, provide a realistic explanation for the multiplication of

contradictory or uncertain statements, etc. While the usefulness of these incisions, in terms of their value as a demonstration or commentary on the text itself, is not very clear, on the contrary, it is clear that they create gaps, pauses or nervous movements that whip up, relax or deepen the narrative, in the midst of narratives full of little details that are at the level of gossip journalism.

So "we haven't seen little Louis again". However, it seems that his body has been found, as we are now told of "a small grave with two geraniums, a small white cross that would break your heart". A whining phrase that Madame Ducreux assumes afterwards: "she watered the geraniums, she removed a weed, she cried softly". Information on the cross: "Louis Ducreux, 1948-1952". Mathematicians will deduce that the scene takes place in 1962. The mother cries, then goes back to the bakery "where these ladies were feeling for bread". And these ladies talk behind her back, taking up the theme: it's not normal to have your child murdered, who are the Ducreux's friends, etc.; and it's the picnic version of the affair that is denied, erased: "it was a story spread by God knows who, the Ducreux have never picnicked anywhere...".

The story now remains firmly rooted in Ducreux territory; the development will absorb and swallow up several elements that were foreign to this area. First of all, there is the pharmacist Verveine, who is brought into the presence of Madame Ducreux a few days after the funeral (ten years before the preceding event), and who tries to "pull the wool over her eyes", "wanting to know if she is...".

or not his sister hadn't come that Sunday, the day of the crime, with a stranger, a boy from out of town". Sister Ducreux, we are told (but in the bakery this time), "is in Argentina", adding that "her mother died some time ago". And, as if the Ducreux's family situation were really too similar to Lorpailleur's, we are immediately corrected (this is Madame Monneau speaking): "what am I saying, the mother, the mother-in-law, it was the mother-in-law". As for the stranger accompanying this sister from Argentina, he was "a boy of about twenty".

Continuation of the narration: "The weather was mild, it was mid-May" - a chronological detail that could apply just as well (or just as badly) to what follows as to what precedes. But we've known for a long time that all the little details in the story are designed to mislead the reader...

So what's interesting and original about mid-May? First, "we see the neighbour perched on a stepladder washing the tiles in her kitchen"; and also "the schoolmistress upright on her English-style bicycle, her mourning veil

fluttering from behind". Note the nouns: voisine, maîtresse d'école, which have replaced the mademoiselle Cruze, mademoiselle Lorpailleur, of the first versions; the whole passage is intended to be general: indefinite pronoun, present tense, etc.

Another "everyday" image ("the little Ducreux, is it Frédéric or Alfred, playing in the courtyard while his mum looks on from the window") begins the gossip about the Ducreux couple.

The next paragraph suggests that the weather has been "so mild (...), June had been so hot and this *sweet July* suddenly...". This confusion is further reinforced by a remark made by Madame Monneau to Madame Ducreux (in July): "Do you think the weather is so nice (...), it feels like May".

There seems to be a particular reason for this change of month: we're going to be talking about accidents. We know (page 9) that "all misfortunes happen to us in July, fires, car accidents, hailstorms, drownings"; if we accept the almost superstitious July-accident link, the narrative cannot tell of any accident that takes place in May: it is in a way by attraction

that the proximity of an accident description changes the month of the year in which the scene is supposed to take place.

Accidents, or rather chain dramas. First there is little Alfred, who, "the Sunday before", frightened by the onset of a storm, "slipped and fell, dislocating his shoulder slightly. Let it be noted in this connection that nothing similar would surely have happened to the child if, a few pages before, La Lorpailleur had not dislocated her shoulder (in obedience to Verveine's assertion that she had a "very strong constitution"). As we all know, accidents are contagious in *Le Libéra*, and anyone named in the story is an accident victim; I was talking about superstition before, but here it's almost like a curse!

Suddenly, however, little Alfred emerges from the bakery, and the mother rushes to catch up with him, because "she is still looking at the little boy who was run over by that car ten years ago". Strangled, abducted, slit throat or run over, little Louis remains a stable victim of everything that can happen to a child, in the kind of news story that fires the imagination of mothers.

And in any case, the one who was run over was "little Bianle, his poor mother still has the lorry in front of her eyes as it rounded the bend (the bend that was "fatal" to Lorpailleur, blinded by her pancake), just as Lorpailleur was

cycling past, the child waiting on the pavement didn't see the lorry and was killed instantly". Since we're not talking about a little Ducreux run over by a car, but a little Bianle run over by a lorry, Madame Ducreux couldn't "have seen her little one run over by that car"; so we have to start the scene again, including the Lorpailleur in her posture of the Bianle accident: "just as the Lorpailleur Madame Ducreux was passing by with her sponge in her hand (...) the son Bianle with a friend already in the river...". The dead certainly don't hold still: and we no longer know what to believe, unless... "To say that she was cycling past just then (...) was a trick of Lorpailleur's" - which is to say that the whole Bianle story is null and void, to be redone.

The result is a scene similar to the one on page 12: "Madame Ducreux still in her household, the first daydreaming in front of the armchair where the child was hiding, identical circumstances at different intervals...". - but which, according to a now customary procedure, is augmented by the immediately preceding statements - in this case the son Bianle and his taste for fishing. Madame Ducreux is doing her housework when she spots "little Frédéric making

pâtés near the fountain". Frédéric, who "bears a striking resemblance to the strangled boy" - whom we are very happy to see murdered again, in accordance with the original version: because the aquatic context of the scene (fountain, angling) put him in great danger of being drowned! The little strangler, therefore, whose "white marble tomb" we can now see again, which has changed its two geraniums for "three pots of artificial cyclamen, which now make very pretty flowers, no need to water them, they look clean and decent all year round".

The tomb brings back the conversation in which Verveine taunts Madame Ducreux: "roundabout questions about her sister in Argentina, hadn't we talked about her return some ten years ago". (Note that the first part of this conversation took place a few days after the funeral). We also learn that "the son Pinson had also gone into exile at that time"; and Lorpailleur assumes that something "must have been going on between the son Pinson and the sister from Argentina". It should be remembered that, on page 8, we have gone from one of Lorpailleur's sisters leaving (alone) for Argentina, to a sister (of Madame Ducreux) returning from Argentina; and forming a couple successively "with an actor it seems", with "a boy of about twenty", and finally with "the son Pinson".

Verveine is a pharmacist; it would seem that he symbolises the scientific spirit, since here is a notebook in which he accurately recorded the two events

that interest us: "in 1952, Saturday 12 July, the little Ducreux boy disappeared, seen at the bend in the Casse-Tonnelles, Miss Lorpailleur narrowly avoiding a lorry". Rue des Casse-Tonnelles, as we know, is where the Ducreux bakery is located.

The story swings again towards Lorpailleur - and I'll interrupt this review there. There is mention of his mother's death 'in May 1952, two months before the tragedy', and of an attraction that seems to be the consequence of this closeness in the deaths: 'Madame Aristide (the Lorpailleur's mother) was very fond of little Louis, who was therefore their neighbour; the courtyards adjoined'. La Lorpailleur's aggressive and spiteful character - in other words, the narrator's aversion to the teacher - is amply illustrated. This is followed by small allusions (children playing in the courtyards, a near miss, Madame Ducreux "grabbing" her child) - until an interesting reprise of the theme "la Lorpailleur est folle" ("la Lorpailleur is mad"). This reprise, which in a way completes the passage studied, takes place through the conversation between the narrator and Verveine. The idea of having Mademoiselle Lorpailleur committed goes awry

this time to the point of complete and aggressive fabrication in every detail: "No one went to see her in the asylum, in fact it was inadvisable, they gave her cold showers and put her in a straitjacket some days and gave her electric shocks and medication"... The situation, of course, required the return of Lorpailleur's "sister from Argentina": "her sister from Argentina or wherever came back to the country, she cleared out the flat (...), she found it in a state (...), so filthy you could vomit, she didn't bother to go to the place, I'm talking about the madwoman, doing the floor, at the foot of the bed, and manuscripts everywhere, loose sheets covered with her illegible handwriting...".

Without needing to go any further, we can draw from this commentary a number of characteristics that are valid for the work as a whole, as far as its technique is concerned. The narrative has no *a priori* "content". It is built up by successive manoeuvres around a number of centres of interest, which themselves derive from a fundamental statement chosen for its fruitfulness. The phenomena described are of the order of a realistic narrative, in the tone of a "scene from provincial life", with regional events and conventional characters: schoolteacher, pharmacist, baker - and, gossippingly, all those ladies "feeling for bread".

Only oral or informative shots are given: names, professions, dates, places, gestures, ready-made expressions of spoken language, with which

events and people are defined and commented on. It is on these series of clichés, which appear in strings (which are themselves macro-clichés), that the variations, permutations and combinations are established, gradually 'knitting together' a controlled fiction oriented according to a traditional project (aiming for a story, an anecdote, a scene 'given to see'). These breaks and contradictions act as processes that generate new stages in the fiction, which remain closely linked to the previous text. In fact, what emerges from these oppositions is a kind of average truth for the narrative: a truth defined by the maximum amplitude of the variations, and therefore made up of factors common to all the statements; it is itself a referential fund subject to development, cross-referencing and extension.

Thus, a *first* reading of the text gives an impression of coherence and continuity, which we owe to a blurred perception of the narrative, as well as to the effective limitation of the possible transpositions of the initial assertions - the negations, erasures, alterations affecting only the qualities, and not the

These are, on the contrary, the formative elements of the fiction as a whole, insofar as they can be given commutable, interchangeable attributes, the progression being accomplished by immediate proximity, as on a checkerboard.

However, the technique of self-fertilisation of the text is only used in the sense of a "positive" narrative, because of the self-imposed limitations on its use. This restrictive use, for more or less conformist purposes, of techniques capable of creating non-narrative ends for a novel, perhaps marks the limit of *Libera at the* same time as it defines its characteristic circularity; in fact, since the privileged elements of variation are traditional constituents of a narrative, as we have seen, they are obliged to make their presence felt in order to make possible the general movement of which they are the multiple poles. Thus, fighting the novel within the novel condemns us to a perpetual (and fascinating) conflict between the demands of invalid conventions and the disruptive processes that build on them.

Finally, the technical role of spoken language and of the first person seems to be to facilitate these processes, or rather to prepare the most favourable ground for them, while at the same time allowing them a certain discretion (and unnecessary 'verisimilitude') - through the unification that results, on the one hand, from the literal quotations from the text itself (specific to this reconstructed spoken language), and on the other, from the presence of a single 'narrator', whose 'I' smoothes out the rough edges of a contradictory narrative, and helps to shape, in a flow of 'psychological speech', a fiction

organised in such a way that the 'he' would establish in it incessant lines of flight - while the 'I' gathers and aborts these centrifugal movements by giving them a kind of indeterminate yet exclusive place ; The Libéra's own word has this dialectical/genetic function of driving and destroying a fiction that is its epiphenomenon and materialization.

(*pierrot*)

that would be one day but this time I'd erase them better I'd whitewash them I'd skin them with my nails I'd tear off limbs from hands from eyes from sexes from noses in the air from little swinging feet I'd bury it all in quicklime white hot as hell every muscle lacerated into long yellowing yellowing fibres in the lime that bubbles at the bottom of a bathtub the broken bones their marrow that palpitates a crazy bath the little fingers the wild hairs the little white cheeks and the teeth round and fresh as fresh thick cream a purulent yellow bath the upturned cocks lime over-white everywhere I wear white gloves to love and to kill I'd go looking for them one by one I'd encourage their skin and their fat I'd weave long whips with their hair and flogging the corpses from place to place I'd crush them little round curves and all

every evening I would prowl in the shadows of the carriages, a Hall of Mirrors with a half-transparent sheen, a black background, a lake of black light, bodies reflected against a backdrop of night by hollowed-out eyes in which time slips away

and other bewildered false looks where each image is buried, reflected and traced back to its source.

from that moment on, all blended together, indistinct, all merged into a shadow that trembled until it faded away, I imagined that it was me rais

because I'd gone through it like someone going through life with a lantern at the end of their arm, shouting obscene songs nes

an opaque life, riddled with the stones that support it (sharp and black, large, smooth, moulded like a turd) seem-

7

Source: Original numbered edition.

FREEZING AIR Currents - August-September 1968

Source: Monthly magazine *Preuves*, published under the auspices of the International Association for the Freedom of Culture, issue 209-210, August-September 1968 (18^{ème} year).



Frozen draughts

THE CITY is a habit of the body, a habit of the gaze. But it whitens presences, makes the unique fail. It is against its witness. The city is built for others, all others, except the one who sees it. The roads, the squares, the shelters, the treasures, the help, are without destiny; the lines, without purpose. You don't live in cities, you pass through them: they are elsewhere. Images, painful grafts,

The poetic image of the city is an aggression against the city, an aggression of the witness against what he is looking at, and who has not looked at him.

We've learned that cities are empty, and that's why we enter them: to take a chance, a chance to be. And then we see that they are empty: but we are part of those absences. Aggression, again: the whole city will be the same black stone that we brush up against, that we hate, where we find a kind of salvation that we refuse, but towards which we tend. You come back to it. You keep coming back to the city to refuse it - to constantly return the perverse movement it makes around you, of assistance and retreat.

No choice. Useless freedom. In the city, we're a collective. Ridiculously multiple, to the point of contradiction. In this greyness we discover a form of the opportunity we came for: to be irresponsible. The city belongs to others; the body to others - and the sounds and signs. You think you're blind because there's nothing to see, immobile because all paths are the same, mute because a hundred thousand guessed words extinguish yours. It's not that you're small, out of place, insignificant, certainly not: but you're not *impressed*; rather, you do everything in your power not to feel it. Afterwards, when you get your body back, when you get out of there, you can see that it has moved, and what it brings back, the body: it's mixed up with everything, you don't recognise it.

Cities are full of exits; day after day you enter at one end, leave at the other, concentric animal, wave after wave, ebb and flow, it's all movement. When you know where you are, who you are, what you've got, you don't move; movement is the loss of identity, you might as well die.

Neighbourhoods, districts, streets large and small, monuments, shops, the past, the present, meeting places - it all adds up to a shape, a face. The face

of a city! In this immobility? Cities change because you move through them, but from one end to the other, the hours reflect back to you a face that you won't see come to life, because it's all around you, with you: it's the stones, the trees, the unique shape, it doesn't move - and impassive faces have no features. The city, as you can see, is too fond of polyhedral solids, and for the eye a polyhedron is just a surface; in front, underneath, behind, next to, each unit of the city is already a restatement. Cities are plains that nobody wants to build.

A habit of the body: there are images and lights, these are the minute movements that we observe on these surfaces, the only calls, better than doors and windows, which are useless because they don't give access to enclosed, i.e. autonomous, places. No, it's only the colourful, animated simulacra that we follow. From one image to the next, all in vain, the first step is taken again and again. This is not the reign of sameness: for two things to **be** alike, they have to be different; it's simply absence and distance, everywhere. Cities are frozen draughts; there are optical illusions all around you, illusions of flesh, of voices (pleonastic, cinemas on every street corner). Fantasies, passages, simulations: they awaken the body.

The anonymous body. Impulses. Cities extinguish love, stimulate eroticism. It's the best trap, all-powerful, devious. The body comes to seek its nakedness, each time, with the emotions of the beginning. It thinks it can make form, face, movement and urban images speak for itself.

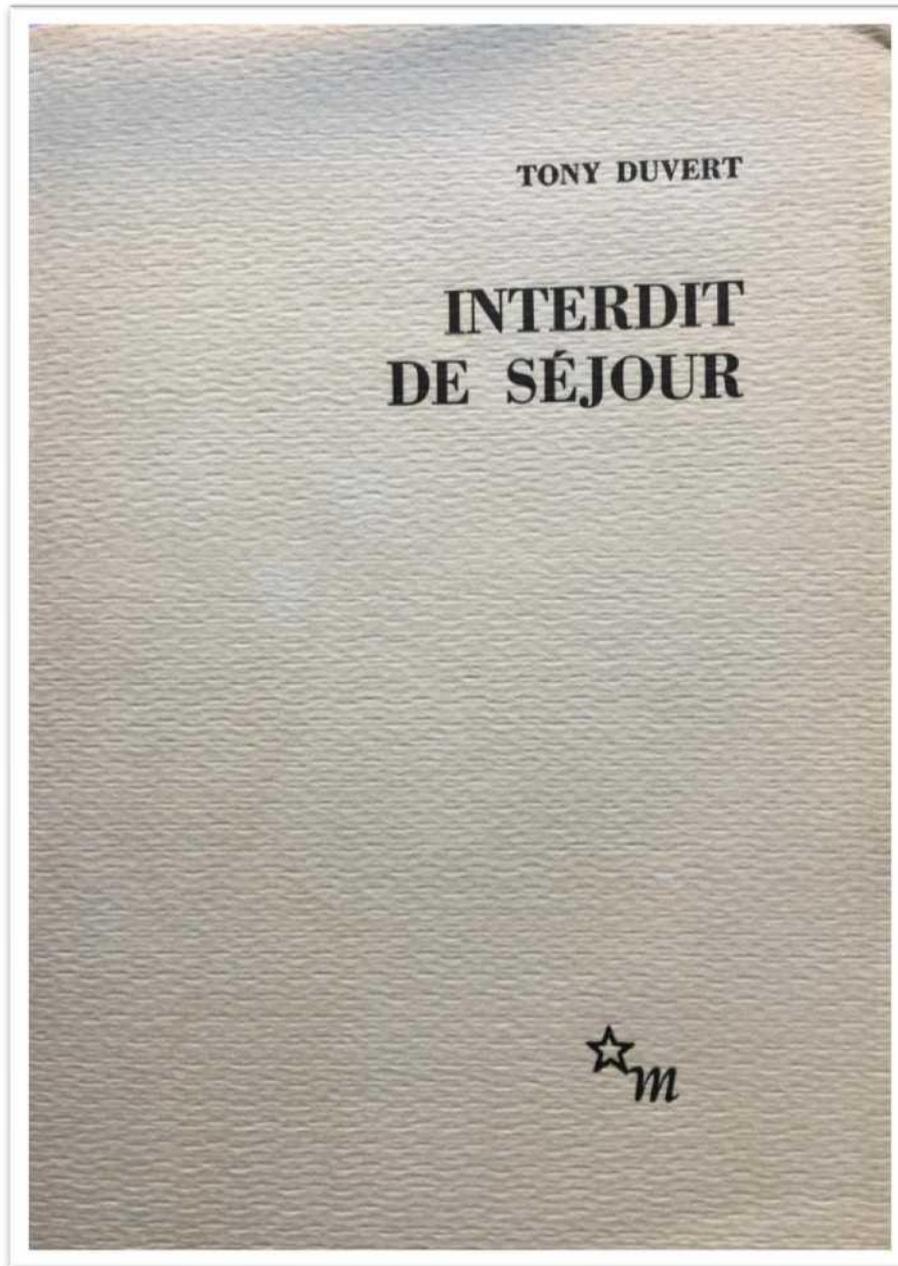
The body in its nascent state, the place of all savagery, this is what we want to become, obeying the trap, in order to escape the city, or to be worthy of it, or to return to it what it gives, or to pervert its prohibitions, or to give meaning to its paths, or to respond to its violence: to become a sex and a gaze.

And they are proving powerless. In the city, we *are preceded*. As if we were superfluous. Pride falls. No eroticism, no violence without pride. Not these, in any case, since they have been erected to close the very wound through which they flow; the trap has worked, they will sink beneath the pavement, anywhere.

From that moment on, there is no solution; the cities impose their solution, have nothing to do with yours, your master solutions. Infinitely adaptable, people will give in, give up, understand, suffer; passivity or subversion, the aspect will be the same. The city that doesn't foresee man makes unforeseen men: we'll be one of them.

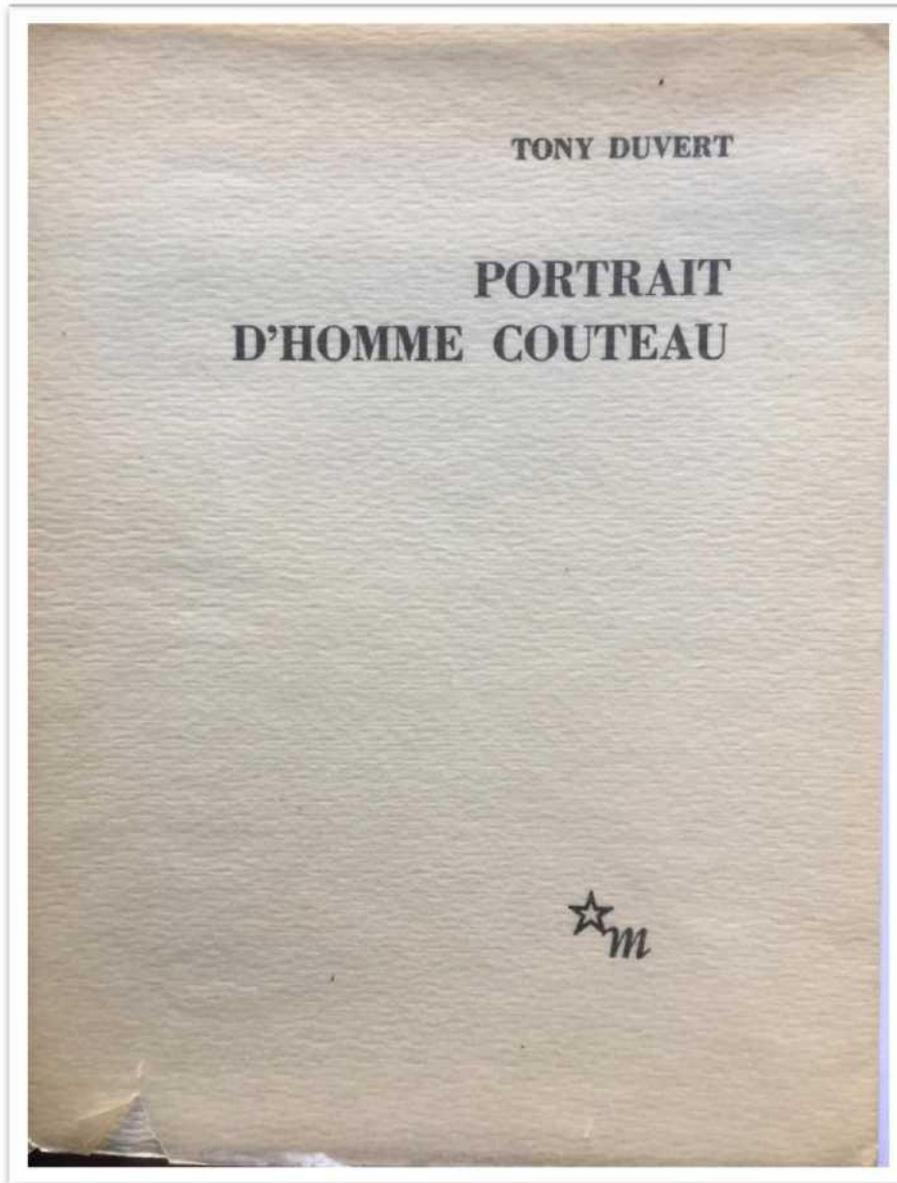
PUBLICATION OF *RESIDENT BAN* - March 1969

The book will be "forbidden to be sold to minors, exhibited or advertised.

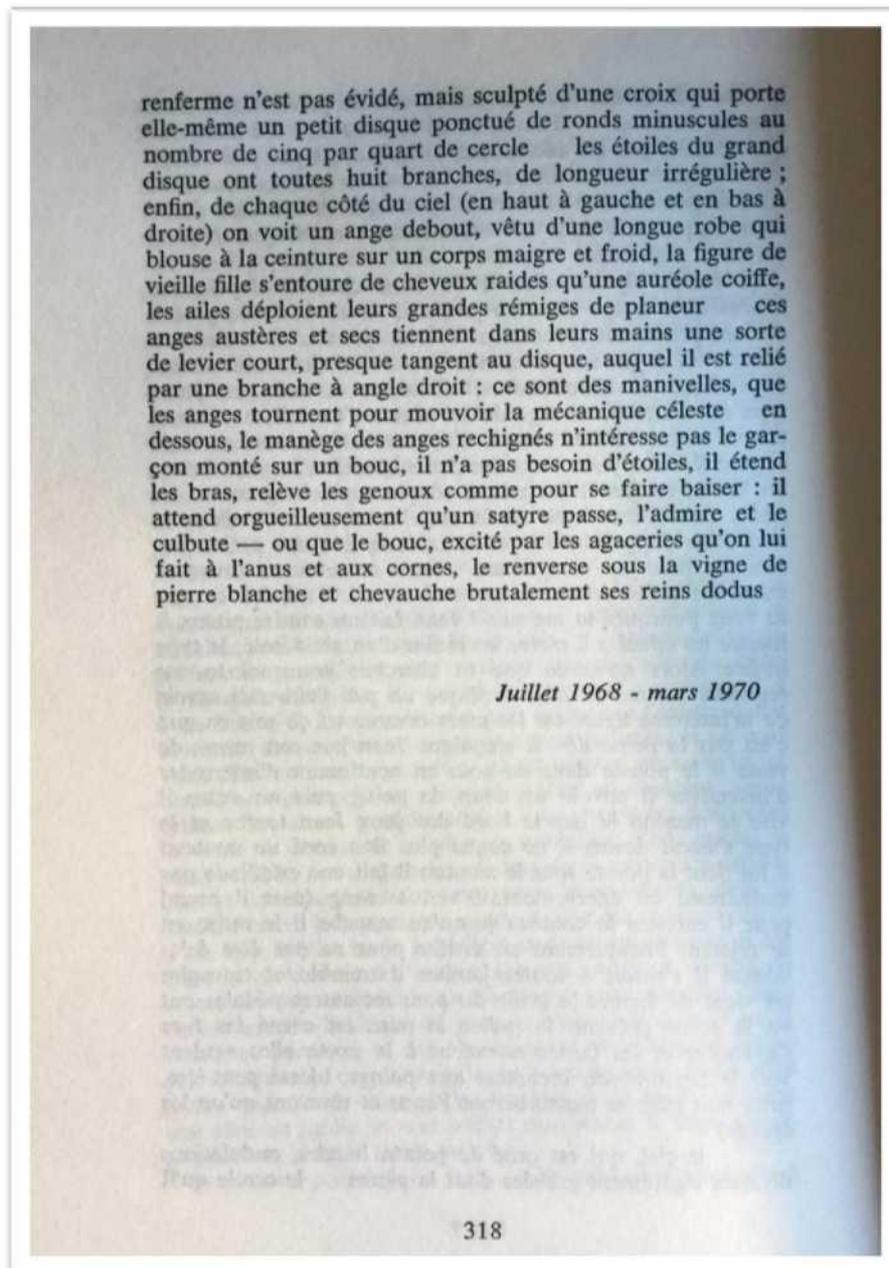


Source: Original numbered edition, 1969.

PUBLICATION OF *PORTRAIT OF A MAN WITH A KNIFE* - April
1969



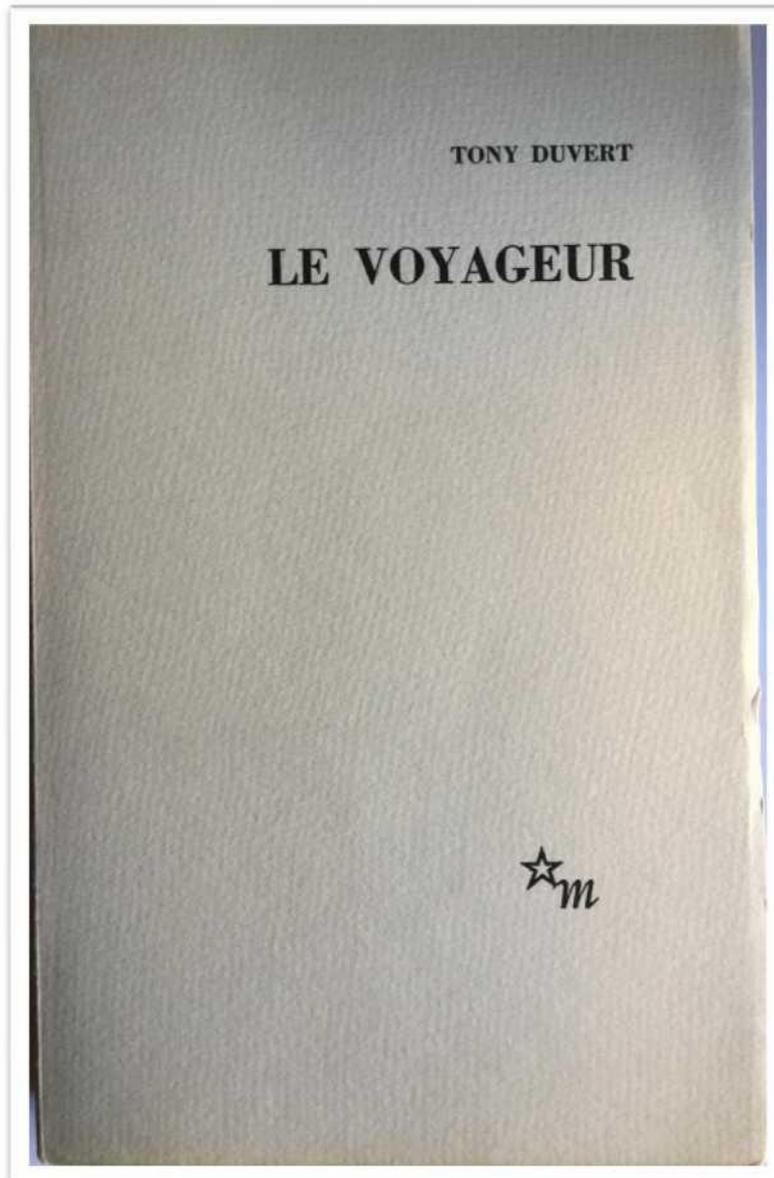
Source: Original numbered edition, 1969.



Source: Original numbered edition.

VOYAGEUR PUBLICATION - October 1970

A month after the book's publication, on 17 November 1970, Tonu Duvert's father committed suicide by shooting himself in his car outside the house in Villeneuve that his wife had left some time previously. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.



Source: Original numbered edition.

TICKET TO TOUT! MAGAZINE - 17th May 1971

Source: Extreme left-wing newspaper Tout! in which the FHAR (Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire) took part, issue 13.

Giving minors a voice.

I don't know anything about your movement and I don't know what these articles can really be used for, but I am struck by their efforts to avoid many of the stupid things that homosexuals are used to thinking about themselves. It's a pity that the problem of pederasty, which is difficult and crucial in a critique of society, the family and education, was hardly touched on, especially as you were, it seems to me, in a position to make those we need to hear talk: not the pederasts, but their possible under-age 'victims'.

Tony Duvert (Paris)

RELEASE OF *RESIDENT BAN* - October 1971

Completely revised version, with additions and cuts compared with the original version. The two-column layout has been replaced by a more traditional presentation.

buildings with no shop windows, no lights or doors, deserted nights and foggy squares the summer passed, a little less clear every day walking for hours on end, exhausting yourself, walking endlessly, searching some more

I'd go home and sleep in a dirty room, they'd lend me this, there was water
I put on a little stray Arab I lick his slit a hairless cut you have to wipe them before using them

I'd lock myself up for days on end, I'd hang out on my bed, alone, jerking off, slowly dying, I'd stink, I'd sniff myself, I'd cut up pornos, I'd get a bit drunk

his hairless armpits disgust me I make him lower his arms (he smiles sideways when you fuck him and frowns if the blows are too hard - then he fucks in turn and discharges in the light ecstasy of a fart)

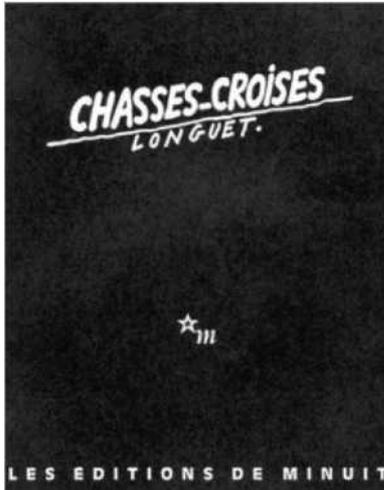
sleep and darkness emptied the streets, every evening a new city arose, uninhabited, where cops, hoodlums, tramps and aunts prowled: this crippled universe was ours on the boulevards we still came across young silhouettes, supple and lively, solidly embodied I would take refuge in a public garden, I would sit and wait, my pocket empty, I had a hard-on for impossible bestiality, old joys where images and a secret came back to life, that must have thrown me there, into the night where I no longer recognised anything, running from the pissoir to the gardens, to the hotels, paying, humiliating oneself, lying to oneself, nothing but a fog in which one navigates with closed eyes, nobody existed (one mimics harshness, one invents tactics of withdrawal, protection, safeguarding, changing one's being or one's body)

far from here, in the half-light, the call of a pleasure no longer desired, glimpsed

Source: Original edition.

REVIEWS OF CHASSES-CROISES - 1972

Spring 1972: Duvert met Michel Longuet, who had just published *Chassés-croisés* with Éditions de Minuit. A friendship and collaboration on the Minuit review followed. Source: Michel Longuet's blog - <http://michel.longuet.free.fr>. and *Retour à Duvert*, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.



"*Chassés-Croisés* (out of print) was published in 1972 by Editions de Minuit when I met Tony Duvert. He was amused by the book's childish attack on the couple, marriage and love. He wrote a review of it, which he offered (unsuccessfully) to the *Nouvel Observateur*. This unpublished work was sleeping in my boxes".

Michel Longuet

CROSSINGS

by Longuet, éditions de Minuit, 64 p.

The man is a husband; he wears a black hat, a black jacket, black striped trousers, black shoes; he has a black armchair, a white newspaper, a tyrannical job, memories of war and grievances. And the desire for love transforms him into a black cat who, with an appetitive laugh, pounces on a tiny smile: his wife.



The woman is a wife; she is preparing for a holiday in Guernsey, with a swimming pool and a view of the sea; she is wearing a white dress which, from her neck to her feet in black boots, forms the mobile triangle of her feminine body - adorned by a head of hair.

like the top of a cypress tree. She has nostalgia, fits of nerves, a sense of propriety, memories of knitting under the bombs, in the cellar, in the old days, during the alerts; a coquette, she ends up sporting a pretty hairdo with Mickey Mouse ears.

This middle-aged couple, with no children, live squeezed between a black floor and a black ceiling, against a white background with no decor other than an armchair or a bed, seen in profile as the man and woman themselves are. They talk to each other



make scenes, evoke their past, dream or argue about the afterlife - an Anglo-Norman island and its hotel, or Hell and its priest - and it almost ends well, because the spectre of marital duty appears: it's a tomcat

flying over a frightened victim, so fearful that she shrank.

This unusual and funny comedy does not belong to any known literary genre. It's not a novel, because it's made up of drawings; it's not a comic strip, because, as we shall see, the drawings appear to be generated by the words; it's not theatre, because everything is already there, played out on paper, page after page. It's no more and no less than a 'cross-over' - between text and drawing, between a man and a woman, between reality as we know it and as this couple parody it before our very eyes. In fact, this world is not entirely foreign to us: a few steps from the burnt grass of Oh les beaux jours, another Willis and another Winnie are talking to each other, in a climate that is sometimes that of Beckett himself. Then the tone changes; Winnie, up to her neck in song, was singing Heure exquise - but the man from Chassés-croisés, triumphant and vociferating, is shouting a Marseillaise. Far from Beckett and his



singular tenderness, we find ourselves faced with a ferocious showman who, in order to laugh and make us laugh, tears apart two petty bourgeois puppets. The cruelty of a child watching his parents die of stupidity, and the jubilation of a schoolboy Alfred Jarry inventing Ubu's puppets.

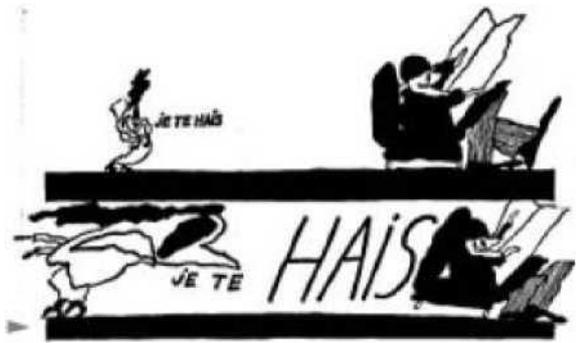
Longuet's theatre of silhouettes has been cut out of thick black paper by light-hearted scissors that bite into the contours of the figures.

The characters, sketched in the gentlest sense of the word, are angrily transformed into monstrous insects with the oblong eyes of ants. The schematisation of the graphic design gives it extreme density, while the apparently sacrificed detail is reborn in the tremors of the line, where the expressions of the faces and the nuances of each gesture and posture can be read, suggested and truer than real. Longuet's line is already, in itself, a story; we follow it like an abstract sign of writing, and it suddenly expresses what he disdained to represent, the faces of the two actors in Chassés-croisés, a kind of amoeba with an angular pseudopod pointing to the nose, and a

They live by the movement that constantly distorts their profile.

Reduced to shifting spots, man's black spot, white spot of the woman, these characters lend themselves to whatever the reader imagines while looking at them; it's a pleasure to read someone who can play with what they are shown as they please, as if they were deciphering the mould on a wall or the cloud form.

Here, too, words play a singular game. Integrated into the image, they live in it as it lives, placed close to the characters. Taking over the strip or curled up in a corner, extending a nose, caressing a rump, piling up as big as a house or almost disappearing, written stiffly or askew, climbing over each other,



Bending, crumbling, they obey their own meaning each time. Their meaning becomes a direction, and, rather than inscribing a discourse, they seem to draw a voice. This excellent dialogue takes on all the character of a musical notation, while its facetiousness in space is that of a child who prattles on while grown-ups talk. Intimately interwoven with the drawing, the text is at once the illustration, the source and the ironic parody.



This literary and graphic mastery of the spoken word is very new. Comic strips like to use

a system of variations in writing, but it's according to a simple and poor code, in which almost meaningless texts are clothed in a typography that matches their content: large letters if you're shouting, small if you're whispering, wavy if you're scared or fainting, and so on. With Longuet, on the other hand, the text, which is of the highest quality, is the subject of a veritable mise en scène, and constitutes an element of the image that is as precious, as original and as mobile as the drawing itself.

This is because, as we have suggested, this drawing is hardly static: the character is first and foremost a shadow that can be stretched in all directions and deformed at will. These metamorphoses are in turn the story that the book is telling: not a narrative, but a mime, pushed to the breaking point of the forms.

Gestures and words alienate the body in action, which each time reorganises itself fantastically to serve its posture and deliver its message, narrowing, twisting and bending of the trunk and limbs are not



Rather, it is their completed, ideal a simple exaggeration of attitudes form, in which the "real" shape of a human body is expressed.

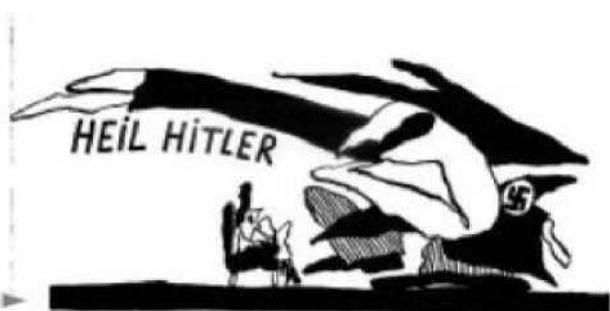
Flesh, totally inhabited by what it wants to do and say, becomes a perfect, imperious sign.

At the same time, contained within the confines of the drawing, the figures direct their metamorphoses, stretching out, leaning, stooping, curling up as if under the low ceiling of a cheap flat, a humble living space into which, as docile citizens, they flatten out. The bodily elasticity of these figures reveals their dramatic relationship. The woman is often reduced to a crumpled little ghost,

while her companion is metaphorically and literally afflicted with marital gigantism. In only two episodes does the female figure grow, become exalted and disfigured: in a fleeting scene of revolt, then when she recounts and dreams of her death. As far as ordinary life is concerned, petty-bourgeois femininity gives way to the tyrant.



This art of establishing the proportions of a character according to his or her subjective importance, or of creating that importance by embodying him or her in space, evokes the layout of medieval drawing, which was not perspectival and was too concerned with representing to stoop to reproducing. Transposed into caricature, this process extends its powers here, energising the narrative and cinematising the representation.



But what is Chassés-croisés about? Simply scenes from private life; and,

indulgent, eventful, laughable, the happiness of a law-abiding couple. The husband and wife: two corpse-faced beasts who survive through each other and against each other. Longuet sarcastically draws the cowardice of this symbiosis, its tenderness, the social crush that motivates and perpetuates it. And it's only natural that such a masterful sense of humour should have favoured the grotesque where it flourishes with impunity, and always goes unnoticed: in the couple, marriage and love.

-5-

This art of establishing the proportions of a character according to his or her subjective importance, or of creating this importance by embodying him or her in space, evokes the layout of medieval drawing, which was not perspective, too concerned with representing to stoop to reproducing. Transposed into caricature, this process extends its powers here, energising the narrative and cinematizing the representation.

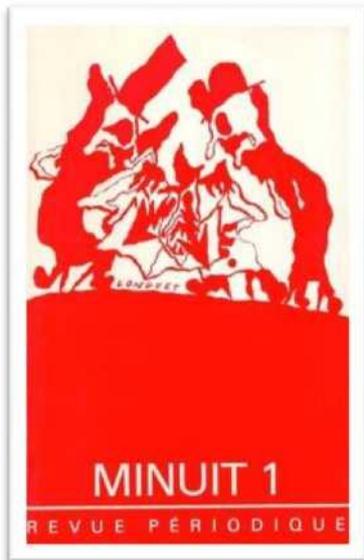
But what is Chassés-croisés about? Des scènes de la vie privée, simplement; et, complaisant, mou vementé, risible, le bonheur d'un couple en règle avec les lois. Husband and wife: two corpse-headed beasts surviving on each other and against each other. Longuet sarcastically draws the cowardice of this symbiosis, its tenderness, the social crushing that motivates and perpetuates it. And it's only natural that such a masterful sense of humour should have favoured the grotesque where it thrives most, and could always go unnoticed: in the couple, marriage and love.

Tony Duvert.

*Extract from the original manuscript of Tony Duvert's review of
Michel Longuet's Chassés
croisés.*

THE INTROUVABLE READING - November 1972

Source: *Revue bimestrielle Minuit, issue 1, November 1972. Publication director: Jérôme Lindon. Cover design: Michel Longuet.*



READING NOT FOUND

A young man, clean-shaven and well-combed, in casual clothes, is sitting in his living room; the shape and material of the furniture give a feeling of comfort, that of a well-appointed petit bourgeois interior; the golden light of a lamp shines on him - and it's the warmth of a benevolent gaze on him: for he is reading. A good carpet under his feet, a fireplace in the background, not a speck of dust. A few steps away, in another armchair, his young wife is perhaps also sitting, and there is perhaps also, on the carpet in front of them, like a clean and docile dog, their young child. Each of them is holding an identical book: richly bound, magnificently illustrated, which they handle with confidence and without putting too much pressure on their fingers. These are the works of Balzac, or Alexandre Dumas, or Victor Hugo, according to the advertising that this photograph is designed to make effective.

The couple is young: old enough to buy something that will last forever. Above all, reading is not a leisure pursuit for idle old people, but the joy of early wisdom, a break from active life, an unshadowed sense of well-being: in the evening, it makes for a peaceful hour at home, justifying the lamp, the fireplace, the armchairs, the carpet, the cleanliness, the work and the order; the effort to acquire and maintain all finds its reward, its *raison d'être*: the comfort that allows the mind to regain its freedom, in the exercise of a clear and healthy pleasure: reading. Because this book is a good, a property and a benefit, a valuable object and the instrument of an uplifting pleasure. The solitude of reading is erased: we are harmoniously reunited, reading volumes from the same collection, the child in his incomprehensible wonder, the adults in the satisfaction of the dilettante who savours a tasty text, and the consumer who appreciates a justified purchase. Reading is the family sharing of a richness, a beauty and a ritual; the sumptuous faux-leather bindings, the abundant gilding that sparkles recall, in an allusion to the flashes of gold and the oblique rays that enliven the choir of the churches, the sacred essence of the enclosed work, the brilliant word in its case like God in his tabernacle, one and the same.

the other ready to manifest themselves as soon as you open the door and look: it's golden, God is there, Dumas is speaking.

Behind her, a fireplace, probably adorned with a vase of flowers; to her right, a lamp; perhaps also, on the table, a cup of coffee. But the essential thing is her gaze, the dominant feature of an expressive triad: dreamy eyes, pen in hand, blank sheets of paper waiting. There is no hint of hard work: the young woman has the slightly distracted face of someone who listens to beautiful nostalgia; she is the prey of a discreet spell, of an inspiration that, without disturbing a lock of her hair, settles inside her as a melancholy old lady would sit in a sober and tasteful boudoir. It's the memory of a delicate love affair, the dreamy evocation of a great lost happiness; everyone has a novel like that, all they have to do is write it, with tact, finesse and sincerity, thanks to a writing school that publishes this advert. A dispenser of knowledge that will soon, mysteriously, reunite the blank page and the suspended pen. Writing is a beautiful, sad thing that can be taught in a few lessons and will make you a fascinating woman.

The image does not feature a shower of money or fan-shaped bundles, as the advertisements for other kinds of schools do: the idealism of its theme would be offended. But the neighbouring text is a timely reminder of this truth: to be published is to earn money. Melancholy can be monetised, dreams ring and stumble, and failure can be turned into success when you acquire the talent to be its histrionics.

These images of the reader and then the writer, obviously staged to appeal to an uneducated public, make literature seem like the magic of a Word that turns to gold. The common theme of these ads is clear: pay to get rich. It's the hermit turned devil, the unsaleable object turned profitable investment. But the incentives to buy invented by the bookbinder and the rhetoric merchant, because they erase the real object on offer - writing - manifest its impossibility of being and its gratuitousness. If these advertisements express or caricature the status of the literary work in a literate society, it can be summed up in a double rejection: reading is useless, writing is derisory. The point of union of these two acts, the book, justifies them only because it is the product of an industry that manufactures objects that can be evaluated and more or less remunerates those who invent them. The book in this market has no indisputable value except as a solidary of

Certain conditions had to be met: beautiful clothes, beautiful paper, beautiful images, a well-known story, the work of an illustrious creator, a 'giant' whose

fame combined popular success with the esteem of teachers. Instead of an opaque literary quality, the clarity of a market value (the book's beautiful materiality) and social value (its sacred notoriety) were the surest motives for investment. For its part, the art of writing that we want to sell undergoes the same oblique operation. It is simply the art of 'writing' - of encoding for general use the intimate musings of the lady in the illustration - of learning how to form, from this material, a publishable story. Implicit in this is the market value of the story as such: a good anecdote - original, touching, believable - has a price; it is recognised as a product, the quality of which may be questioned, but not its nature. To write is to produce story-objects whose destiny as a commodity is predetermined, and whose model bears an ornate gold binding. The writing school sells a philosopher's stone that can transmute a personal possession (daydreams, memories) into a finished object that can be communicated and monetised: the novel, the book.

Because the novel is at the top of both systems: it represents Literature. The publisher of hardback collections sells "great novels", while the writing school sells the art of writing at least small ones. The apprentice soap opera writer and the illustrious novelist now seem to belong to the same universe. The genetic division of the novel into two periods - the imaginary and the rhetorical - puerilises its development, reducing it to a task as accessible as a school assignment: conceiving and writing. These two operations conceal and imply writing in action, and invent its mystery: that of an alchemical fluid, a sublimate that feeds and validates the "transcription" without the writer having to fear seeing it or being touched by it. The technique of writing is therefore taught in the same way as sexuality is formed and closed: an art of creating one's outside and blinding one's inside. Missing from this construction is the piece that must cover up the censored, make *the differences in nature* between the works seem like inequalities in value, explain them and prolong the mystery left by the disappearance of writing; this last fragment of the schema is superstitious: it is the gift, the genius. Rebuilt in this way, the art of writing gives a flawless appearance to the ideological machine that brings it into existence; it is the reasonable craft of a storyteller; little workers toil on the line for little people while great masters work for the bourgeois pantheon. Between the former and the latter, there is nothing more than an unequal sharing of the same knowledge, the same gift, the same ability to produce a discourse bearing - like a piece of wood bearing the marks of the chisel - the traces and proofs of a labour, a metamorphosis of a so-called

The object is structured as history, as copy or translation, as assent to the ritual collective of the I, the Other and Time.

Everyday dialogue shows the primitive value of every anecdote, of the gift we make of it, of the sacrifice of representative, narrative - formative - speech. Talking to someone about ourselves and others, recounting what is real, is the usual and expected way of establishing an exchange. Through little anecdotal bubbles, micro-stories that are tightly wound and regulated like a court curtsy, a social edifice is built up in conversation, based on the myth of transparent speech (it obeys the simple alternative of true and false) and ending with the drama of recognition. We are identified, we recognise the other, we validate each other and we express this agreement in replicas: duplications that are responses. In this double mirror of words two men are represented, read and said by their society; each is both suspect and judge, until recognition has established the common proof of non-strangeness. The discourse of identification, with its almost animal-like suspicions and rituals, is based on a narrative of the self and the world, through which the incessant fragility of reality is abolished by agreement on the credibility of a universal fictive, that of Man, Society, Language and the Ego - instances put into narrative. Those who remain silent, who do not speak to each other, arouse suspicion and risk exile, just as those who speak to each other without weaving the common fiction, but by tearing it apart - the discourse of the madman, of the accursed artist. Undoubtedly, there is no such thing as a discourse entirely devoted to the social model of reality; but aberrations are accepted, if they do not attack the ideosocial axioms whose respect is known to be a condition of human coexistence and the permanence of an outside. Our conversation-history is like a search for love, a meeting of the dogs (with its dances, sniffs, bites and cries); it is fear of the stranger and urgency for the similar, holder of illusions and, in its haste to create I and the other in order to attenuate them at the *same time*, maker of angels.

The novel is the ideal form for this perpetual social narrative, the author concerned with a reality he only wishes to witness. The popularity of the genre, its fixity, the public's familiarity with it are the very effect of this contiguity. Its models and triumphs remain the works of the nineteenth century, and that is no accident. Their authors are the great men admired by the nascent secular state, and the state school created and taught a rhetoric based on theirs or on its origins, and it still sticks to it; it could be said that it balzacises or flaubertises children, more than it alphabetises them. Texts read, dictated,



The narratives we learn to write are an attempt to reproduce these models. The narrative we learn to write is an attempt to reproduce these models. The ability

to read that is instilled is no more than a limited capacity to decipher the perspective laws and conventions of a historically marked discourse. The readable universe of the schoolchild, where he learns to discover a little meaning and to imagine himself, is order, coherence, decency, hierarchies, chronology and censorship: it is the textual replica of society and of the man it engenders. The school inflicts the language of the possessing class, and the literary pieces it chooses demonstrate the eternity of order by inscribing it in a sacred word - which at the same time serves up psycho-social schemas, over-elaborated anecdotes through which the child can think about himself, experience himself, take shape, organise the strangenesses, mutenesses and prohibitions of the body he is in the process of having, and fix, confirm and assume what the family and the school do to him. It is probable that a close relationship is established between the order of the world, the necessity of which this sacred word teaches, and the order of the body that the child is developing, of the possible self and of the inflicted other, desired in the strangeness of its permanence which guarantees my own - and which becomes doubtful if the Word does not act. Within the slow mechanism of dispossession and machining that is teaching, the literary has the place of a tool for bringing into conformity with the world as it must be spoken in order to remain intangible. Apart from the propaganda that this use accomplishes, it irrevocably reduces the spoken word to an objective and objectal function that will make us forget what maintenance of order (mental, impulsive) it simultaneously has the power to operate, in the depths of the subject who speaks 'freely'. Fencing off the world and the self, fictionalising the self and the world - these are the common features of inculcated speech and revered, literary speech.

We can see that, in the advertising image of the reader in the family, the important thing is not the "fake book" that seduces the household: it's the household itself, its uneventful harmony, its cleanliness, its warm decor of skilful modesty, the young couple and the child. The harmony of the work offered and its consumers is itself an illustration of the invitation not to read that the entire ad constitutes. The triangle: sacred work, family, non-reading, is perfect. Whether leafed through or read, the bourgeois novel has nothing to say that is not already clear from its appearance and that of its model purchasers. Simply reinforcing meaning, its presence is enough; at best, reading it can be a distracting pleonasm. So the book-object, intended to enrich the inculture of a class that respects order and wants a few fetishes close to it - thrown away by the class

is in this home like a whip in a stable where the animals have been calmed down: you don't touch it any more, it's already been used.

It is also a public shaped by the social word, of which the novel is a 'culturised' version, and which obviously provides the clients for the writing school - a parodic image of our ideology of letters. The expression of the woman writer described earlier suggests passivity; the myth of the creator is purified by the elimination of any sign that might suggest work, activity or trial: the pose is dreamy, the pen does not write, the table is in order and so is the woman. It is, in a cosy narcissism, the immaculate conception. From this subjectivity, left to its own devices, the novel is supposed to emerge, through rhetoric. Imagining a story, characters, a sentimental or social conflict that expresses the author's inner world: that's the cliché, the snapshot of writing as seen through the lens of advertising imagery. It coincides with the common opinion of the semi-cultured public, and with the inner feelings of ignorant novelists. The imaginary, supposed to be the source and foundation of literary discourse, is seen as a pure, virgin gift, the absolute fruit of the private property that is each person's personality, past and dreams. Those who write devote themselves to themselves and then convert the spoils of this quest, the unsettling foam of this pleasure, for the use of others.

Such a conception conceals the fact that the imaginary is already written, or spoken. The people it portrays, the content of the dramatic organisation it imposes on them, obey in advance the system of a social narrative whose universality (from the constitution of the child's ego to the trials, pastimes and conversations of adulthood) conceals its arbitrariness. The author of traditional novels takes charge of these schemes for inventing and collectivising reality, purifying them into a simulated imaginary where they can be applied with a rigour that will exclude from the work the failures, inconsistencies, contradictions, blanks and marginalia of this social narrative - fiction badly made. This is because the purpose of his work is to purge the reader of the anxieties aroused by the shortcomings and clashes of 'reality'. The novel, a successful fiction, masks these clashes, fills in these gaps, offering once again, in a narrative conducive to identification, the social model of reality, strengthened, slightly open to one of the strangenesses that challenge it (illness, abnormality, misfortune...), assuming this singularity, creating for it a myth and a rank - thereby over-motivating the reader to consolidate his faith and obedience. The conformist novel is both conformist and restorative, offering everyone a fictive that puts floating reality back on its feet and justifies it by showing that every man and every act has its place, its role, its meaning, its narrative. This agreement between the reality shaped by the "spontaneous" collective word -

It is a phenomenon of organisation and self-repression - and fiction - the

exemplary product of this speech and the cathartic tool of its power - shows how, in such a subtly policed universe, writing and reading are the same listening to order.

The fact that memory is, as much as the imaginary, a fund of the traditional novel, reveals even more clearly the deceptions of this discourse and its consumption. The material of memories used by the conventional author undoubtedly appears to him, as to anyone else, in the incompleteness, illogicality, gratuitousness and obscurity that protean experience, censorship and memory create within this voiceless present that we call our past. The relationship between the I and the self established by autobiography is then similar to that between the novelist and the reality he claims to observe, which he believes to be both constituted beyond any words and graspable in the image produced by his alienated mind. The past self is, however, nothing other than the present self - the latter operating the former, and which is even this operation, this pre-writing offered to the nostalgic writing of the I-narrator. The writer who remembers only has to deal with his own actuality, at the precise moment when he convinces himself to explore an enclosed elsewhere; the shaping of this retrograde present that is the autobiographical universe obeys the plans, demands and refusals that the I borrows from the social narrative of the formation of the world and the self. The past of memory is like the past of fiction: it is a sign-censor of the present's backwardness and the closure to which it is subjected.

Our 'personal property' (subjectivity, desires, memory, even impulses) is therefore prefabricated, written and spoken by others from the outset; and its so-called writing is nothing more than corrective recopying. Literature, conceived as reception, perception of the exterior or the intimate, then transcription, conceals the initial and imperative inscription of this 'naive' given and contributes to its acceptance of form, limits and order. It is the docile art of non-writing, just as the use of the books it produces will be a tactic of non-reading.

Trivial or refined, all the traditional kinds of novel meet this definition; but it is remarkable that only the lowest of them are actually consumed today: the photo novel, the detective story, the station novel, and their journalistic equivalents (news and history set out in a narrative with an implicit morality, "truthful" fiction, as opposed to fictional fiction, which is merely verisimilitude - raw reality versus reality to be believed). The fewer cultural cues the novel carries, the more it is received.

It is therefore closer to the "spontaneous" narrative and to the other forms of

expression that are subject to it: cinema, song, television. It is essential, however, that it rejects the letter of popular speech (which is only an object of culture for the dominant class): for it must submit to the protocol of sacred literary discourse, as taught in state schools - avoiding coarseness, looseness, indecency, moving from tu to vous. The Sunday dress of the soap opera story is the only literary guarantee that its public demands to validate it - and crime novels often escape this requirement.

On the other hand, we know that a book is read less the more it is offered up to real reading - adventurous, not cathartic, it is the discovery of the first utterance of strangeness. Because this readability obscures the work, because it renounces the socially prewritten communicable, for the never-spoken language of a never-spoken real - the body, the object, nonsense. Deciphering this difficult discourse is only possible for a privileged cultural class; but the work's insistent aggression towards the model of reality for which language is responsible (in which, of course, the cultivated reader is included, through which he thinks himself and maintains his perception of the world, and thanks to which he presents himself as a demand for reading in the face of the work supposedly giving reality) repels and dissuades a large part of this audience.

This corrosive literature offers its clientele the appearance of a trap: a conventional surface (i.e. whose beauty is of the same order as that of sought-after conformist works, mastery and completion of rhetoric, the art of sound, rhythm and form) and an aberrant substance. The beautiful word of bourgeois writing is more or less there, but it rambles, attacks, parodies, perverts and violates. The first element encourages us to include the work in our cultural heritage and among the usual commercial objects on offer for critics and prizes; the second leads us to practise non-reading, especially in its most shameful tactic: the indispensable and undesirable book is what we sometimes buy and never open. The company of this non-reading is the widespread consumption of trivial or conformist fiction, taken from the trough of the lower classes, and now the only thing capable (along with ancient works or the classics, rehashed and disarmed by teaching) of reinforcing the uncertain conscience of the bourgeois reader, and imposing silence on the contestation that would be inflicted on him by the provocative art he likes to advocate, if he really submitted to it. This astonishing regression, in which the subversive (that which is overthrown) is simultaneously admired and parked in a closed space that prevents it from being heard, takes an even more unusual form: for many

active" books, and perhaps all of them, can be read with a reductive eye which,

censoring anomalies, warming up traces of convention, mutilates the work and restores from its remains the banal and comforting novel that it was not - a purveyor of reality and massive meaning. Some have a selective talent for amputating and deviating, choosing their own avant-garde author; this is what we call having understood him and liking him well; all in all, he doesn't bite if you know how to take him.

The funny thing is that readers are taking the trouble to tame them. But the subversive book is now charged with a fairly lively socio-cultural aura; it is even a pillar of culture insofar as, by disobeying, it manifests that social freedom peculiar to the possessing class, and participates in the revolutionary humanism which, because it abolishes all feelings of class, is the advanced ideology of the bourgeoisie. Self-contestation maintains the stability of the person being challenged, proving his innocence, lucidity and goodwill; and the subversive book plays its part in this merry-go-round in spite of itself.

So subversion through the novel is an art consumed by the class that benefits materially, socially and sexually from the world order it attacks. It's a hyperculture that is often beyond the intellectual resources of the bourgeoisie, and shared above all by an elite professionally dedicated to "culture" and revolt. Free speech, whether or not it can be the start of freedom, is the food of a henhouse with a strong fence.

Within this group, which is largely made up of academics, 'renversante' literature, a contemporary form of which is called the New Novel, has been given a very curious status. It is given an abstract reading which, neglecting the powers and beauties of the works, focuses exclusively on their formal particularities, that is to say the techniques which tear apart the conformist novelistic and social universe, its subject, its object, its values and its time. It is as if the reader, disappointed at not being able to see the habitable architecture that is the discourse of others (and therefore the object-history sold by publishing), were resigned to investing only in this narrow house and this naked commodity that are words, their rhetorical organisation and their combinatory resources. Against the unbearable aggression of non-fiction, the comfort of its supposed logic.

While these novels, or some of them, invented a new reality that fell short of the one dictated by our society, their readers, the more

In fact, the works were an effort or a success of rewriting - of the first kind that is, in each era, the "furious craft" of writers. The analysis of the subversive

processes of the new novel has even inspired the candid idea that more or less formalisation equals more or less revolution; and that, on the other hand, new literature implies new reading - a feeling based on the alleged impossibility of deciphering this new without being prepared for it, and which denounces (since the works in question lend themselves as much as others to a naïve reading) what detours were imagined to take the work without undergoing it. From this formal examination, we finally deduced that literature would only truly consummate its rupture when it substituted, for the empirical and dubious refusals of the dissident author, the unquestionable truth of a knowledge of writing, the only guarantee of the purity and universality of its future action; thus a few 'free' works were produced, fascinated by this paradox: the absolute presence of the non-place.

Be that as it may, the old and recent works which, by writing the censored, have shaken the novel, witness to society and agent of its reproduction, are victims of the worst kind of erasure: a non-reading which claims to be metaleading; a consumption which, in order not to be a victim of the consumed object, practices it and tastes it obliquely. These recipes for non-reading, which are the theoretical analyses of the novel, are widely listened to; and although they teach distrust of and distance from literary discourse, they themselves enjoy unlimited credulity. This is because their own space of fiction (the hypothetical reconstruction of the novel and its system) is infinitely more comforting than that of the works commented on. In a stable narrative, we find a self-confident, coherent, erudite and strong hero, with whom we readily identify - the author - and, abstract but very present and very large, characters, good, bad, young, old, in their hierarchy, their chronology, their relationship of value ready to be copied, so reasonable is it: the works, the forms, the concepts. And a few abstruse sketches, God's figures - to make the universe complete. The critical essay offers its readers the very thing they are looking for in the bourgeois novel, and which the new art denies them: transparent communication, an order of things, and a univocal verb. Formalist reading has been reduced to subversive art by the society whose narrative it pulverises. All the cursed works of our cultural past are gradually enjoying this kind of amnesty through castration - Sade being the first.

This paradoxical fate is difficult to interpret. It certainly has nothing to do with a cultural police system that incarcerates 'harmful' works; what we have of censorship acts in a more direct and ingenuous way. But it is striking that it is only concerned with two forms of dissidence: political writing and pornography. The other subversions seem too engulfed in the art in which they manifest themselves to attract much attention. The new novel, for example, has never

had any revolutionary pretensions: it claimed to be "disengaged" (even if some of its authors thought they had to play at small wars in 1968). The truth is simply that we can read subversion in this kind of literature today, because its defiance and rejection coincide, in elaborate ways, with those expressed by the most recent generation, without wanting to insert them culturally. This coincidence should be a hope for *reading*: but, because of its places and modes, literary subversion is unnoticed or inaccessible.

The incoherent and the forbidden that resurface in counter-fiction go through the eye of a needle to manifest themselves; they take the difficult paths of a contortionist art that both revolutionises itself and, at the very heart of the cataclysm, preserves the ancient conditions of its existence. The work is always more of a work, the author more savagely and solitarily an author, the writing more written: a struggle on the brink of the impossible is waged between the iconoclastic demands of subversion and the 'skin' of the work of art that remains its locus. This struggle is perhaps art itself: the absolute of compromise, the extreme of separation and the extreme of assent.

Unfortunately, this problem contributes to the lack of interest that seems to be felt by that part of the public that is revolted and could understand it, but for whom the degree of elaboration of a work proves its degree of belonging to the possessing class, the master of language. A generation in which, on the other hand, the myth or hope of an art and a literature made by all and for all runs: It would be post-literary, neither the discourse of society reassumed by the conformist individual, nor the discourse of art perverted by the subversive novelist, but immediate speech, graffiti, punching. Since no pure speech is possible, the violence of expression would be better than the asceticism of not saying what is said. Above all, the right to speak and write would no longer be subject to the cultural capacity to do so, too arbitrarily shared to remain decisive. This right to speak

is therefore based on physical power. It assumes that the discourse that will emerge from this violent body will be free and true, since it will have taken no path of compromise; and that everyone will understand it, since it will be passionate. Such a hope is infinitely attractive. And yet it seems impossible.

For the subject liberated from the outside only expresses his subjectivity - which does not belong to him. The spontaneous, the affective, the passionate, the corporeal are not innocent; they too are society in the subject. The first liberation, and perhaps the only one that matters, is therefore to describe the forms of the subject, its body, its desire, its violence, and to rewrite what

language has killed - even if it were to be their non-existence. This adventurous task can liberate the word and the speaker; "sex and drugs", as the newspapers say, undoubtedly contribute to de-writing; but we can only see art re-writing. This is the twofold condition that must be met if the social real is to cease to exist within the very person who rejects it - in his desire, his perception, his enjoyment.

Curiously, the myth of free speech and the individual practice of this or that technique of liberation are like a parody of the personal rescue to which the dissident artist is thought to devote himself. Everyone acts within their means, and so rejects art, which is too hard and the mastery of which is naively posited as a privilege, not as power, which *can also be taken*. But who, in order to achieve this, would submit to the slowness and trials of speaking out? We prefer an acultural art summed up in 'cry' - which unfortunately can only mean its opposite, obedience to the subject's prior order, to the enemy it would like to tear apart on the outside but cannot decipher on the inside.

The refusal of any cultural contact - writing or reading - capable of bringing about this essential deciphering is significant. For the rejection of culture because it is bourgeois is entirely embedded in the bourgeois error about culture: the error that makes art sacred as something to be accessed and practised in a reserved, difficult and fearful way. Yet what we have of music, painting and literature, past or present, is the immediately communicable, the wildly everyday, the assimilable without detours or limits - and the emergence of the proscribed real. But the idea that there can be full and right contact with art escapes the very people who want a new art for everyone. For everyone: which is precisely what art has never ceased to be; only that access to it would first require, we are led to believe, the knowledge of a competent owner - judgement, erudition, analysis, inventory - whereas the work, a simple presence, simply requires

the presence of the other, not its conquering or humiliating fascination. To read, see and hear is to be there, and to be equal - or to become equal.

It would seem to be an impossible endeavour, and perhaps it is today. For this inability or refusal to be present to works (present to the censored, to risk, to pleasure), and its corollary, the rejection of art, seem to reveal a new, mutilating aspect of the social milieu - one that is now presumably organised to secrete autism and present it as the sole and last chance of survival. Recent forms of art, intended to be spontaneous, collective and free of obstacles, also obey this autism, as signs of the same powerlessness. A complete withdrawal of

the subject is apparent from the very notion of 'consumption'; a system based on it suggests the uncertainty and ruin of its ideology, a decay in which everyone chooses an exquisite form of cancellation as their salvation. The object-history or the object-opinion, ritual builders of an object-discourse whose inconsistency and rigidity show just how worn out is the reality it elaborates in a vacuum, the object-novel, a more or less superfluous product of the blackened paper industry, the object-habitat, the object-family, the object-nature, the object-habitat, the object-family, the object-nature, the object-sex, the object-revolution and a few others are screens of the object-man, a closed animal that simulates its transparency, its openness, by projecting onto itself the trompe-l'œil of a limpid reality, an ideal possession, an unlimited spectacle, a concretion of the ideology that freezes and saves itself in it.

We can imagine that the lover of conventional fictions - in drawings, photos, words, writings or films - no longer even maintains, through conscientious self-propaganda, his social adaptation and his agreement in principle with a falsified self. All it seeks from this fiction is the presence of a conforming object, valid because it is null. Reading is an immutable repetition, guaranteeing the total inactivity of the written word on anything and anyone - an inoculation that will inhabit the moribund subject without provoking, modifying, attenuating or reinforcing anything. A reign of neutrality and, by the same token, stasis, autism. The "silent majority" is like a pallid space where we never stop talking to cover up the absence of speech, to mask the cadaverous nature of a discourse reduced to the echo of its inanity.

Any act of presence is beyond the powers of that uninhabited solitude, that concrete disembodiment, which is the subject-object. But it is also to be feared that, in certain respects, the protesting minority makes claims and refuses that are inspired by the same system of annulment. The liberated subject they often have as their ideal, their Eden of nudity, equality, youth and unaggressive sociability, their hope in salvific expression - all these acts of faith seem to be a simple passage from bad to good *object*-.

world. The myth of the limpid outside, of the sovereign subject, of the disarmed fellow man, remains present; it's the same march, on an even whiter road than that of "consumption". It's as if our society were the patience of a purgatory, and that some of its members, faithful to its myth, demanded straight away the promised paradise, its innocence and clarity.

In this world subservient to the object, fiction has very little power. It has no chance of satisfying an enormous need for a model reality that is much better satisfied by the cult of the object, whose images have the omnipresence

of pious stations in a holy city. Photographic advertising, the good shape of the world offered by films, non-literary writing - journalistic, erudite, scientific, practical - which 'really' express social reality taken literally, have a greater force and a more rapid and less ambiguous action than the novel. The mythologising discourse on the object wonderfully fills in the gaps in reality that novelistic fiction is slow to reconstruct. The models of speech, feeling, body, beauty and behaviour have, in image, the absoluteness of a parental example, a presence as imperative as that of a child's entourage. And the spectator who sees 'man' on a screen is convinced, unlike the animal in the mirror, that he sees himself and that he is not this fascinated passivity, but this active, well-constituted spectacle. The most banal of written serials, because it requires at least one physical operation of continuous reading, is next to that a swamp of equivocation and a hell of action; and the effort of reading is all the more useless because it does not provide a tenth of the good that abandonment to the image dispenses. Probably, the eminent quality of the latter lies not in the fact that it was preformed by its author, nor in the obviousness of its legibility, but in the fact that a crippled eye can reduce it and still find meaning in it. Everyone thinks they can see - which only means that when an image has passed through the most opaque brain, the illusion of something always remains.

All the more so, reading subversive fiction will be hard work, unpleasant on two counts: because of the "shut up and walk" that any incitement to read entails, and because of the hazardous path that will have to be travelled. The reader who may be troubled by the subversive refuses to do so because it is his own trouble that has led him to the book, and his reading is a quest for appeasement, enclosure and solicitude. He wants to heal this disorder by reconsolidating the order that created it, not by destroying it - a narrow path that would lead to a cursed elsewhere.

The writer is nothing more than a foreigner; he is repressed. His criticism of the perceived, the imaginary, the memorised, the pre-established scriptable, held to be the only admissible readable, makes him the author of another language, which is claimed to be foreign because we understand it and don't want it. A shameful, roundabout refusal that sometimes displays its opposite - in this respect very similar to the relationship that each person has with his or her body; for, in the most stifled of subject-objects, the body is also the threat of a reappearance of the undesirable real; it is always in the process of becoming the foreigner. The social game divides the body into subject and object, the latter a slave and bearer of all that is cursed and disturbing, even in the ultimate and derisory manifestation of its existence: orthodox sexuality.

Pornography and its status clearly express the two stages of the body's incarceration: a discourse of sex, it does not emanate from sex, but from its crippled social state; yet, because it is written "obscene", it is banned. A box around a box that contains only a vestige.

This is because the obscenity of pornography is still approval of the body, too vivid an appearance. Only the complete concealment of the body that we call eroticism is tolerated. Because, from one to the other, it's the difference between the dirty and the clean, the real and the transfigured; "obscene" is what appears literal, "erotic" is what has been ennobled by bourgeois literary clichés. A work devoted to sexuality must at all costs be subject to the idealism of the external signs of the distanced - science or art. Erotic is then no more than translated pornography, station graffiti recoded by a salon writer.

Yet they both express the same thing: the stereotypes of the obedient sex that rehashes the images of its obligatory staging. Sexual fiction expresses fantasies that are nothing more than the social programming of sexuality. This is why the only aspect of it that is condemned is obscenity, a shameful reminder of the body, or rather the candour of the body that invests itself in a censored language in which, because it is outlawed, it recognises its own species.

The reader who is seduced by a-literary pornography and the one who is aroused by the metaphors of bourgeois eroticism share the same kinship as those who are passionate about the nude and those who are passionate about the veiled. The reading is identical, and so is its end. A search for immediate pleasure, in which the reader invests his desire in the fiction on offer, just as the buyer of rubber females inflates his partner without words, if not without ways. And the confidence demonstrated by this rigorous consumption of sexual fiction is simply due to the fact that reading and its pleasure take place in different places.

This opposition between the fictive of the narrative and the simultaneous reality of onanism transposes that which is internal to desire, experienced as the desire for a body for the image of a body. This desire has the same lack of reality, and could therefore be described by its opposite: the adherence of a fictitious sex to a real discourse. The reader of erotica accepts the self-body that this erotica gives him, he inhabits it and separates it from the fiction by crediting it with a reality that it does not have.

An erotic work that, like Sade's novels, reinvented the body would disappoint desire; it would be unfaithful to its pre-writing, as the subject ignores it when it chooses a supposedly real body - which is what bourgeois erotic

literature reproduces. The reappearance of the body escapes the system of images in which the amputated body seeks its counterpart, its exercise and confirmation of its limits. However, there may still be a micro-fascination here, which the letter of perverse writing would operate if it resorted to the obscene: the raw word becomes the supposed sign that a transgressive ritual is being performed, and then seems to sum up the "socialised" body constructed by the conventional fiction of the sexual. Only the irony of the text would make it almost impossible to divert the word from the intact body through the fascination of the crippled body - a diversion that is the non-reading we have seen at work in the face of all excess.

Whether erotic writing is conformist or subversive, dirty or clean, popular or bourgeois, reading can easily reduce it to what it requires; and this is certainly the limit of familiarity and activity that the 'non-reader' can reach. This is undoubtedly because finding oneself face to face with a fiction 'from below' authorises privacies that discourse from above hardly inspires.

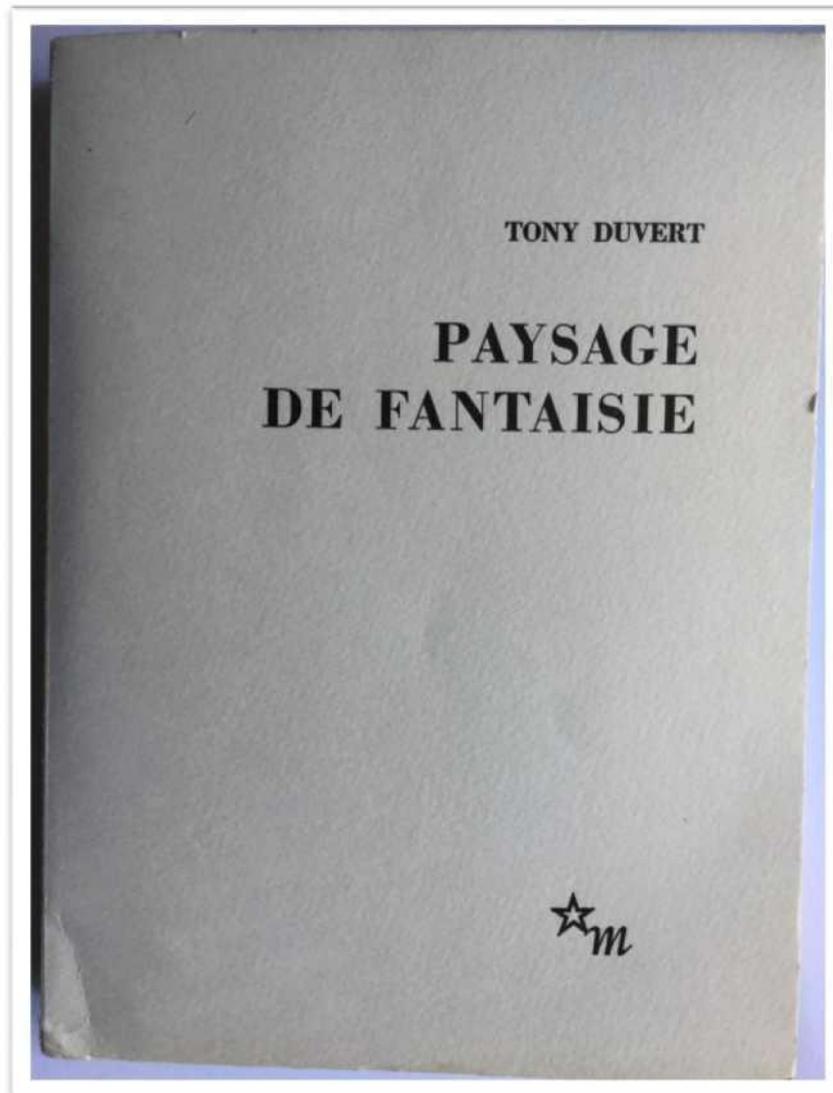
We could go on with this inventory of non-readings, but the ones we have identified at least say the essential. The subversive art is not just a disruption of the novel's reality; it attacks its very reader, and from the reality that the traditional novel claims to copy, it demonstrates the roots in the man who expects it to be reproduced in literature. The novel, society and reading are the three sites of interest to subversion, which is resisted above all by elimination. The subversive writer has constructed an object that is part of the system he is destroying; he is therefore seen as a counterfeiter, the author of a non-loyal commodity, the denouncer of an implicit convention that requires fiction to be a sacred inscription of the legible, a duplication of the accepted universe - whereas his effort to write is the revelation and destruction of ideology at the very heart of what appears to be situated below, beyond or at the edge of it.

the opposite of its power. This liberation is considered undesirable: it reveals a lack of the world. Yet antiliterature is inseparable from the time in which it takes place; its image of the world is not the hypothesis of a future of perception and the subject, but the adventurous rewriting of what the present stifles and hides from itself. In this, it is a modern form of what art has never ceased to be, and its social status is nothing new either. However, there is a similarity in the approach that unites this art and the subversive action of a minority, and it would be precious if we could see that writing and reading can accomplish an essential action of their own on the formative word of the ideology being fought against: in this way, beyond reading-consumption and its other faces, formalist religion or the refusal of art, a reading could reappear that

would be present to liberating writings and to the world that is searching for itself in them.

PUBLICATION OF *PAYSAGE DE FANTASIE* - January 1973

In the autumn, Duvert was awarded the Prix Médicis for this work. He was supported by Roland Barthes, with whom he fell out at the dinner following the award. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.



Source: Original numbered edition.

EROTISM IS NOT A PIECE OF INGRES - January 1973

Source: Interview with Madeleine Chapsal given to L'Express (no. 1124, 22-28 January 1973), on the occasion of the publication of Paysage de fantaisie.

Until now, Tony Duvert has chosen to live in seclusion, in a room that he prefers to keep hidden from view.

address. He gets up late and lives at night, but when he does work, it's fifteen hours straight every day. His typewritten manuscripts have the impeccable rigour of obsession. Shy, he claims, and speaks in a very low voice, as if to himself. This is the first time he has agreed to answer a few questions.

L'EXPRESS. - Do you realise that your books are very difficult to read?

TONY DUVERT. - Was it the lack of punctuation that bothered you?

- You've got to be kidding, it's the effect on sensitivity!

- What produces this shock is perhaps the brutal, total presence of sexuality in the mind. Usually, literature, erotic or otherwise, always shows eroticism as something apart. I try to do the opposite, to open the cage. And then, the erotic and the non-erotic are no longer differentiated, they combine their powers.

- But how much time and reading do you need to find yourself after such an outpouring of sexual violence?

- You call it sexual violence because you compare it to its attenuated, commodified forms - to the very wise free-marketism of the normal couple, the non-aggression pact that is what remains of eroticism after it has been repressed.

- What if there was no repression?

- I don't know about that. The sexually free society that people are calling for seems to me like a boy scout society, where eroticism is kind, flattened out, unbidden, but

without any real presence. We love everyone, we do no harm, we do not abuse. It's more like a society of hyper-repression, where everyone's body is at the service and orders of everyone else.

- What about our company?

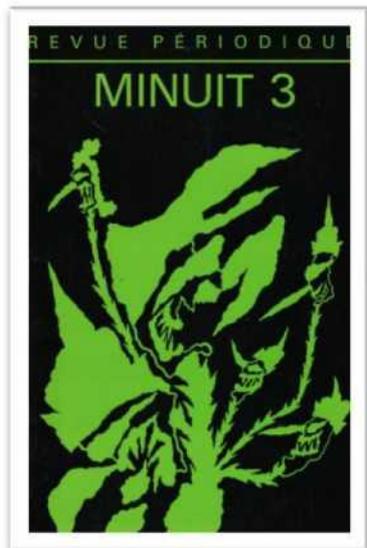
- But I have the impression that it lives out its violence by exercising repression, prohibitions, abuse and inequality. That's the shape of its sexuality: the institutional power of some over others. But if this is a bad society, I don't think that a Scandinavian-style 'free' society, for example, where sexuality is a neutral, bland, hygienic activity, is the real solution. In fact, everything remains to be imagined and said.

- Whether or not they are the repressed dreams of our society, your books are provocative. How do you think they will be received?

- It depends, of course, on the intimate relationship that each kind of reader has with sexuality. But, in any case, it has to act. For me, writing my books means being the first to be affected by them. I can't belong to that category of writers who sit down at the table at 9 o'clock, write until 11 o'clock, and then lead a normal social life. You don't write things like that just for the hell of it - there's no such thing as subversive writing, which is a test, an adventure, a challenge. Living and writing interpenetrate: and to be, in our society, that writer, that homosexual, that sexual subject, is not easy. But eroticism is not a violin d'Ingres, it's a hard happiness - something that, when liberated, abuses yourself and others. Perhaps this is what frightens some readers.

SEXUALITY IN CHILDREN - March 1973

Source: *Revue bimestrielle Minuit*, number 3, March 1973. Director of publication: Jérôme Lindon. Cover design: Michel Longuet.



SEXUALITY AT THE HOME OF MORONS

Here is the full text of a leaflet sent to fathers, particularly in a "residential estate" in Jouy-en-Josas, near Versailles:

*Versailles, 1st November 1972 Circular distributed
Parents' Association agreement
with the Préfecture de Police Youth Control
Department*

Dear Sir

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the behaviour of teenagers in schools and academies is very lax, due to a lack of supervision on the part of parents, or to the overconfidence they have in their children.

1) Drug trafficking exists in many schools. Are you sure that your child is safe from danger and is not tempted by drugs or has not already used them?

2) Sexuality is a major issue for teenagers. Have you checked exactly what your child does after school, at lunchtime and at weekends? If your child is staying overnight, do you know exactly where and with whom? Check what they tell you, with their name and address. Meet the people your child will be staying with. If they say they are going out with friends, get to know their parents. Adolescents usually get on well together.

There were many cases of minors being abducted with the consent of their children, homosexuality among boys was on the increase, venereal diseases were rife and underage pregnancies were on the increase.

3) Ask the Headmaster to check the frequency of absences by signing off on apologies and by carrying out surveys.

Be certain that your child has already missed lessons without your knowledge.

When you receive this letter, ask for a statement of absences since the start of the school year to be sent to you.

4) *Observe your teenage child's behaviour at home, their manners, the way they dress; these indications often reveal hidden orientations, especially in boys.*

Urgent, swift and firm action can avoid serious consequences for the future.

5) *Adolescents are dissimulators and liars, which is the only way they can ensure their privacy. They want to "live" by getting away from the family unit, where they feel bored and trapped.*

Even if they swear to tell the truth or swear on their honour, religion, etc., don't trust them.

On principle, don't necessarily trust them. Check their statements discreetly without them knowing.

6) *Don't let them go out at weekends without knowing who they're staying with, and arrange for their friends to meet you at your place.*

Keep this letter confidential, *but keep a close eye on your child for his sake and your own peace of mind. Don't take him head-on, but avoid letting him try the "unknown and tempting pleasures of life" while there is still time.*

Keep a close eye on him and discuss this note with your wife.

We'll be in touch again in a few months' time about safeguarding teenagers (1)

I'm not proposing this leaflet for analysis simply to study the family as a concentration camp institution - in which case there would be better things to collect and quote than this poor parental rubbish. If it is exemplary here, where I want to talk about adults and sex, it's because it introduces the notion of prison eroticism: the alarmist image of the adolescent rut is based on the premise of a tidy sexuality, that of the conjugal bed, the caged bed where Mum and Dad, their duty done, withdraw and take shelter.

(1) Words in Roman script were underlined or capitalised in the original. Correct spelling and punctuation have been restored by me.

For these adults reincarnated as 'school parents', sexuality, kept at a distance, is the strange disease their children suffer from. A disorder which, after the measles and scarlet fever of childhood, infects their offspring when they reach puberty. A growth disorder from which, of course, these parents are cured.

So much so that they seem to have forgotten it: the disorders listed in the leaflet are due to "lack of supervision by Parents". This ambiguous syntax is significant: it is both the children and their parents who need to be better supervised. The producers-breeders to whom the State delegates the temporary

and conditional management of children's livestock are no longer worthy of their position: overconfident, they are responsible for the relaxation of morals.

They need to be reminded of their duty as a matter of urgency, because drugs are on the prowl "in schools, colleges and academies". But the leaflet only mentions this supreme danger to dramatise its real concern, which is quite different: "sexuality", it reveals, "is a major problem for adolescents".

Dogs are docile animals: but when the rut seizes them, they break their chains. The same applies to young people: the innocence they are credited with (?) shelters a demon that they obey in secret. It's up to their parents to fight it "while there's still time". Let them know that, in adolescence, every hour of unchecked leisure is an opportunity for clandestine debauchery: lunches, outings, weekends - and even "missed classes" to rush off to infamous appointments. Friendships? mere alibis for an obscene complicity - because these young "liars" dare to show solidarity.

The proof of their vices can be seen in the newspapers: all the minors are embezzled, sodomised, syphilised and knocked up. If your son doesn't seem to be one, take a closer look at the way he dresses, it says a lot.

Our authors reinforce the old fear of 'hijacking' with a curious detail: not only are they going to steal your child, but he's dying for it. I don't think anyone had ever ventured to say this before. Instead, the misappropriation was presented as a crime of which the child was the victim. Now we recognise that he is the accomplice; and the real victim, protected by the

laws, has finally been designated: the Family. From now on, the child is a traitor to parental property, since he gives himself up to whomever he pleases, even though *he does not belong to himself*.

There's also an implicit admission of a love rivalry between parents and strangers: if the seductive kids neglect the family retreat, the parents lose the most precious object of their impulses, their "love" and their government. How can we forget that they are married to their children, and very jealous?

A more devious danger than "adultery" is homosexuality. But why is homosexuality "on the increase" among boys who are poorly supervised? For the authors of the leaflet, does it represent a temptation that every human being feels, and to which they succumb as soon as they are free? Anyone who uses their sex without precaution will fall into anarchy of desire and copulate

against nature, like a toddler passionately deciphering books held upside down. Homosexuality is a trap set by desire that listens to itself, and the embodiment of a paradoxical "bestiality". Heterosexuality counters this with its civilised 'naturalness', on which the order of the brave new world has never ceased to be built.

Venereal diseases are a monster that is less disturbing than perversion; little helpers of morality, they are simply a reminder that sexuality is evil - for which they are the immediate punishment. No matter how easily they are cured, they remain 'shameful' because a shameful act brought them about; this is clearly all that interests the parents of schoolchildren about them. (The genital anatomy also has a *shameful nerve*; I'll leave it to you to guess where it runs).

The ultimate threat is a realistic one: underage pregnancies. But the leaflet does not insist on this. It mainly blames the boys. Girls are more submissive, better supervised; without contraceptives, they run "risks" that dampen their rut; they have many other fears, and good superstitions. Finally, they don't bite and rarely run away. Talking about early pregnancies is more like saying: the guilty freedom you give your sons, it's your daughters who will suffer.

As for the boys, we know that if they weren't rapists they would be raped: the "hidden orientation" revealed by their behaviour and clothes. The idea that homosexuality manifests itself in the finery and gestures affected

is so silly that only songwriters stick to it. Our authors return to it because it will be a good pretext: any boy who challenges his civil servant schoolboy uniform and copies the mimic code of virility too softly will be a little aunt: and, as such, he may be subject to measures that would not otherwise have been decreed. House arrest, spying, brutality and psychotherapy will at least have asserted parental power over beings who, by oblique and incongruous means, were trying to escape it.

This is hardly surprising, given that teenagers are such "dissimulators and liars". To the frankness of adults - "confidential letters", "surveys", "discreet checks", "signature deposits", "doubts" and "urgent action" - they are unacceptably withdrawn. They don't even have the good taste to show what we want to cut out of them.

On the contrary, they jealously protect this forbidden thing; it inspires in them the laughable idea of "securing a private life"; they come to feel

"prisoners" of a "family cell" where they are nevertheless offered the wisest form of happiness. What they call "living", then, is simply escaping from the duty of one day reproducing a small cell, the result of the just prison that was so important to their "salvation".

The panic behind this leaflet is clear: children who become emancipated are a threat to the family, a cell whose walls are made of flesh. Safeguarding teenagers" is just a pretext for campaigning for the protection of parental rights. The fact that this blessed power is crumbling is the only "serious consequence" tormenting parents threatened with *diminishment*. Control must remain "discreet", since to "take children head-on" would be to declare a war that is no longer certain to be won. Between laxity and repression, the family order will only prosper by playing a double game.

Admittedly, the text produced by the Versailles parents is on the extreme right of family ideologies; and while the "agreement of the Préfecture de Police" gives it a nice secular flavour, its very content is denominational - shamefully so. Certain words, which are pointed out in spite of themselves, indicate this: there is talk of the "salvation" of children, and it is assumed that they could "swear on religion". I can imagine an interrogation in which the father, concerned for his "peace and quiet", asks his son to account for the time he has spent outdoors; and the child "swears on religion" that he has not tasted the "unknown and tempting pleasures of life". A staged family salute that's no laughing matter.

The aim of the "discreet checks" advocated in the leaflet is explicit: it is "urgent action" that will no longer be discreet at all. Parents must secretly prepare the weapons for open repression and ease their conscience. The "relaxed" aspects of teenage behaviour are pushed into the background.

In France, it is all too clear that the majority of children are desperately submissive. Even if they hate their families and loathe school work, they are terrified of any contact with the outside world and any offer of initiative - the fruit of an education in a vacuum. Inability to speak, to judge, to invent, to act, morose resignation to a future 'saved' by a few hopes of gratifying *consumption* and a mythical profession: this is what remains of a human being after only thirteen or fifteen years in the 'family unit'. A savage, looking for a cave and a job that society will already reluctantly provide, and into which he will sink as quickly as possible, dragging with him, for better or for worse, the first female who says yes.

So it seems to me that the mass of children is neither revolted nor even

revolting: it is only moribund, dull, mute, unhappy and crushed.

Proud parents are obviously aware of the decline of their children, which is their work. And they fight against those who would oppose it: liberal parents, "revolutionary" educators, timid reforms decided by a state that no longer sees its loss.

Rather, our leaflet sums up a kind of quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. It is fictitious, since the moderns, as I shall try to show, have the same intentions as the ancients, but implement them by other means. The old methods of repression are giving way to more subtle techniques, which are believed to be liberal because, as they refine their action, they operate at depths that can only be reached by instilling confidence in the victims. Today's teaching methods, for example, allow children to 'express themselves' in order to trap their freedom. In the ancient classroom, pupils had a hundred ways (not the least of which was good conventional work) of neutralising the attacks of compulsory education. Modern education, on the other hand, stimulates and recovers the child's 'creativity' and playfulness, and then harnesses them to good social ends; responses, reflexes, knowledge and conditioning that will transform the little 'animal' into a zealous citizen, a part of society and a part of the world.

institutions and production machines. It is no longer enough to learn how to manipulate a tool, whether material or intellectual, we have to become - flesh, bones and pleasure - that very tool. In this way, the future worker will spontaneously and "creatively" accomplish what those of today do only under the constraint of need; happy and adapted, he will be the blind mechanic that employers dream of.

But such teaching implies a little exhibition of freedom beforehand; and this virtuoso taming, hand-to-hand, frightens some parents and educators, who were more reassured by the distance provided by the stick and the whip.

The same intention to enslave for sure has inspired the spread of sexual information in public education. The little cursed beast will obey much better if it is domesticated openly, instead of being locked up in a dungeon - where, as psychoanalysts know, it used to do some pretty good things.

A television clip from the time when sex education was still 'on trial' clearly illustrated the ulterior motives behind this reform. It showed an experimental class in which parents devoted themselves to teaching other

people's children about sex - toddlers and young girls wisely gathered together to be described by... mum and dad. Active teaching, since the disembodied children were encouraged to provide their own 'logical' explanation for their parents' behaviour. Dad kisses mum on the mouth, they've met, they love each other, they have hair, mum has a skirt, dad has trousers, who wants to say why?

So the socio-cultural model of the love relationship had to be justified - right down to the smallest zip button - by those on whom it was imposed, which is the height of brainwashing. A tactic similar to that of angry parents who slap their child and ask: "Do you know why? Come on, tell me why? In this case, the victims remain silent, while in this case they respond, because sex education hurts less than beating.

It's a new power that the Order is giving itself. The sex class - a programme of revelations broken down by age - will study biology and sexology, the founding sciences of the orthodox couple. This sexual model will only be useful in the long term: here's what you need to know today to be

tomorrow of good fathers, good mothers, good husbands, good Frenchmen. Alerted by the failures of the sexual order, the State resigns itself to improving the methods of its taxation. Since the duty to reproduce is not as simple as human physiology describes it (since it involves building a factory - the family - and producing new producers with difficulty), teaching sexuality will provide the means to prepare and maintain the solid heterosexual and monogamous contract that forms the basis of the family nucleus. Pre-marital experiments, contraception and ethnological explanations about the other sex will not help everyone to live out their sexuality in the here and now, but to face up to the traps of compulsory marital hell when the time comes. How to make your wife come, how to make your husband hard again, how to put the little things in the big dishes, how to tolerate the infidelities and petty vices of your legal partner, and above all how to limit your herd of children, should its abundance exceed the resources of your farm - in short, the art of good management and longevity. Even if this learning is derisory, even if nothing is as happy, 'natural', convenient or 'fulfilling' as you were promised, it will be your fault: you should have applied the recipes for happiness that you were taught better.

Rebuilding couples by spreading 'knowledge', the lack of which is considered to be the cause of all sexual failures: this is also the aim of popularised sexology works - guides to morality under the guise of science, as we know. Weaving together medicine and cockroach advice, objective information and selected untruths, deft liberalism and excommunications, they

aim to plaster over the crumbling image of 'good' sexuality - the state sexuality. They blame its failings on the ignorance, stupidity and lechery of those whom it has made unhappy, impotent or neurotic: but never on the society that petrifies this stereotype and inflicts it as the only permissible form of 'salvation' in love.

Children can be given the freedom to masturbate (alone). Moderate onanism does not make you deaf or stupid; it will help children to wait peacefully for the age of their first authorised experiences. It's better to let children off the hook for masturbation than to have early erotic adventures, which are always degrading, perverse and harmful to the psychological beauty of those involved, it seems.

In this case, the good doctor believes that a desire that has no right to be exercised anywhere can legitimately be consumed on its own: intelligent parents will come to accept this. Since children have a sexuality anyway

pusillanimous, "narcissistic", "egotistical", they are not mature enough to experience eroticism from above, socialised, generous, respectful of the Other: they lose little by liquidating their wild impulses by the shortest route. Such is the "humanist" defence of masturbation.

It posits that there are inferior sexualities and one eminent sexuality; the latter is, conveniently, that of the 'harmonious' married couple. The others need to be cared for, amended or trimmed back. And the sexuality of the non-adult, which combines all the 'faults' of the others and adds the inconsistency of youth, has no place: it serves, or would serve, only the pleasure of the person who indulges in it - it does not contribute to the myth of blessed Complementarity, sister of Love and mother of the Family.

Scandalous for conformist parents, tolerance of masturbation is nothing more than a repressive attitude: shrinking and denigrating the major eroticism of children and adolescents, it allows them to eliminate themselves like spit. This is a concession that some parents are very proud of; it's like farmers who allow their pigs to drool and screw up. Admirable permission - which they prefer to the revolts and escapes that total prohibition could now provoke - but which is her new mask. Onanism is allowed because it kills well.

The sexuality of others is what is feared by those who dominate, whether in small or large ways. It is striking that the advisers in the leaflet were at least able to identify the origin of the threat to their power. The impubescent child does not worry them: it lacks a 'real' sex - a sufficient reason for autonomy and rivalry.

On the contrary, it lacks sex in countries where parents take care of it. Denying the sexuality of women and children is the father's main weapon and his best way of justifying his superiority over them in kind. The woman capable of pleasure and the sexual boy, pubescent or not, are therefore his two enemies.

The "right of exploitation" that a human couple has over "their" children is initially underpinned by the weakness and fragility of the little one. But, institutionalised, this right is maintained well beyond the years when it was that of the strongest. From then on, in order to keep their family heirlooms, the couple had to infantilize them. A break is first imposed between the child and its sexual organs, which, almost from birth, were those of a specific pleasure,

self-sufficiency - the core of a little man's independence, a completeness of the body, a circuit of desire that disdained exchange: an authentic vicious circle. And this was the child's first obstacle to socialisation, the only need he could satisfy without anyone else. Its development is thwarted and overcome by introducing a schism - a ban, a displacement, a circuit breaker. So every child is carefully tied up so that he only sees "his" father and "his" mother. Their masters, who are the compulsory, inflicted object of love. It's all about family love - and the child doesn't shy away from it. At the price of good, castrating mothering, the result is an affection as exclusive and as clear-sighted as that of dogs. Those who love well spoil well, but those who spoil well are loved more. It's the only recipe known to man.

The human sciences lend a lot to children: this early knowledge is no more disinterested than they are. We like to observe in children everything the family has put into them, and say that this is their 'nature'. But it's all an artefact. There is no child-whatsoever to study, but the child of the parents, flesh already revised and corrected to grow as it should; a distraught brain inventing, through the family concrete, the means to make compromised impulses survive.

This is where the most delicate tasks of socialisation take place. Calling for the liberation of adolescents alone is as essential as it is insufficient: it's too late, we're only liberating quasi-robots. The revolts of adolescence are part of the logic of the system they are fighting against; they challenge the absurdity of "finished" beings having to wait several years before their mechanisms are allowed to function. By copulating at the age of thirteen, well-familiarised teenagers would remain wise forever, good products straight out of the factory; stored for years, on the other hand, paralysed and complexified, they corrode

and risk becoming bad citizens, bad spouses, unadaptable people who need to be "re-educated". That's why a sexologist advocates sexual freedom for adolescents: once the pruritus has subsided, they can be put to work without a hitch.

The measures concerning childhood itself are all the tougher for it; they reach the point of delirium in the new pedagogies, the prescriptions for families, the parental scruples, the protection of the "innocent" infantilised by maternal love and the censure of the father. It seems that we need to act ever faster and ever better. It would seem that the system no longer feels capable of familiarising its offspring properly once they reach puberty: in twelve years, everything has been done.

must therefore be finished and perfect; 'mature' sexuality and social needs will be invested where it is appropriate.

It will be in the Couple, of course - where the individual who has been given the feeling of incompleteness from birth, so that he or she needs a better *half for ever*, plunges. The Western ideology of 'love' is the thinnest part of the mechanism: the incredible mishmash of impulses it produces before putting it in order - its proper order - is difficult to analyse. Today's most liberated people still cling to their sentimentality, their quest for the 'Other', their rehashing of an old wound that is neither metaphysical nor tragic, but a lamentable family butchery. A crippled, pitiful sexuality, shaped like a hollow, a receptacle, a humble saucepan without a lid, or the opposite. A sickly need for others, superstition, neurotic possessiveness, the glory of the person who has 'found it'; the complacent misery of others; an ingenious ideology of reciprocal and perpetual happiness, a lure for morons; human halves running after their own sleep.

And the royal road to the other universe, that of consumerism and work. Here, life becomes completely fictitious, devoted to unreal objects, in an appalling circle. Honest people who work to buy cars to go to their work, which is to make cars, or to sell them. A fiduciary world, subject to the need for infinite outbidding; a fiction so obvious that it's as if the most concrete of jobs are in fact the most abstract: workers just like the tailors sewing the invisible clothes of Andersen's King.

The activities, leisure pursuits, desires and loves that populate the life of a 'normal' citizen are purely dreamt. Adulthood is all about devotion to rituals and myths that are so intertwined that anyone who touches one of them is soon subjected to all the others. A job without a purpose, marriage and its erotic,

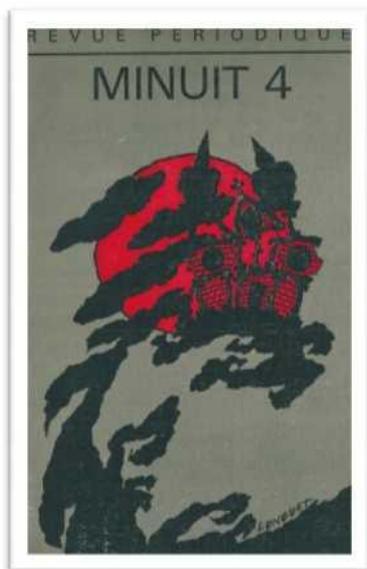
emotional and family fictions, private property and its divinisations in which a misappropriated ego shimmers: each time, a door opens and closes on the steps of the future "citizen"; then the bolt slams shut.

The only decisive break in this process of *reproduction* would obviously be the defamilialisation of childhood; and this is why the most generous societies in terms of public freedoms do not allow it, or substitute worse. It can be shortened, simplified and vaselined, but it has to happen. Because the basis on which the socialisation of a new human being takes place is his sexuality; the way in which it is modelled will produce in him this behaviour, this perception of others, these values, this survival of self for and through sexuality.

It is this repression, this wounded need, which will bend its affective and impulsive adhesions to a system that is ever more adept at diverting them. Sexuality is cut off from its playful futures and invested in a blind sense of belonging to our society - and this means demanding a hundred times more of each individual than would suffice to produce the necessary and the happy. It is here, at the root of this hijacking, that the social machine must be brought to a halt. This means abandoning all private or public ownership of children by adults; not creating new institutions, but inventing and encouraging the free movement of children - adult and unproductive citizens. This break is taking place here and there: through abstentions from power, small-scale daily sabotage and skilful subversion of the parenting industry - and against all its means of existence.

LA FOLIE TRISTAN - May 1973

Source: *Revue bimestrielle Minuit*, number 4, May 1973. Director of publication: Jérôme Lindon. Cover design: Michel Longuet.



TRISTAN MADNESS OR THE UNDESIRABLE

In a letter published last year in issue no. 1 of *Le Fléau social* (1), a homosexual posed this problem: he was ugly and couldn't find a way to make love. Excluded from pleasure like a beggar rejected far from the city and its bourgeois prosperity, he denied the virtues of "sexual freedom". With no territory and no body, split in two by his belief in Beauty, he was confined to the outside created by this belief, put among the

It was a dislocation to which Michel Foucault's reflections on the insane who, at the end of the Middle Ages, were either locked up at the gates of the town that chased them away, or placed on a horse. Michel Foucault's reflections on the insane who, at the end of the Middle Ages, were either locked up at the gates of the city that expelled them, or placed on a ship (the nave of the insane) that sailed down the rivers, are aptly applicable: "He is put inside the outside, and vice versa...

He is a prisoner in the middle of the freest, most open of roads: firmly chained to the infinite crossroads. He is the Passenger par excellence, the prisoner of passage. His truth and his homeland are to be found only in this fruitless expanse between two lands that cannot belong to him. (2)

This may be the status of desire itself, but here are a few fragments of what the 'Undesirable' wrote to the gay protesters:

... You are the start of a revolution. You want the liberation of all homosexuals, you want them to live their state. But this bourgeois morality that you are right to spit on, do you really believe that you are detached from it? Your morality has at least one thing in common with it: the demand for beauty. For there to be love, there has to be desire, even and above all desire for beauty.

(1) Published by F.H.A.R. Group 5.

(2) *A History of Madness in the Classical Age*

especially in homosexuality. And for desire to harmonise with love, there has to be beauty to begin with. You cannot desire an ugly face or an unattractive body. This is true even for those of you who believe yourselves to be free of all taboos and preconceived ideas. But ugly people do exist. At least I do. There are others. Others who tell you that you can't possibly know what it's like to suffer every second of your life for an ugly face. That you, the good-looking ones, are happy to see a guy who isn't good-looking, because you feel privileged and therefore superior to him. That's why I don't believe in your revolution. Alongside the majority of you, triumphant in your enjoyment and becoming self-aware, there is the minority of the not beautiful, those who should always keep quiet, remain alone, masturbate with disgust when desire becomes too strong; those whom you can only reject and who, forced to repress their desires, the same as yours, can only envy you - hate you, why not - from the depths of their mediocrity.

It takes a bit of cowardice to quote a 'document' of this kind about ugliness, since we are all ugly; and the bitterness, contradictions and morose illusions of the man who wrote this letter are our own - at least, as long as there is some well-socialised desire left in us. In Sade's novels, ugly men don't make a fuss: they are poor, they hardly ever appear, they are not sexual objects, they can hardly be victimised. Sade's victims necessarily have the prettiest faces in the world, the most beautiful asses in the world, the most beautiful lives imaginable, and so on. But the executioners, the heroes, the masters present an extraordinary catalogue of ugliness: often old, obese, hideous, smelly, sometimes impotent or with a miserable dick, they are nevertheless the ones who enjoy. That's because they have the power. Nobles, ministers, highway robbers, rich merchants, they hold what bends the bodies of others to ourselves: the right of the strongest, and money. The romances of the most beautiful man and the most beautiful woman, or of the two most beautiful women, make them sneer: or else they see in them a charming knot to be untied, by rape and blood. For them, "love" is like the warmth of the sun and the shelter of trees: the property of the poor, the despicable form that desire takes between those who have nothing.

On the contrary, in the exercise of desire, Sade proposes a triangular system; its three vertices are the beautiful (the desirable), the ugly (the undesirable) and the powerful (the desiring). It is the latter that establishes the economy of the relationship between these points. We have understood that the constitution of the triangle was obviously an artifice created by him, a deviation in which the 'powerful' is the positive doublet of the ugly or the beautiful, both disqualified as desiring. Power (that of
The sadistic model of the love affair (the love of money, the love of social function, not the love of seduction) becomes a relational dynamic that replaces

the ritual statism of the love market, where two identical couples were involved: desire-object versus desire-object - Tristan and Isolde. The Sadian model produces a much stronger link: desire-power versus object-victim. It is what annuls the desire of the other instead of responding to it - and there is a subterfuge in Sade's fictions, since the victim-object, although annulled as desiring, remains capable of enjoyment: the victim gets a hard-on, the victimised woman shudders and "discharges", the father who, under the threat of the executioner, is forced to fuck his impubescent daughter, smashes her round like a soldier.

This is the usual abuse of philosophical novels; but however reasonable the Sadian system may be, in reality it would have to contend with the incapacity of the victims it had first "castrated". This is a necessary contradiction, otherwise the give-and-take of the love trade will reappear. The torturers are always looking for victims and acts that will give them a hard-on and make them unload: but while the acts are often outside the norm, the victims themselves conform exactly to the values of what is desirable: the beautiful, the healthy, the delicate, the virile, the juvenile, the virgin, and so on. These values prepare the ground for the enjoyment that the victims will constitute with their flesh and from which they will simultaneously be deprived, even as they are forced to perform the gestures of pleasure - in this space of non-reciprocity that is the space of desire specific to their tormentors.

Sometimes, however, the old and the ugly show their heads, and they are the masters' accomplices. There's no good orgy without, at the end of it all, the old women, their old cunts, their old arses, their spoilt mouths and their ruined tits. But it's just as there's no such thing as a nice arse without the turd that's demanded of it: the nice arse has to shit just like the nice live and the nice cunt that unload, which only means that, in sexed bodies, everything has to work. Female executioners will have clitorises long enough to fuck men and women; they will discharge gallons of cum. Older women, pimps or maids who are not martyred, will become the very thing to be desired, because, shapeless, they will be a concretion of flesh, an extreme exposure of what was virtual in the prettiness and grace of younger women, and pure activity.

Everything will have powers beyond measure, everything will be a source of erotic events, and the great mystery that, in *Sodom*, is prepared interminably by forbidding gitons and virgin to take a shit, is a

diversion - the creation of an organ. The ass, producing a cylinder that is sucked like a penis, will be this new organ, which emits not shit but, well and truly, turd.

No colic, nothing inconsistent or disgusting: it has to be this naive, smooth object that comes out of the hen hole - Sade will often say that the arse *has laid eggs*. The stercoral egg is the only thing that the new organ has the right to produce. Shapeless matter, if it exists, is barely worthy of smearing the anus that the sadian hero will give to lick; it will act as a sign, it will aggravate the humiliation, the submission, the pact between master and slave, where the victim kisses the executioner's arse as the witches kissed the devil's in the sabbaths. An ass is only pretty when it's clean: it's only powerful when it's soiled. Sade has a counterpart to this doubling: the ass that the master violates is fresh, chubby, cute, part of the purest desirability, like his beautiful egg; but the ass that the master presents for sodomy, the one through which the slave whipper's vit must pass (imperturbably stiff), is often withered, horribly enlarged, flabby, wrinkled, even pimply and, of course, always shitty. Repugnant, given over to a paradoxical act of desire, it is still an imposition of power.

In short, the sadian does not practise the slightest "gift". His submission to ass-fucking, excrement and castigation is, on the contrary, the height of what he inflicts on his "patients". And if he does pay them, it's with stolen money. A perpetual embezzler, his career, whether handsome or ugly, is to acquire by any illicit means (i.e. quickly and exorbitantly) the fortune that will give him power and impunity. Every sum he extorts pleases him because, as the concrete form of an abuse, it also promises future abuses, docile flesh, extravagant crimes, new enrichments and superb hogwash.

In order to exercise his desire, the sadian will take on an eminent social role, occupying one of the rare drinking places in front of the flowing springs; he will accomplish the first and most decisive of those economic captures thanks to which desire and voluptuousness will blossom. The sadian does not offer himself in exchange for what he desires, and his pleasure does not depend on an ability to be desired himself: disdainful of any reciprocity, he takes, and consumes to the point of destruction. His desire is an ex-corporation of the object of desire, which he does not consume in order to absorb it but to make his own desire circulate through it, perpetual and travelling, a desire-organ, enormous, aggressive - a complete body, a sufficient body, which obeys the values of the desirable only to trace a bloody path through them, just as his philosophy knows God only in order to be able to live his own life.

give that height of insult and crime that the laws punished more than any other (1).

For the blasphemer occupies in the social body of that time the cursed place par excellence, he disassociates himself absolutely from the human community. It's not "God" he's blaming - he doesn't give a damn - it's what underpins the body and the factual limits of each individual: universal assent to the beliefs and codes without which men excluded themselves from the right to be. This creation of man by man under the hand of God is curiously illustrated in the famous novel published by Daniel Defoe in 1719: we see Robinson Crusoe educating the savage he has saved from death, and the episodes are those of a birth: "First I let him know that his name would be Friday, it was the day I had saved his life, and I called him that in memory of that day. I also taught him to call me master, to say yes and no, and I taught him what these words meant. Then I gave him milk in an earthenware pot...". These primordial acts of slavery (the name, the *no* and the milk are more important than *master*, which sums up the whole thing and repeats its meaning), in which the "savage" is nothing until the civilised person names him and designates him as his object, are what every society accomplishes for the new individuals born into it. Finally, it remains to mark the body (by clothing it) and the mind (by teaching it God):

" ... I made him understand that he had to follow me and that I would give him some clothes; he seemed charmed by this, as he was absolutely naked... To tell the truth, at first he seemed very embarrassed (by these clothes): his pants were worn awkwardly, and his cap sleeves were uncomfortable on his shoulders and under his arms; but he eventually got used to them."

" ... I endeavoured to teach him to do everything that would make him useful, skilful, understood, but above all to speak to me and understand me..."

" ... I took this as an opportunity to instruct him in the knowledge of the true God. I told him that the Great Creator of all things lives up there, that he governs the world with the same power and providence with which he created it; that he is all-powerful and can do everything for us, give us everything and take everything away from us..."

— . In the mid-seventeenth century, blasphemers were still condemned to be burnt alive. See J. Imbert, *Procès criminels des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Paris, 1964.

The one who gives everything and takes everything away is Robinson himself; every gift he makes to the savage means: you belong to me - you cannot feed yourself alone - you have no human body except through me - you produce nothing when it is not I who orders you to, when it is not for 'us' that you do it - truth, being, and that very thing in the name of which I grant you life,

are in my beliefs and morals, not in yours.

The idea is to pass oneself off as the source of everything, in order to turn the other to oneself; and to maintain the imposture by returning to the "savage" a small part of what has been taken from him. At this point, Vendredi has become a faithful dog, preferring to die than to be separated from his master: the anthropophagus is now a "man". (1)

Defined, enlightened, informed about good and evil, true and false, strong and weak, useful to Robinson, perfectly annexed, Friday is one of the objects of the micro-capitalism that the castaway has established on the island, with triple barricades, caves, herds, parrots *that repeat his name*, work and hunting tools taken from the sea, reserves of all kinds, rigorous management - and last but not least, meditation on the Bible. The creation of man, the creation of territory, the creation of power, the creation of objects that can be named and sacrificed: this is the function of the *jealous God*, and this is how the same forms of being and the same pacts of association are reproduced, not just by the masters and the exploited, but by both. Friday is fed on boiled bread and cakes (Christianity is also an initiation into wheat): now it's Robinson, Bible in hand, who is the anthropophagus.

— 1) Moreover, he was not a "real" savage, but a *savage* - a good merchantable object to European taste, loyal, healthy, innocent and pretty. Defoe is careful to describe him as desirable, and this is not naïveté on his part, but a prerequisite for any diversion: "He was a tall, handsome fellow, slender and well turned, and, in my estimation, about twenty-six years of age. He had a good posture, an aspect that was neither arrogant nor fierce, and something very male about his face; yet he also had all the soft, gentle expression of a European, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not frizzy like wool. His forehead was high and broad, his eyes bright and full of fire. His complexion was not black, but very swarthy, without however having anything of that yellowish, coppery and nauseating tone of the Brazilians, Virginians and other American natives; it was rather close to a light dark olive colour, more pleasant in itself than easy to describe. His face was round and chubby, his nose small and not flattened like those of the Negroes, his mouth beautiful, his lips thin, his teeth fine, well arranged and white as ivory".

This is the order that blasphemy tears apart. For it debaptises humanity and erases its name. Blasphemy, not sadism (which is part of the logic of despotic capitalism), made Sade the enemy of humankind.

To commit this crime and impose oneself as *still being there in spite of oneself*, as more powerful, more existing, is to tear the socius apart, to demonstrate the derisory and uselessness of this social and religious order

through which the individual creates himself as an individual, i.e. as a *residual*. This kind of genocide is not symbolic; it involves anguish and the risk of destroying oneself in the annihilation of what founds others, but it also offers the chance to de-measure oneself.

Beyond such a breakdown, Divinity (Virtue) and Beauty will exist for Sade only as modes of presence of the objects of his drive - other men - and the object, through the aesthetic and ontological conventions that produce its historical "reality", will be believed only in order to be caught up in Sadian desire. This desire thus accepts and reproduces the Beautiful and the Divine, but subject to its own pleasure, masks of a seeming forever faceless and borderless. This begetting is a game of artifice, creation for laughs, for pleasure, a vicious circle of desire without a break. This means that it ignores the philosophical "Truth" and proclaims the absolute power of the false, of lies and evil, of contradiction, of this creation of mirrors in which it lives and enjoys itself. A disdain for Truth, since to believe in it would be to share - to break, to stop, to censor the delirious operations of the subject without measure that is the Sadian hero. The diversions, the borrowings, the incongruous combinations, the subterfuges, all the triturations of the social, logical, economic and philosophical fabric, will play endlessly with the conventions and castrating traces of the "True", the forms of the "Real", these interruptions in the desire and being of others, this scar that they have and that we can reopen, make bleed, suck until we have emptied the strange shells that are these univocal men, these measured citizens, these egg-shaped individuals, these circumcised, closed anuses - these objects.

Sadism offers itself as the madness of the sadian state - capitalism - its unbridled expenditure; it reactivates desire under the social order, restoring its infinitude and making it the perpetual excess of the order itself. So we are wrong to 'find' sadism only in war, violence, concentration camps and torture - which are merely crises of the permanent sadistic structure of our society. The equilibrium, harmony, peace and prosperity of each group dominated and managed by a State are

And "erotic" sadism shows what happens when capitalised desires are crudely reapplied to those who have been dispossessed of them. Sade's heroes, their treasures, their henchmen, their relentless desire do not *turn* other human beings into victims, because everything that is not themselves is already a victim. The existence and power of master executioners means the prior victimisation of their contemporaries, from whom it is enough to choose on whom to complete a murder that has been virtually consummated long ago.

This is what defines the limits of sadistic desire: it is an overkill, or even a simple repetition, of the desire that came before it and built the order on which it will itself be based. The rich, virtuous, good Christian prince is more sadistic than the girl-killing marquis, a punishable, penniless hobgoblin afflicted with a nasty vice. The sadist is merely following in the footsteps of a pillage, a destruction that is far more decisive than those to which his desire may give itself over.

Sade's system is not to be found among the monsters of psychopathology, the cutters of children or stranglers of whores; it thrives at the point where power is exercised, and where the fundamental sadian gesture is accomplished by a few to the detriment of all the others; the gesture of Robinson Crusoe, of the coloniser; that of the father, the master, the husband, the boss, the powerful. There is no strength unless it is extorted from others; there is no power unless it is captured. Eroticism" is what is left after this excessive pillaging. It is no coincidence that it focuses on the biological facet of its praxis: 'sexuality' and its 'organs' are the remnant of the desiring, what spoliation has failed to destroy, or rather what it must cede to us in order to perpetuate itself - just as we leave the hens a few eggs to incubate so that the henhouse can repopulate. And the laws governing the sexual order insist all the more on the natural being permitted and the perverse being forbidden, since the natural is the obedient practice of this eros-producer, whereas the perverse marks a restart of desire-for-itself. Perversion is banned as a danger to the reproduction of order, to desire under order, to the capital of desire under order, which it disembowels and restores to the desiring body.

The most remarkable thing is that there are two perversions: that of the rich and that of the poor. The first is simply an oddity in the practice of power; the rich man is a desirer, a capitalist and a nullifier of other people's desires; his elitist perversion does not endanger order, and justice leaves him in peace. The dangerous pervert, on the other hand, is the inferior, the exploited, the innumerable, because

To desire while enslaved is precisely to threaten power, and to take it back. (In Sade's novels, certain characters who are victims or servants - Juliette's childhood, moreover - are thus incorporated into the class of masters, when they have proved their irreducible nature as desiring beings, their cruelty, their hatred of virtue, their contempt for men; there is nothing revolutionary about this reversal, of course, since it is the emancipation of a few slaves, admission into an oligarchy and its privileges, who over-exploit an unchanged order).

The pervert is the neutered evil, as we always say. He is the one who still

has and produces desire. Homosexuals often regard heterosexuals as "cripples", not because the latter prefer the other sex to their own, but because they *overdo it*: on the pretext of loving women, their desire is to buy one and lock themselves in forever. This ultimate ordering of desire, this over-ordering, this entrenchment of sex in the castrating complementarity of the couple (it's the sword between Tristan and Isolde lying side by side, the sign of the annulment-mutilation pact between the sexes: I (am) (only) man/I (am) (only) woman), this is what the pervert does not forgive the normal. There are furious prisoners and docile ones; strong-minded recruits and disciplined soldiers; lazy slaves and sycophants: in short, those who, under the thumb of power, do barely enough, and those who do too much; those who rebel and those who ask for more. Perverts and normals. Enemies, because the latter offer the chaster their stump of a penis so that he can shave it again, and denounce those around them who keep too long a piece of it, the nomads, the desirous outlaws, the perverts without power.

Be that as it may, we are still subject to this social order whose foundations and strength lie in desire that has been hijacked, capitalised and redistributed. Our libido is this waste or dividend of desire that the system gives us to manage with imperative instructions - love, marry, family, buy, enclose. Recovering this libidinal debris and using it for ourselves would seem the least we could do: but this art of accommodating leftovers, this derisory right, remains a utopia - which we call sexual freedom.

Even when free, this waste is immediately reinvested in a sub-market, a sub-economy of selfish desire, where conventional values of the desirable play the main role, in a rite of simulated appropriation, me against you. Underneath the great economy of desire-capital is the petty trade of private libido. An apparently dual microstructure that is in reality

triangular, sadistic, with a pettiness and cruelty that are parodies of the power of Above.

Sexual freedom within an unchanged socio-political system is an illusion. We make love 'freely', but we continue to use the same desire patterns that defined the object and the pleasure derived from it in the prison and commodity eros. So much so that this freedom, for homosexuals, minors or women, is nothing more than a right to follow the rules of the game once reserved for the fathers of the family. And homosexual desire will persist in reproducing the heterosexual order. The idealistic sword that separates Tristan and Isolde also creates the male faggot and the female faggot, the active and the passive, the adult and the child, the voyeur and the watched, the rogue and

the madwoman, the little gigolo and the old hustler, the Arab and his 343 sluts (1), the lonely penis and the 'disgusted' hand that wrings it out.

The vocabulary of the letter I quoted at the beginning sums up this libidinal orthodoxy: for there to be love there must be desire... and for desire to harmonise with love there must be beauty... those who should always remain alone, masturbating with disgust when desire becomes too strong... you beautiful people... From the outset, these beliefs set the trap.

On the contrary, one would hope that an Undesirable would discover the ideological deceptions of the sex market and, turned evil, adopt a sadistic tactic of diversion: that is, after all, what most people do. There are many such tactics and, as we shall see, the *Social Scourge's* response to his correspondent proposes a rather burlesque one.

Sadian, i.e. where a value external to the desirable is introduced as a third party to modify the meaning of desire. Ugly faggot plus money versus gigolo. Social power (nice car, fashionable job, connections...) versus pushy simpleton. Ugly loser plus big cock, versus pretty willy with a complex. Mister with a bag of sweets versus schoolgirls, etc. Each additional seduction depends on the group in which it is exercised and the values that are recognised within it, of course (many queers give themselves a simplistic "added value" in the form of chatty trousers).

1. See *Rapport contre la normalité*, p. 104, or the document 'Arabes et pédés' in the latest issue of *Recherches*.

It functions in the sexual market as a value of attraction, of capture, which reverses or profoundly alters the relationship between the desirer and his object. Millions of heterosexual couples are based on this: in the eyes of a girl to be married (Prince Charming aside), old age plus glory, ugliness plus character, stupidity plus a young executive's mask are always beautiful.

What's unusual is that homosexuality, which is in principle instructed, is also organised according to this pattern; but the additional values are less abstract. Even for an hour or five minutes of mating, desire remains a small viaticum that you don't invest haphazardly; it has to bear fruit as much as possible, be a good investment. Otherwise, it's better to abstain, for fear of being eaten.

In the same way, the streets offer the touching spectacle of young boys shyly leafing through nippy magazines, fishing out a few image souvenirs and then scurrying home, sullen, hasty, full of hatred for the dirty young, dirty old and dirty old who would dare to brush up against them and drag them off the straight and narrow path of pre-marital onanism. They've made a religion of their sex and, apart from the missals on the newsstands, they don't bat an eyelid. Seminarians of the sexual order, waiting for the distant day of inconnex, they are nevertheless hardly less amiable than the biggest fuckers among us, who keep their hole free of intruders as if there were a hymen to be plucked.

Young bourgeois males, it is said, denude themselves at a much later age than working-class boys; this is explained by the early social integration of the latter and the prolonged infantilisation of the former. But the young bourgeois, whether revolutionary or not, maintains a sacred body image, in which sex is intended for the acquisition of the most serious of all goods, and not as an expense. You rub your belly to appease the hunger that comes from saving, you wait for the chosen one, you tinker with a smelly nipple the way you make mummies by macerating corpses. This piggy bank in the young bourgeois's fly, and the hammer to break it that he will only put in the hands of a "good" object (he thinks), sanctify his imago, his individuality, the precious repressions that constipate his face, button up his backside and inflate his being with ideals. The popular sexual economy, at least at this age, is much more concerned with spending money, and sex is not as important.

There's no point being noble about it, you don't get to add to your soul by strangling your penis.

Hesitations, slowness, contempt, loneliness, tension and the extraordinary visual aggression sent back at you by those you're looking at (don't touch me with your eyes, you creep) make these places the terror of tender souls and the infinite boredom of *perverts*. Bars or gardens, hours go by before a faggot decides to pick up a partner similar to those he saw and scorned on his way in. The sexual choice must remain a great event, a gain on the stock market, a good bottle of wine on a holiday, mass, madness, a holiday, danger, the unexpected election of a superman. You're someone who doesn't make love (who's worthy of approaching me?), a walking refusal, and you only give in to the unthinkable expenditure of desire if a semi-sacred object appears - miraculously, since such a boy is always handsome "like a God". This God resembles the God of Robinson Crusoe: it is the God of the triangle of capitalist appropriation. But here the Fridays are looking for Robinsons, with an island around them and the same Bible.

This sparing of desire helps to shrink, petrify and stereotype the categories of the desirable. Fags try to get inside them themselves and adopt a flirtatious uniform, halfway between the glitter of nude dancers and the diving gear of scuba divers, because it is both what gives them the right to look and what protects them from any pejorative gaze, by its strict conformity to what is "done". Fear of looking like the men in grey, those short-haired, ill-aged people whose knickers don't even show their sex, and who dare to show themselves where we are.

Eroticism strangled by the restrictive rituals of a 'clan desirable' favours either this desirable-object or a desirable-agi. In the first case, there's no end to the search for someone who's enough of this and that; the cult of the sacred partner (sacred because of the model-signs we want to read in them and copy ourselves) is more important than the acts of love it may entail.

In the second case, more concretely but less hatefully sadistic, it's the act that counts first - random, unfortunately, since, monomaniacs of a 'pleasure' to the exclusion of others, so many queers, more erotically crippled than the heterosexuals themselves, are like Lichtenberg's knife: boys without dicks whose buttocks are missing.

These specificities of pleasure are seen as legitimate, we have the right to love one thing and hate another - and sexual freedom means, it seems, letting you be made up of just five fingers or a lower lip or a triple arse mounted on legs with red heels. Surely, but the trouble is that these preferences are rarely choices of enjoyment; it's rather what's left when you censor your body and that of the other - in favour of a region, an act or a role where not only substitute desiring activities overlap but also all the evaluations - moral, psychological, aesthetic... - of the behaviour you've adopted. - of the behaviour we have adopted. Restrictive acts of love are therefore the result of self-repression; those that are practised and those that 'disgust' are the subject of a categorical assessment (it's wrong to be fucked, the person who 'bites the pillow' loses face) or an empirical assessment (it's dirty, it tickles, it moves the bed too much) that ends the debate. Anyone who refuses to do something is, above all, someone who doesn't want to be the one to do it. On a more puerile level, people are still teased today for not daring to go naked and for retiring to bed with the lights off and the sheets pulled down to their necks: I find it hard to believe that this is a 'choice'. I find it hard to believe that this is a 'choice'. Similarly, some people, in clandestine and indiscriminate conditions (piss-houses, bushes, saunas), have the kind of boldness that they no longer have face-to-face, forced to assume what they are doing. Strange behaviour from

apologists for the right to be.

So the homosexual market, far from being anarchic, is characterised by the variety, omnipotence and incoherence of the self-repressions that clash and seek to combine. The relentless ritualisation of desire, behaviour and object perception makes it without doubt the rarest erotic trap that men have ever set for themselves. One suspects that a queer who respects all this doesn't make love very often, especially as this inner censorship is coupled with social and police repression. We're closer to a painful caricature of ignorant heterosexuality than to free eroticism. The desire (not free, but privileged and hyperbolic) that Sade depicts is, as we have seen, dynamic, gestural, situational and active. He consumes his object, he enjoys it rather than having it. Appropriation of the object is an unnecessary premise of the act of desire; it is its abusive pleasure, not its end.

On the contrary, the homosexual relationship seems to be based on appropriation without enjoyment. It is, one might say, a Tristanism. Its purest example is represented by male prostitution: the gentlemen's gigolo does not necessarily offer his client sexual services, but his mere presence or, if you prefer, his tolerance of the homosexual's presence.

He is not required to be consumable, to take part in a sexual act: all he has to do to be paid is to be the *image* of the consumable, and as well as possible.

We can see that sexual hunger simplifies eroticism: desire here becomes the desire to approach the desirable, and it is content with this symbolic transgression. The heterosexual boy, if he's 'handsome' and young, also serves as a distanced object. He is obviously the one that the homosexual desires incessantly, since there are more heteros than homos to be seen everywhere, to be known and to be associated with. Desirable and perceived as such according to the simplest of aesthetic codes, the "normal boy" soon enters a twisted and much more complex perception. The only way to explain why queers, who like ordinary boys, behave and dress in such a way that they resemble them so little, is probably to say that these homosexuals model their appearance on the heterosexual appearance, to establish themselves as possible 'complements' of the one who will never sleep with them. The habitus of certain pederasts brings together the signs of two contradictory intentions: to show off and promote themselves in front of their colleagues, thus seducing them, but crushing them (they are rivals); and at the same time to be the possible object of the heterosexual, seducing him too, but crushing himself underneath. The homosexual market suffers from this competition from the

unapproachable heterosexual, who is more present than anyone else and who dictates the "homosexual habitus" that fags adopt for themselves, thereby disqualifying themselves as objects of desire in the eyes of each other.

There's no point in prolonging the unworkable analysis of the inextricable incoherences of homosexual desire: the essential element that emerges in this labyrinth is the inability of this eroticism to live under the order of the heterosexual world, which is much more than a repressive context: it is the source of the myths, particularisms, limits and prohibitions experienced within homosexuality itself, and which make it almost impracticable or falsified a priori.

Homosexual passion for hyperstereotyped objects and situations is a manifestation of this absolute prevention of desire, *its focus on erotic images dictated solely by the difficulty of being*. This behaviour of compensation and sacralisation - so similar to that of the adolescent virgin - obviously expresses frustration, first and foremost and always. The social status of the homosexual, a minority and more or less persecuted, and the unbridgeable gay/straight boundary explain this endemic frustration: but they hardly justify their consequences being ratified or introjected,

aggravated a hundredfold by the homosexuals themselves. I was talking about the zeal of normal people to obey: now we have to admit that fags, too, do too much.

Or not enough:

... many of us think that physical appearance or age are of no importance, because what counts is inner beauty: a generous, rebellious guy (or girl) who wears the idea of revolution on his face can't be ugly. He doesn't need make-up, he's got sunshine on his face. Like money or virility, beauty is a bourgeois criterion, ugliness doesn't exist, what does exist is the stupidity of those who make physical appearance a value.

The above is the best of the *Social Scourge's* response to the letter I quoted.

The idealistic solution to the misfortune of being ugly remains invariable, as we read in letters from the heart: devote yourself to others, be generous, enrich your soul, the important thing is inner beauty, love of neighbour will transfigure you. It's possible that the altruist, rewarded by the benefits he or

she dispenses, will see his or her behaviour change from shady and odourless to "radiant" and stinky. This 'sun on the façade' doesn't take away the ugliness of the sunny person: he displays, as a third part of this unattractive appearance and to compensate for it, a clan desirability. Assuming that the "idea of revolution" is the miracle cure that erases obesity, the marshmallow dick and the dirty coil, it is merely a new code that tells the desires of the group what they can choose to be well invested.

Inner beauty" is the most adulterated expedient of all: it is applied, or at least postulated, in Catholic, patriotic or obscurantist heterosexual circles. External or internal, it's always about beauty, which a "bourgeois criterion" helps to define; and too bad for the ugly type that a revolutionary flirt wouldn't deem "rebellious and generous" enough to be consumable - even though "there's no such thing as ugly". To be homosexual and to conform your desire to such an ambiguous code is in fact to regress towards a Christianity that blesses beautiful souls and exorcises demons - and to share, with a faith that's better tempered than ever, the "bullshit of those who make physical appearance a value".

In the game of the Undesirable, there is the intention to offer oneself as desirable, morally beautiful through the suffering that one endures; the spurned lover exhibited the extent of his passion, that was its market value: to say that another is desirable was to give him such a gift that one obviously had to be paid in return. The person who desires feels that he is making an expenditure, and it is this expenditure that is supposed to provoke an identical expenditure in the recipient.

I likened the behaviour of L'Indésirable to that of Tristan because of an episode in the medieval poem: the hero, banished from the court of King Mark, disguises himself as a madman, becomes ugly and returns to the court, where Iseult is. In front of her and the king, he plays the buffoon and mixes his insane speech with memories shared by himself and Iseult, so that she recognises him without the king noticing. But Iseult, confused, doesn't understand either; she doesn't see her Tristan under this awful man, despite what her confidante, Brenguain, assures her:

*Brenguain respont: "I think for right
"that iço Tristan mëismes soit.
"- Ne Vest, Brenguain, car cist est laiz
"et hideus et molt contrefaiz,
"and Tristan is so alinieiz,*

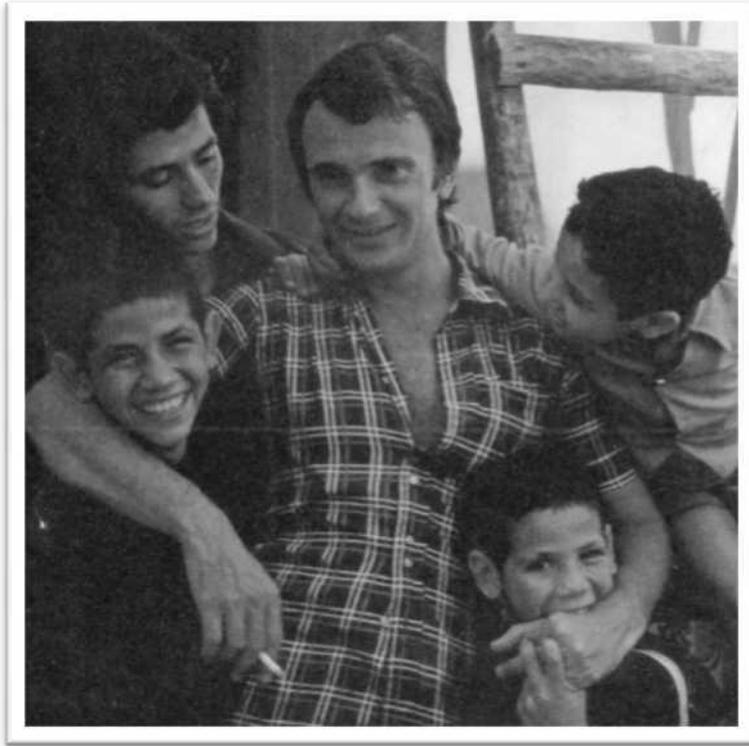
"bels hom, bien fait, molt ensenez..."

The handsome Tristan has mimicked the ugly in order to be identified as the desirable and the excellent. It's an impossible tactic, because you get lost in it and can't find the other person - who, for his part, doesn't see any of the values that would capture his own desire. You're like a customer who, having got the wrong change, offers a bag of sweets to the whores. In his madness, Tristan lists the ways to hunt with birds of prey: but the means no longer match the game, which makes King Mark (the real hunter, and the real desirer of the triangle, because he holds the power) laugh a lot:

*"... of my haughty little falcons
"I'll take the goats and fallow deer;
"d'espervier prendrai le goupil
"that is the gentle tail worm;
"d'esmerillon will take the hare,
"de hohel the cat and the goat..."*

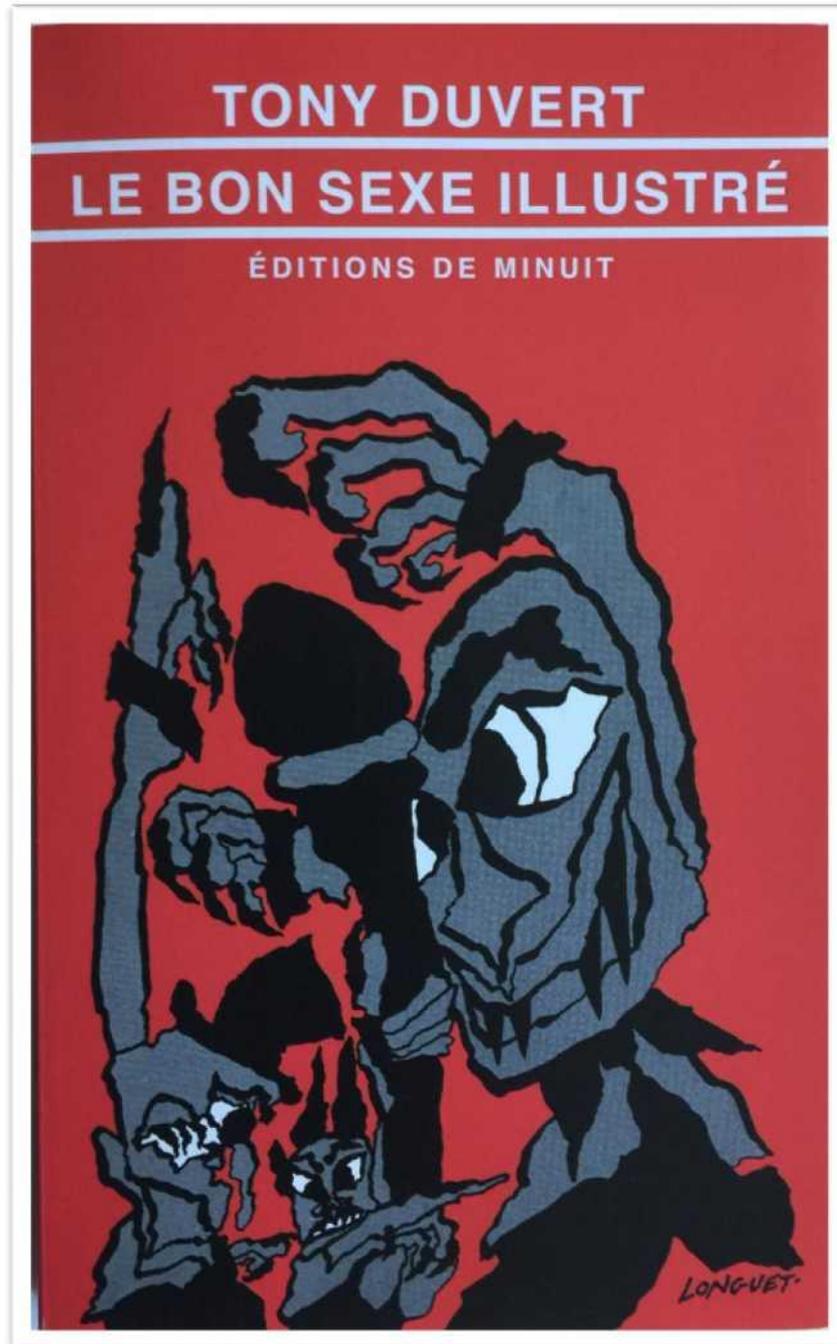
Li roi s'en rit à chascun mot, que moult ot bon déduit del sot.

Tristan is a "failed sadian". But the Sadian morality to which this Tristanism refers remains the optimal state of the desiring situation: the undesirable mimics it, and the desirable or the powerful exploit it. We can only speak of freedom of desire once this market and the social structures that determine it have been destroyed. In an unchanged system, on the contrary, 'sexual freedom' will only further increase the share of some to the detriment of others, multiply the diversions of desire that already exist, accelerate and panic the relationship between the false master and the false object, substitute property for enjoyment, and petrify the economy of lack that is the foundation of the individuals we are. We only know how to live a residual and particularised eroticism; we need discrimination, exclusions, aesthetic values, prohibitions and imaginary objects. Perverse or normal, the liberalisation of mores will enable us to live a little better within these limits, and sometimes to play with them; but we can be sure that it will not be enough to abolish them, and that the desiring body will remain the exploiter, the undesirable or the exploited.



Morocco, 1974.

PUBLICATION OF THE *ILLUSTRATED GOOD SEX* -
January 1974



Source: 2016 edition.

WRITING THE *DIARY OF AN INNOCENT MAN* IN MARRAKECH - 1974

Duvert has been in Marrakech since December 1973, with Jean-Pierre Tison. He met many boys during what he considered to be the best period of his life. He wrote Journal d'un innocent, recounting these experiences. He did not return to Paris from Morocco until 7 December 1974. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

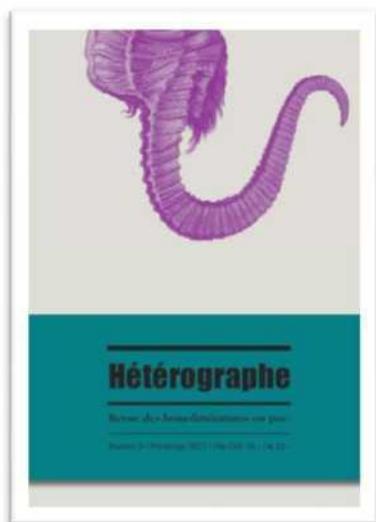
I wanted to talk about birds, but now is not the time. In spring we saw storks; they were grey and thin, like the dead branches of the nests they build on certain ramparts, far to the south. Later, they stretched out their sad wings and, slowly, with the sound of an old, disjointed fan, they took to the skies.

There was a time of careme in the city and I started to write. It's winter in a world without seasons; my friends desert me; life is heavier. The sunny days pass and we don't celebrate any of them. Then, at dusk, life can resume. The eaters are already lining the benches of the open-air gargotes and receiving the bowls in which the chickpea soup is poured. It's a liquid purée, spicy, mixed with lentils, tangy with tomatoes, with broad beans and vermicelli - it smells of roasted grain, it's good, floury and strong, it burns. I'm in a house that's inti-

Source: Original numbered edition.

LETTER TO MICHEL LONGUET - 12 March 1974

Source: *Hétérographe, revue des homolittératures ou pas: issue 9, Spring 2013.*



AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER

Tony Duvert (1945-2008) explored the erotic imagination in powerful, deeply felt novels published by Éditions de Minuit (*Récidive*, 1967; *Paysage de Fantaisie*, 1973 Prix Médicis; *L'Île atlantique*, 1979; *Journal d'un innocent*, 1976). A cult author who was both adored and hated - especially for his views associating homosexuality, pederasty and paedophilia - he spent the last fifteen years of his life as a writer

and editor.

of his life in almost total isolation. The unpublished letter we present, written to his friend Michel Longuet in 1974, shows us a more playful side of this extraordinary writer.

Marrakech, 12 March

My dear friend,

I'm very envious of the wonderful holidays you're having in Paris, because it's the most beautiful city in the world and the French women are all pretty and young and well-dressed, and all they think about is love. But I have to stay here, where the sun and fatigue (there's not even an underground) are overwhelming. It's a horrible city, full of trees full of insects full of germs; and not only are Moroccan women, when they're not veiled, neither young nor pretty, but they're inaccessible - so much so that (I'm ashamed to admit it to you) the boys have to make love to each other. In the street, everywhere, they call you: psst! psst! fuck-fuck! - schoolchildren mime. I hardly dare to set foot outside, yet I'm forced to submit to these abominable customs because my friends here insist on sharing my bed, showing off their manly parts, acting like boys or girls with the same shamelessness.

Marakech, 12 mars.

Mon bien cher ami,

J'envisage beaucoup les merveilleuses vacances que tu passes à Paris, car c'est la plus belle ville du monde et les Françaises sont toutes jolies et jeunes et bien habillées et elles ne pensent qu'à l'amour. Tandis que moi je suis obligé de rester ici, où l'on est écrasé de soleil et de fatigue (il n'y a même pas de métro). C'est une ville horrible, pleine d'arbres pleins d'insectes pleins de microbes; et non seulement les Marocaines, quand elles ne sont pas voilées, ne sont ni jeunes ni jolies, mais elles sont inaccoutumées - si bien que (j'ai honte de te l'avouer) les garçons aiment faire l'amour entre eux. Dans la rue, partout, ils vous appellent: post! post! fuck-fuck! - même les écoliers. J'ose à peine mettre le nez dehors, et cependant je suis contraint de me soumettre à de moeurs abominables car mes amis d'ici insistent pour partager mon lit, exhiber leurs parties viriles, faire le garçon ou la fille avec la même impudence. Et si je refusais, Dieu sait les rancunes que j'aurais à subir. La pire, dans cette ville, c'est qu'elle ne connaît aucun repos: matin, midi et soir il faut y passer. J'ai très peu pu à réparer ma colonne vertébrale qui se liquéfie bientôt, vivée par toute la semence que mes amis, sous prétexte de koudrek, me font jaspiller sans merci. Alors je rêve aux élégantes Parisiennes avec lesquelles tu vas danser dans les night-clubs. Un jour, je veux aller à Paris moi aussi et connaître enfin cette vie étincelante et voluptueuse. Mais aurai-je encore du force? J'ai le devant et le derrière sans un état à faire pitié.

Qu me manques affreusement et,

And if I refused, God knows what grudges I'd have to bear. The worst

thing about this debauchery is that there's no rest: morning, noon and night you have to go at it. I'm very afraid that at this rate my spine will soon be liquefied, drained by all the semen that my friends, under the pretext of tenderness, make me waste relentlessly. So I dream of the elegant Parisian women you go dancing with in the nightclubs. One day, I want to go to Paris too and finally experience that glittering, voluptuous life. But will I still have the strength? My front and back are in such bad shape that I feel sorry for myself.

I miss you terribly and, since you left, the letters I wrote you were so wet with tears that I had to give up sending them to you. Your friendship, on the other hand, was full of respect for me and never stooped to the infamous caresses that are the rule here. How I wish I could find such pure affection again!

What else can I tell you? I don't want to overwhelm you by describing one by one the details of my daily life. My windows open onto a garden full of birds so noisy that they keep me awake in the morning, and so insolent that they enter my dining room to steal the crumbs from my meals.

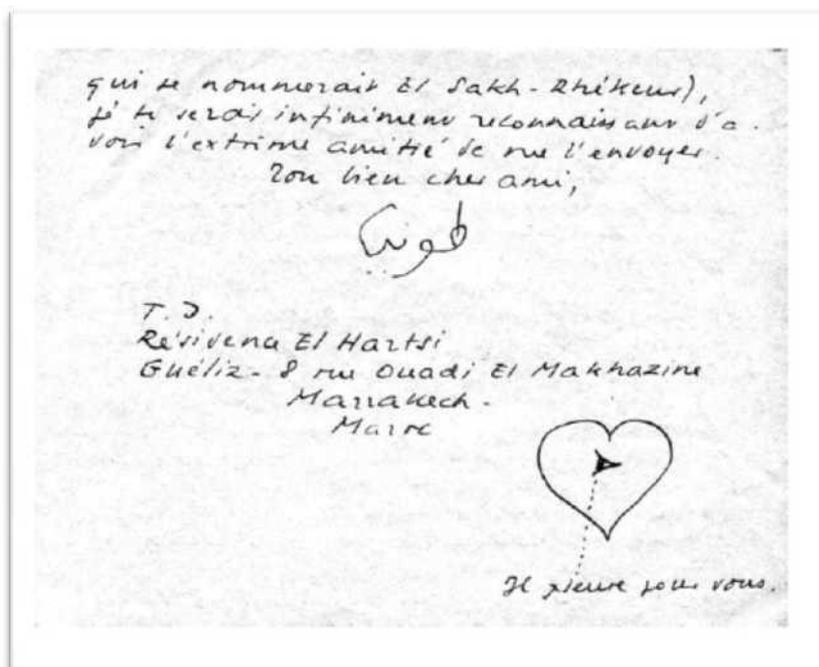
Between the trees, I can see the Atlas Mountains - high blue and white mountains that send a chill wind down on us. I have a nice house, but it's badly guarded because anyone can come in and out; and, as many single Europeans live in the same house, there are always Moroccan boys or children waiting at the door to be invited inside: when I pass them, I put on a stern face and they don't bother me. Despite the comforts I enjoy, I sleep very badly, because I often have to keep certain friends at home who linger too long after dinner; and when there are three of us sharing a bed, we are not at ease. It's a good thing they're very young and not very corpulent. Strange detail: I have a second bed in the other room, but nobody wants to sleep there.

I walk around a lot, melancholically and with my eyes downcast; often teenagers come up to me and pull me aside to share their distress in love; or maybe it's children whose curiosity is aroused by my Christian foreskin - and of course I can't disdain this lively pleasure of learning. But how sadly I return from these walks! No sooner am I home than the visits begin; I can't stop undressing and getting dressed again, my clothes are already all wrinkled from being rubbed. It's impossible to be alone, to meditate, to work on beautiful things. Always the fornication, the chatter, the intruders. I can't stand this city any more.

That's how I feel. My dear friend, I want to hear all about your stay in Paris. I want to know everything there is to know about this metropolis of finance

Fine arts and pleasure. And if by any chance you could find a postcard representing La Touréfle (I have also been told of a wonderful mosque called El Sakh-Rhékeur), I would be infinitely grateful if you would be so kind as to send it to me.

Your dear friend Tony (in Arabic)



Letter from Tony Duvert, 12 March 1974.

LETTER TO MADELEINE CHAPSAL - March 1974 ?

Source: *Retour à Duvert*, Gilles Sebhan, 2014, page 70.

Happiness in Marrakesh is not about flirting, savagery or the solitude of the "fouteur"; on the contrary, it's about a strange and omnipresent sociability of pleasure; it takes hold of you, opens up to you and engulfs you. How can you go back, put on again the censorship, the coldness, the quarters-to-self that you ignore here? It's a tough city, though, a society whose inequalities, miseries and obsessions with profit caricature our own a hundredfold; but there remains that disconcerting innocence of the people, their taste for being together, a generosity that almost makes you feel uncomfortable. In short, I'm not in paradise at all, but I've never lived or seen so much living.

ALEJANDRO - THE BODY OF DESIRE - March 1974

Duvert met the painter Ramon Alejandro in 1973, through Michel Longuet. Source: Text accompanying the catalogue of the Ramón Alejandro exhibition at the Arta gallery in Geneva in March 1974 and Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

The first glimpses of Alejandro's paintings were of torture machines. Then other glances evaded this impression; they pretended not to be taken in by it, and found a pretext: the machinismo of the painted object implied no action, no movement, it had no verisimilitude, and the machine was therefore harmless and illusory.

They wanted it to be dualised, divided, endowed with a 'deceptive' appearance and a secret 'truth'; they studied it in the same way that idealism (of the religions, metaphysics or psychoanalysis) interprets every being, every act, every object: by tearing apart their physicality, crumbling their surface, inflicting a reduction that arranges them within the system that they were disturbing too much.

Once the gratuitousness of Alejandro's machinic architectures had been postulated, all we had to do was choose the metaphor to which they seemed most suited - as if the object captured and annulled by critical discourse had a right to exist only at the price of falsifying meaning. And as if these canvases pointed, with unacceptable obviousness, to what no cultural discourse ever dares to name, for fear of disqualifying itself and confessing its impostures, its castrating fury and its miserable larceny.

This unnameable thing, this absolutely-present thing in Alejandro's paintings, this absolutely-absent thing in the discourse on Art, let's give it a name, a nickname, a pseudonym rather: desire. But it could just as easily be called a or x.

First of all, we must avoid saying that the machinic architecture of Alejandro's canvases is "gratuitous", and that their meaning is to be sought in some region that they designate without constituting it. Admittedly, these machines are not tools; nothing in their mechanism is organised to produce an object external to them, a work or an effect of which we have any notion. However, the logic of their formal construction indicates the irreducible production that they accomplish: that of their own existence, imperious and one. This impassive self-engendering, where the parts combine with each other only to create themselves, nested, screwed, pegged, coupled,

is not a secret to be taken by surprise: on the contrary, it is what the canvas wants to show, in its threats, its seductions, its rigour. The "alejandroid" (Bernard Noël) is a permanent publication of himself. It is the perfect, eternal narrative of its own genesis.

Not that we can limit it to the abstraction of a "pictorial discourse": it is a painting, a canvas, a concrete object, a living object, turned outwards, it is a spectacle. In other words, in the articulation of its forces in dangerous repose, it is the site of a theatricality - the sado-masochistic modalities of which will perhaps give us the key. So let's accept that Alejandro's objects appear machinic and torturous, and let's try to define what makes them special.

As "instruments of torture", they would first of all have the particularity of being *undecidable*: it would be impossible to say how they would be applied to the bodies they were intended to subdue. What are the dimensions of the machine in relation to those of the spectator? How, facing the canvas, do you imagine yourself fitting between these fangs, in these pincers, in these trapdoors? Should you put your arm, your leg, the tip of a finger, your tongue, your sex, your whole body? Where are the parts that the executioner would operate and those that the victim would suffer? The object cannot be assigned an unequivocal torturing function, and while it does indeed trap the human body, the way it does so is not the same as the instruments used by executioners.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that these instruments of "justice" had an ambiguous functionality. While the usual tools are designed to adapt to the body, to complement it, to multiply or distribute its work, the instruments of torture are, on the contrary, machines of maladaptation. But if, by definition, they are unsuited to the body of the victim, they remain suited to that of the torturer; they transmit work between the one who acts and the one who suffers. It is not, therefore, their mechanical specificity that is responsible for the torture; any tool can act as a relay between the agent and the patient, any object that the torturer diverts from its usual use. And the aberrant manipulation of the object is the only condition for the effect to be produced.

In fact, the instrumentality of the judicial tortures of the past was unnecessary: when you want to make someone suffer horribly, you don't need complicated and monstrous devices. The existence of these devices served a social, ideological and institutional function. It was necessary to hide, to civilise,

The torturer's relationship with his victim, which is a real hand-to-hand combat,

a machine of bodily antagonism of which the instrument of torture is only one part, is rendered abstract. A system of invariable torture rituals and a meticulous code of torments sought to erase the scandalous and excessively carnal aspects of torture. The official executioner and the technical nature of the torture purified a situation where the bodies and their impulses were a little too visible.

The same was true of the evolution in the means of killing those condemned to death. The old axe was later replaced by the guillotine; the old medieval hanging method (in which the executioner sometimes had to sit on the shoulders of the hanged man so that the extra weight could break his neck and finish him off) was replaced by an ingenious trap-door system that killed quickly, discreetly and well. The Quemadero, invented by the Spanish inquisitors, was a sort of vast masonry cauldron where the condemned were locked up during the burning at the stake, and then set on fire underneath and around it. The ultimate refinement of the pyre, this torture, instead of burning the victims, slowly cooked them in their own steam. Unlike the guillotine or "good" hanging, which were intended to be humane, this was a terrible escalation of cruelty. The spectacular horrors of the stake were replaced by an invisible, anonymous and muted action. Such devices were the height of the triumph of the Order, which thus gave itself the means to perpetuate its barbarities by disembodiment.

This concept of "progress" led to the twentieth century not to the end of legal killing, but to the end of public killing. Whether tortured by the police or put to death, it is now in the very clandestinity of criminal acts that the law remains in force.

While institutional machinismo and its secrecy aim to cancel out the corporeality of torture, sado-masochistic instrumentality - the kind we're interested in here - has exactly the opposite function. Sade's work shows this clearly. Any torture has its place in it, but those that are favoured, those that prepare or bring about the orgasm of the Masters, owe their pre-eminence to the sensuality of their invention rather than to the real abomination of the pain they inflict (an area in which any hierarchy seems largely fantastical). Whether a strange device is being made or the threads of moral torture are being woven, in Sade's work, the creation of machinery expresses a desireful relationship with the victim's body. And, sometimes, the torture is simply an excess

A hero with a monstrous member, for example, brings torment and death to his victims by sodomising them - by doing to them the very thing that is the source

of the Masters' pleasure and vitality. As an instrument of torture, the phallus is ambivalent, like the whip or shit. The Sadian enjoys being penetrated by an oversized rod, being flayed by a whip, having excrement poured into his mouth, whereas these treatments are nothing but suffering and horror for non-Sadians. We return to the device of torture as an instrument unsuited to the body that undergoes it: but here this unsuitability is random, and desire alone is the judge. In addition to this, "organic" tortures only interpose tools in the body-to-body relationship between the executioner and the victim, which, far from veiling the corporeality of the violent relationship, are the maximum degree of this corporeality, the tireless and superb act of presence of what the Order censors. Gigantic rods, mythical clitorises, deluge of excrement, blood-curdling whips obstinately express this being of the body.

This is why the most monstrous, the most dangerous machine, first imagined to torture a victim, can produce a spectacle that so inflames the Master that he will want to be a victim in his turn - but he will not die. We understand that the body, here, discovers its reality in the theatricality that the machine confers on it.

The spectacular nature of the institutional tortures - which, when performed in public, never ceased to attract crowds of men and women century after century - was precisely that of bodily excess. The screams, the streams of blood, the mutilations, the flaying, the burns, all meant: a body is here. No more man, no more soul, no more "sex": it was absolute flesh. A fascinating apparition in a society that forbade it, or only allowed it, only to destroy it immediately.

From then on, the erotic imagination can move from this absolute body to the instrument that fleetingly recreates its presence - from the torture victim to the machine. Again in Sade, we don't masturbate thinking about the charms of a pretty girl or a pretty boy, but rather conceive of the tortures, machinic or otherwise, that we intend for them. It's obviously appropriate to torture attractive victims: but it's so that both the victim and the torture exist better. A beautiful face, a beautiful body, are the furthest thing from brute physicality: everything in their perfection signifies something beyond the body, everything represents aesthetic and moral value. The beautiful body is abstract, it is as if denied by itself, placed above its physicality: it says too much,

too many things that belong to a pantheon of Beauty, of Virtue. In short, he is an idealist and a Christian - and often he shows it a little too much. This matter, so completely dematerialised by its appearance, is about to be returned to

matter by torture.

Soiled, whipped, flayed, butchered, screaming, the pretty boy or girl finally becomes a body again. This blurring of their signs reintroduces them to the anonymity of flesh - and their weakness is that they die as a result. They lived only by signifying: they perish as soon as a machine *abuses their meaning*.

The Master's corporeality, on the other hand, has already made this journey, and it has survived; it has replaced signs of value with modes of power. This is why, in Sade, as soon as a victim enjoys instead of suffers and revels in this degradation of her signs, this bringing into the world of an asocial corporeality, she disrupts the scene. The Masters ask themselves: shouldn't the victim be spared, since her body can survive de-inscription? Shouldn't she take her turn among the Masters? The birth of power in the pleasurable throes of submission to the powerful.

The machine of torture becomes a machine of proof. It destroys body-signs, reveals others and marks their advent. In the space of Sadian fiction, the machinery of torture serves to reinvent the bodies that society has hijacked, to bring the corporeal subject back to life in a frenzied fashion. And it is the violence of the Order itself that sadistic power copies, to bring back to itself the bodies that the Order had captured and to stage its desire without measure.

This subversion of Order through sadistic theatricality is exactly what the alejandroids do in pictorial art. A subversion that also combines two times, two gestures, the second of which recomposes and abolishes the first.

This is the first stage, that of capturing the values of the Order - in this case those of Art. The object is irreproachably, 'academically' *beautiful*; its architecture and perspectives are admirably mastered, its symmetries, balance, proportions and lighting seem those of an ideal model ideally copied - as if from time to time a perfect object from nowhere materialised in Alejandro's studio. All that is needed to represent this unknowable object is material

The brush leaves no more marks than there are fingerprints in the sky.

And, over the years, the painter's style has become even more refined and subtle, the tones brighter and more radiant like flesh without substance, the layout less dramatic, the contours softer, the aggressive attributes lessened or disappeared, as if their hardness and emphasis had become incongruous; the object fogs over with a porous luminosity, no longer part of our universe.

In a certain sense, however, he is entirely part of it, since he deliberately and cruelly combines all the sensitive exquisites of official Culture. It is painting to the point of parody, skill to the point of nightmare, balance to the point of delirium. But it is essential that these canvases be beautiful - just as it is essential that the victims Sade subjects to the terrible theatre of his desire be beautiful.

The sadian hero doesn't bring just anyone into his boudoir of torment: it's invariably the prettiest girl or the prettiest boy in the world, with the most pleasant face in the world, the freshest youth, the chubbiest, pinkest flesh, the cutest buttocks, the most civil manners, the most delicate soul, the purest virtue, the prettiest life in the world or the prettiest cunt. Not a layer of sugar is missing from these adorable confections that the Marquis loves to transform into bloody, panting, shitty debris.

These destructions consume an enormous quantity of young people, but it doesn't matter; they have no existence of their own and, as fundamental as their collective role in the Sadian game is (they are Beauty, Grace, Nobility, Virtue, God himself), these extras, considered one by one, are interchangeable. And since we're talking about writing here, all it takes is one sentence to refill the harems of young men and women decimated by a night of orgies. The novel allows pretty girls and pretty boys to grow there like weeds, always ready to be mown down, in order to constantly feed the sadistic act of destruction.

The same gesture of destruction, in pictorial terms, cannot use such means. Here, the space of representation ensures a priori the permanence of the gesture; but the desire, power and plastic invention that will consume the ideal values of the exquisite object must simultaneously create and abolish this space.

object, in a dialectic in which the canvas will be the operator, the work and the place. The theatricality of the desiring representation will have no sequence, no duration; atemporal, it will have to produce the totality of its acts in one fell swoop.

It's as if Alejandro's paintings present the image of a stopped drama - not interrupted, but immobilised at the maximum point of its tensions, and beyond any possible origin or denouement.

These spatial dramas cannot be described: it's impossible to *depict* such a work, to take it apart, to reinvent its history, to decipher its symbolism. Freud,

attempting to interpret the singular pose of Michelangelo's *Moses*, could only create a narrative in which Moses' posture would take its place, like a snapshot, and as if the being of stone were not a sculpture but the equivalent of a Viennese bourgeois, who could be psychoanalysed at will. To do so was to take the singularities of Moses as artistic flaws, unjustifiable and scandalous faults, deviances - symptoms. But, since there was no question of accusing an infinitely respected artist, all that remained was to cobble together a rationality in which the irrationality of the work would take its place; to unravel its mysteries; to lengthen by a before and an after this object that was pure present. So we can say that this gesture of *Moses* is beginning, that another is coming to an end, that another expresses that the character has thought this and that it is going to happen that way. Psychologised rather than analysed, the sculpture is no more than a moment, very strangely chosen by Michelangelo, in the story of Moses coming down from Sinai. And the work is "elucidated" by Freudian anecdote, in the same way that the *Last Judgement* was "rehabilitated" by a bunch of pants by a cockroach clergy.

In truth, Alejandro's paintings are tempting psychologising commentaries; their sculptural objects, though strange and inhuman, lend themselves to all manner of anthropocentric analysis. But, through the machines that the body inspires, is it Man who should be rediscovered? In the iconoclasies that an artist indulges in, should we be recomposing and admiring the values and meanings on the ruins of which his work is built?

Such a reduction would lead us, for example, to interpret the attributes and appendages with which most alejandroids are equipped in terms of sexual symbolism. And once these teeth and spikes 'become' phalluses, once these keyhole orifices and radiating eyes 'become' 'phalluses', once these appendages 'become' 'phalluses', once these appendages 'become' 'phalluses', once these appendages 'become' 'phalluses'.

anuses or vulvas, etc., there are only two miserable ways of looking at the object. Either we reconstruct a vague humanoid silhouette from this sexual centrality, using all the forms of the canvas - and it's like looking for the representation of 'expressive' faces and caricatures in the clouds or patches of wallpaper. Or, using this masculine/feminine symbolism - the matrix of a host of other dichotomies - we can build an erotic cosmology, which has never served to do anything other than legitimise a very material and despicable sexual order, with which Alejandroids have no relationship whatsoever.

In fact, if Alejandro's works make intensive use of the values and symbols

of a culture that is now moribund, it is neither an assent to its values, nor a simple parody, nor a collage or ironic plastering of identifiable quotations on incomprehensible objects.

Rather, it seems, the work explicitly incorporates the reference points it goes beyond, the boundaries it has transgressed. Inventing the plastic language of a nameless corporeality, it recovers for its own use the signs and symbols by which the censored of desire survived within the order as a vestige. And the work restores this vestige to its place in a global statement of what society had cursed. The object thus created can no longer be broken down into fragments that are legible on the one hand (these vestiges) and illegible on the other. If the machine is made up of organs that combine, they are not pieces amalgamated together, but spatial moments of an indivisible architecture.

And this is also why these machines are a-functional: their parts do not have to be linked together to produce a material effect that can be transposed into the universe they deny; nor do they have to be put into action, since they are already, or at last, pure action.

In this way, the relationship between these canvases and the prevailing culture, whether pictorial or philosophical, takes the form of a relentless, specifically Sadian reactivation of everything that this culture had hijacked, trimmed away and consigned to a museum and a lexicon of "gratuitous" value - that is, in reality, commodified and desexualised. The cultural capture effected by the alejandroids is like a rebirth: not of "Man", but of what men prevented from existing.

This reappearance, at once aggressive and sovereign, impassive and powerful, remains to be clarified as to why it borrows a machinic specificity.

I have shown, using Sade as an example, the erotic relationship that can exist between torturous machinismo and the human body as apprehended by desire. This relationship requires three terms: the torturer, the victim and the instrument. But this triangle is, in fact, the extension, the multiplication of a single term, which is the executioner, the Master. Everything comes from him, everything goes to him, the machine is his organ, the victim is his body, the master/machine is a block of desiring functioning.

Can we assume that Alejandro has the same relationship between his perception of the body, the pictorial gesture and the work? There are several possible answers. Firstly, Alejandro did not once paint a machine: the number

of machinic representations, their extreme diversity, the necessity and accomplishment of each of them prove that they cannot be assimilated to mere traces of a phantasmatic functioning, which would use them as intermediaries, or as a "scenario", to achieve something other than themselves. And if they are the instrument of a metamorphosis, they are, even more, its ultimate fruit. The machine is not, then, a *relay* between two terms outside the canvas (the painter, the body).

Secondly, the canvases are *full*, they fill the eye, they do not present themselves as mysteries to be solved, enigmas to be deciphered, they do not require us in any way to see - or imagine - beside them, beneath them, inside them or beyond them. They make no claim to surreality, let alone surrealism. They are much more than a reference to the petty-bourgeois concept of the "unusual". They emancipate themselves from the pitiful alternative between figuration and abstraction; and they finally ignore all pseudo-contestant 'materialism'. Their magnificence and strangeness are achieved by going beyond the mental categories, divisions and frameworks of our universe. But it is the strangeness of what is integrity and plenitude, and of this paradox: matter "idealised" to become totally matter - removed from human time, human degradation, history.

They are thus what the body, the individualised and named body, cannot be; and man does not inhabit them, because they have, as it were, included him,

absorbed, digested, as the all-powerful but ephemeral model of their own existence.

The drawings Alejandro made in early 1972 are of vital interest here. They shed light on the most ambiguous and delicate point in Alejandro's approach: the link between the idealism of his pictorial invention and the fascination of a sensitive, carnal, degradable and perishable materiality, that of the desiring body. And here we touch on the Christian past that often continues to guide our eroticism and our perception of the body - a past to which the canvas gives, in its play, the very role that Sade gives to God in his.

The human body, according to Alejandro, is characteristic: excessive in form, posture and attributes, it falls short of beauty or ugliness, and is marked not by signs of aesthetic value, but by the evidence that it is flesh. It is the opposite of a "humanist" body, idealised, asexual and perfect. Its balled-up muscles, gnarled limbs, distorted joints, hemmed orifices, organic crudity, the

wear and tear of the sexes, which look as if they have been stretched, wrinkled and chewed by millennia of sodomy, evoke the foul portraits that Sade often drew of his sovereign characters: old, crumpled, smelly, veritable summaries of sexual organicity when it is required to embody Evil.

But this organicity, in Alejandro's drawings, has a completely different function. It establishes the reign of a very particular kind of graphic humour (which is absent from the paintings), combining these 'charged' representations of the human body as a machine of pleasure, with a sacrilegious religiosity made up of grotesque allusions to the mythologies of the Old and New Worlds. The ransacking of values, of the divine and the sacred, is carried out by pejorative and playful beings - as in *The Demolition of the Roman Empire by the Aunts*.

Mythological beings, too (by which I mean fictional and timeless), whose anatomy lends itself to deconstructions and mixtures that are as disruptive to our image of the body as the mixed worlds in which they evolve are iconoclastic. Hybrids of man and alejandroid machine, here are monsters-organ, all intent on coveting some super-male: for example, the wheel of rods and lightning, with the face of a faun, contemplating the buttocks of *The Holder of Lightning*, or the admirable bestiary of organs that makes up *Rain and Fine Weather surrounded by other climatic agents*. This proliferation of

sexes, mouths, nipples, sphincters, clenched feet, phallus-tongues, dancing fingers, multiplies the significant regions of the body, the regions of enjoyment, and we are as if in the permanent time of an orgasm, of a crisis which, far from evolving, from following the wise curve of what begins and what disappears, lashes out in a circle upon itself: and the astonishing thing is the serenity of this fury.

In this way, the artist affirms the inadequacy of the body, expressing and repeating that flesh lacks flesh and that, in order for it to live up to the promise of its appearance, in order for it to live up to the baseness of the desire it inspires, it must become innumerable. Alejandro's human beings are not "expressive", they are neither sad nor happy, neither clever nor stupid, neither old nor young: or rather, they are all of these things, like carnival or theatrical masks. Overloaded with ornaments, headdresses and fanciful objects, they brandish a vast array of attributes of power: but they are nothing more than buffoonish marottes, parodying the sceptre of kings or the thunderbolt of gods - when it's not the cross of our own. They are a mockery of all signs, and it is from the madman and the Fools that they borrow their cruel genius for masquerade.

Here we come back to the theatricality of machines, and certain drawings, such as *Affrontement de l'Orient et de l'Occident*, show us an "alejandroid" in the form of a pastiche. You'd think you'd catch him in the middle of a metamorphosis; he still has his human legs, his hips and his sex: but above that, he's a war machine, bristling with spikes, tubes and articulated hooks, where what is weapon and what is ornament merge. Is this his body, or a cuirass he has donned? Wrapped up in this grotesque finery, he is no longer a warrior, he wants to be war. Yet another affectation of power that turns ridiculous: nothing less aggressive than this leggy paraphernalia confronting a museum Roman, posing on his pedestal like a rather fat model for art students. These are not two soldiers facing each other, they are two exhibitions, two stagings, and the most pitiful seems to be that of the man crushed by his armour, who plagiarises the threatening architecture he could never resemble. A man in metamorphosis? A failed alejandroid, because he is human.

This series of drawings is an exploration of the limits of the body, and of its failure: if the materiality of the desiring body can only live in derision, disguise, masks, impotence and the degradation of the object of desire itself, there is no way out. The ironic theatre of the drawings, which call on the body and its excess to the point of excess, responds to the

He would like to test them, to justify them by asserting, in the name of desire, the need for a superior theatricality that would construct, through the absolute object, what the jungle of madwomen, overmasts and demultiplied organs is frantically pulverising. Where there is delirium, there should be balance; where there is proliferation, there should be unity; where there is obscene exhibition, there should be the seduction of coldness; where there are fragile, anonymous, parodic, insignificant, marked corporalities, cut up into organs incapable of embodying the body, there should be a powerful organism, hypercorporeal architecture, individualised, non-signifying and indestructible: thus Alejandro's machines will be born.

There's nothing surprising about this problematic: it's in line with the ideological constants that govern desire and art in the West. Drawings and canvases show the alternative: representation of a disruptive and frenzied paganism, or idolatry of machine invention; frenzied rapidity of the pen stroke, or slow craftsmanship of a smoothed painting; anarchic piling up of movements and forms, or rigorous calculation of a meticulously perspectivated solid; nervous writing of the ink caricature, or impassivity of colour.

But it's not that simple: the intrusion of 'cursed' art that the 1972

drawings represent in Alejandro's work is not the original stage in a process in which the icy idealism of the canvas would have overcome the barbarity and perversity of erotica. The drawings follow on from a long, 'overmotivated' production of alejandroids; they respond to the exasperation of a desire overly constrained by the cultural demand for an absolute object: and, through them, the artist recognises and inscribes, for the first time, what his proudly sublimated canvases had subjected to them, and which claims its freedom. Who demands, in other words, that the pictorial gesture assimilate more of the censored body, and evolve to bear better witness to it. The dazzle of the drawings, the fascination of a pejorative carnality, the pleasures of the chaos of pleasure are revealed before the eyes and by the hand of the artist, as if to tell him that the game is not up. And we anticipate that, step by step, Alejandro's work will be traversed by other crises of graphic confrontation, in which the purgatory of drawings and the sacredness of machines will contemplate each other - until the latter have exhausted, not destroyed, the former.

The fact that Alejandro's plastic invention belongs to the idealist problematic (perennial art/deadly body, formal sublimation/chaotic hero) is

not as a solution, but as an essential conflict. There is no winner in this conflict; it will be resolved in art itself.

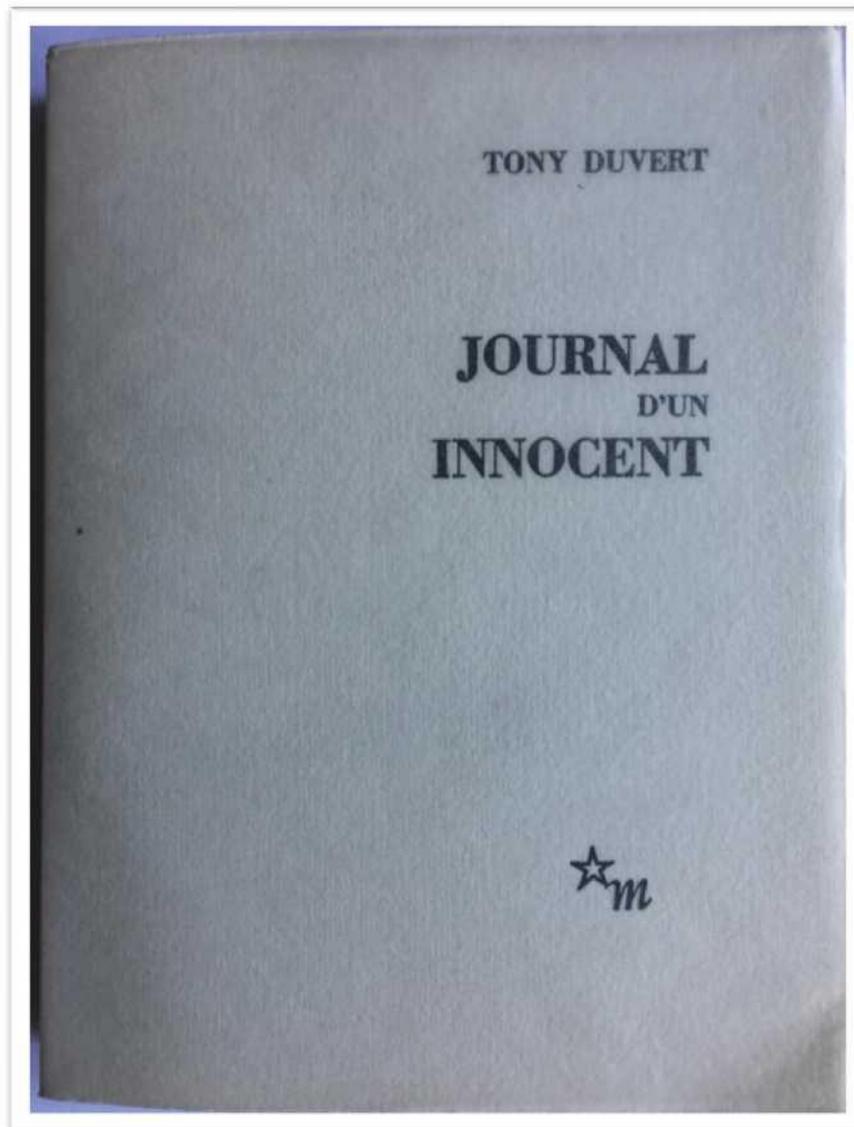
As I have already mentioned, the alejandroids that were contemporary with this crisis or that followed it developed the seductions of the machine object. They erase its hardness, softly polish its surfaces, make the idol more compact and fleshy, and as it gives up its implacable stiffness, its open-worked frameworks, its torturous aggressiveness, it invents a different power, one of greater coherence, rounder beauty, more resolute strangeness, a dynamism in which the tensions of articulated symmetries gradually give way to the inertia of masses in sovereign equilibrium.

Alejandro's initial art hijacked the lukewarm values of installed art within a hyper-servile architecturalism; it was, as in the Sadian schema of torturous desire, Order subverted by a machinic block of obsessive consumption of Order itself. But while the Sadian Master governs this machinismo, which is his mode of eroticizing and corporealising the object, pictorial machinismo seemed, on the contrary, to crush and subjugate the painter's desire like a victim. Recent developments in Alejandro's painting suggest that this situation is now being reversed, as if the alejandroid had been taught a lesson in pleasure and was tending to submit to the artist's reign of desire.

Pleasure, but also the ultimate danger that the painter has made it his duty to confront, if the presence of pleasure is for him the imminence of the perishable. So the work avoids any break with itself, it explores and retouches, canvas after canvas, its old armour, it feels its flesh, extends new spatialities, stages itself as if to enjoy itself. She seeks not brutal energy but extreme density, not bursting but plenitude, and a plenitude that is the fruit not of an asceticism of desire but of its fulfilment. And this extraordinarily tense interplay between the body and art cannot leave any trace inside the painted work without mutilating it, returning it to the human, the stigmatised, the ephemeral: the alejandroid will come into the world to annihilate that which conceived it, and unfold the timeless fictions of its engendering.

JOURNAL OF AN INNOCENT PUBLISHED - January 1976

*In 1976, Duvert was thinking of returning to Morocco. During the summer, he was lodged by his brother Alain in the house in Saint Cyr-sur-Loire, before finding a flat in the old town of Tours, 29 rue Bretonneau, which became his home until 1994. In Tours, Duvert began frequenting the bar Le Petit Fauchoux, a few streets from his home. He stayed there until it closed in 1981. Source: *Retour à Duvert*, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.*



Source: Original numbered edition.

THE EROTISM OF OTHERS - May 1976

Source: Bimonthly magazine *Minuit*, number 19, May 1976. Publication director: Jérôme Lindon. Cover design: Alejandro.



THE EROTICISM OF OTHERS

In the debate provoked by pornographic productions, this sentence was quoted, the author of which I don't know:

- Pornography is the eroticism of others.

It had the merit of using two stupid words intelligently, if not three. It was a word of advice for tolerance: but also a criticism of the discrimination we make in order to keep people apart. what we then boast of "tolerating".

For it could be that the eroticism of others is not so different from our own, in terms of the spectacle it offers: and that, if we despise 'pornography', it is simply because it depicts us openly - sad bodies, dingy bedrooms, filthy conformism, clumsy gestures, miserable fantasies. We don't like our coitus to look as poor in the movies as it does in our own lives: erotic works must absolutely sacrifice to our illusions, and not be, in substance and price, as little as ourselves.

What distinguishes eroticism from pornography is not a difference between our beautiful sexuality and the disgusting sexuality of others: in reality, for the dominant values, all *real* sexualities remain guilty, ugly, bestial, failed. You are never rich enough, beautiful enough, young enough, adult enough, virtuous enough, gifted enough, normal enough, male enough or female enough to have a sexuality that is licit, estimable or simply possible. These are the requirements laid down by our laws, our morals, our ideals, our masterpieces, our very rules of desire. It's hardly surprising that they also apply to entertainment. Pornography" commits the crime of not idealising enough what it shows - and yet, with its abundance of nudes and exploits, it is a garden of delights next to our real world.

life. Even as free and fulfilled as that, to be absolved, sexuality would still need to be transfigured, eternalized, raised to the heights of mythology, smeared

with analysis, illuminated with Humanism, butchered with 'de-alienation', strung with garlands that go just right: a redemption that Love, Art, Science and Subversion each do in their own way.

American manufacturers of pornographic books and magazines had long understood the need for redemption. Obscene texts were published, but covered by a psychiatric gloss that treated them as "documents". Indecent clichés were accumulated, but with the alibi of body-building or nudism, the chaste children of Hygiene. The market was flooded with naked men photographed in all directions, but only to provide artists with a means of perfecting their hand without expensive models. And thick booklets of photos with commentary offered amateur sexologists lively dossiers on sodomy, fellatio, masturbation, large penises, child eroticism and group sexuality. The prosperity of these publications shows that the U. S. censors, touched by the nobility of their intentions, were not too keen to know whether budding cartoonists were really using these nudes, whether the collections of children's fucks only served to inform educators and mothers, or whether the cocks thrust in close-up into all the holes of Human Nature were only being examined by Researchers.

Let's put these simplistic freedoms down to a democracy naive enough to have, for example, expelled a president on the grounds that he was dishonest - because it seems that power, as bad as sex, only needs, like sex, to be angelic to be tolerable. That's a reassuring certainty.

Our country is not the victim of such ingenuous logic: in France, when we defend freedom, it is above all against those who would like to use it. For example, we have realised, among other things, that before liberating sexuality, we need to educate it in such a way that no one has any more: or that if we authorise pornography, it will obviously have to stop defying morality.

But when censorship was abolished, we discovered with indignation that censurable works were taking advantage of the situation to appear. This was proof that we were not yet ready for freedom of expression.

Normally, the French spontaneously boycott the pseudo-products that greedy capitalism wants them to consume: in particular, they desert the cinemas where the commercial rubbish known as "films for the general public" is shown - cretinous tales which are an insult to the masses, and therefore to human dignity, as Messrs Marchais, Séguy and Marty have been energetically repeating for years. This time, however, devious and profit-hungry industrialists succeeded in fooling the People, by dangling the lure of obscenities that were

all too real. Immediately, millions of fathers, mothers and workers, with grannies in their hands and babies in their arms, rushed to the shows of fornication without love: and, hypnotised, stunned by so many horrors, no one dared to react. I didn't even hear a baby cry in the theatres, which just goes to show how precociously stultifying these images are. The state and the elite protested instead, and freedom was arranged. Among the films, a category was defined that was heavily taxed and very little distributed: that which depicted the "eroticism of others", appropriately christened X: pornography. Our own eroticism, of course, would continue to enjoy the necessary freedom of expression.

I've already explained how we separate the two genres: since the main feature of eroticism is its *beauty*, any ugliness, vulgarity, silliness or unfounded obscenity in the representation of sexuality tells us that it's not ours but that of X-rated people.

A highly recommendable measure. A little earlier, in fact, François Mitterrand had suggested in the *Nouvel Observateur* that pornography should be the subject of reserved circuits: because it was really too ugly, and obviously made by pornographers. Besides, these flat representations of organs, he remarked, were infinitely less moving than the touching of hands in *The Narrow Door*. François Mitterrand did not say whether the peckers in *Si le grain ne meurt* upset him as much as Alissa's hands - both of which, however, were duly groped, and sung with all the desirable spelling, by a Nobel Prize winner for Literature. In any case, this socialist position coincides with what our government, so liberal in this case since it is in line with the choices of the left, will have decided.

And so, for the first time in our society, we are saying that mediocrity is intolerable, and that citizens must be institutionally protected from it. It is unthinkable that industrialists should come to exploit mediocrity to the hilt.

And commerce denies itself if it suddenly ceases to work for our artistic and moral upliftment.

From now on we can read on the pediment of the temple of Eros: no one enters here who is not brilliant. Our nation, which seemed to hate, persecute and proscribe sex so much, turns out instead to admire it, to deify it so much that it no longer wants the lowest of the low to touch it. This honeyed cake, this salt of the earth will, as it should be, be reserved for great men. If they are kind enough to accept it, of course. And, if your talents are very humble, your

intelligence quotient very low, your passion for money inordinate, your vulgarity immeasurable, produce family films, romance marital love, comment on politics, criticise literature and the arts, enter the Académie, glorify war, sport, work, virtue, hoodlums, racism, the State : but you're strictly forbidden to talk about cunts, dicks and arseholes - just like all the upstarts, imbeciles, impostors, bastards and punks who have invaded the other domains. Eros is going to feel a bit lonely.

This demand for quality, selflessness and artistic mastery seems to me to be entirely justified (I only have to think of the wonders it would produce in politics, journalism or education). I saw that pornos were being shown that smacked of amateurism, of the quick and dirty, of production without billions or state support: and I certainly felt very different from the X-rated people with whom I had mingled for a moment, and who were not embarrassed by this nonsense. So what's left in these films where there's nothing left?

There's still a certain something that good films never show. And since the world is full of glorious filmmakers, many of whom denounce the scandalous mediocrity of pornos, I wonder why they, who film so well, leave erotic subjects - which they seem to admire, since they can't stand being treated shabbily - to wasters of film instead of getting down to work themselves. Is it the usual humility of geniuses in the face of overblown themes? Or is it because the development of their creativity and the representation of sexual acts are incompatible? In either case, we have to admire the self-sacrifice of these unfortunate filmmakers who, in order to film what others hide, do not hesitate to compromise their chances of acquiring talent.

In fact, the existence of specifically "pornographic" works calls to mind the remark made by Jean Genet when asked why his theatre was obscene: it was because, he said, the other theatre was not. We

We are in a paradoxical situation in which it seems conceivable, obvious, even desirable, to produce a work (all works are about men and human life) in which sexuality is reduced to nothing - nothing but a zone of silence towards which all narrative is directed, however, and on which it stops. Our culture is the historiographer, or rather the mythologist, of an asexual man. Hook him up with his sex: people won't feel that you're filling a gap, they'll say that your work has *too much* - and it's this *too much*, this "obscenity", that will define it. So sex, with its billions of events, sensations and nuances, whose subtleties and lessons are as good as those of sentimental psychology, sex is not a spontaneous,

necessary, variously present (would it be 'basely') component of our representation of man: it is merely a scabrous speciality, peculiar to certain authors, certain artists, certain scientists, who alone bring into existence what, outside them, has no right of asylum. It's up to each creator to decide whether to do 'with' or 'without': it's the least of their freedoms, and if we know what cultural destiny awaits those who do 'with', there's no doubt that it encourages future geniuses not to cut it.

Tolerating sexuality, as we claim to do, exploring it and understanding it, as we feel we need to do, would mean letting it appear everywhere, expressing and experiencing itself everywhere, in short, letting it blossom in the broad daylight of social life. And not confine it to chic books, Pigalle boutiques, royal weddings and toilet doors.

It's not the appearance of 'erotic' works or 'pornographic' products that demonstrates freedom in this area; on the contrary, it's the disappearance of special places and rituals where sexuality, pleasure and the body were confined. It's not up to pornographic magazines to show nudes, whores, dykes and youngsters having fun; it's up to *France-Dimanche*, *l'Express*, *Paris-Match*, *Tintin*, *Spirou* and other humanist publications. It's not up to the makers of X-rated films to depict sex lives, it's up to the film-makers who attract the crowds, and the television channels. It's not up to 'special' authors to decipher our bodies, it's up to literature (1) as a whole. Or let it be said that sexuality is intolerable, and that it must remain the prisoner of the few maniacs who insist on showing how *it* exists, and fill this void in our culture and mores as best they can.

Obviously, in a society where sexuality did not 'have a place', but reclaimed its own, the substance of erotica would be very different from what comes out of our ghettos - where this jumble is shuffled around with resignation.

of illusions, clichés, sublimities and fixed ideas that define our sexual obscurantism. The only thing I can think of that is obscene photography, which, when it avoids the pretentiousness and clichés of beauty, is already free, no doubt *because of its inferiority*, from the stereotypes that, from the top of Eroticism to the bottom of pornography, fabricate for us a false representation of the sexuality we 'want'.

But what do pornographers want? Some of them took part, without reacting, in a cruel experiment in "mise en abyme", which would have delighted

any well-born avant gardeist, and which illustrates a paradox of pornography.

It was a screening of a very good heterosexual porno (market data rarely allows for a mix of tastes in the same product). Title: *Le Sexe qui parle* (because the heroine has a prodigy taken from Diderot: like the characters in *Bijoux indiscrets*, she speaks from the belly). The film featured the following scene. Ordinary people in a cinema are watching a porno film. Suddenly, a woman in the audience, spurred on by the film, reaches over and pulls out her neighbour's cock. The next thing you know, the whole room, bare asses and cocks in the air, are happily fucking each other. On screen, of course. In the other room, the real one, nobody was doing anything. We watched the pornophiles in the filmed room. The ones who could act (1).

So this imaginary scene is supposed to represent a pornophile's fantasy: and, in short, it puts them up against a wall. But the wall is too high. In a real cinema (apart from the fact that porn theatres are even more short of female viewers than the left is of female votes), this act would be a crime, an event that would bring out the police and grab the headlines.

Legally impossible, this orgy is also aesthetically and physiologically impossible. However common the fake spectators of Talking Sex may seem, they have been chosen to present, once dragged from their armchairs, flattering anatomies with quick reflexes and immediate complacency. Characteristics unrelated to the appearance and sexual behaviour of the

1. Homosexuals are less shy (but that's an effect of their wild state). During screenings of *Histoire d'hommes*, there were parades of spectators from their seats to the toilets, where they were flirted with and which opened, well signposted, right next to the screen. It's true that

that queers didn't wait until now to hijack certain popular cinemas, and (when the back, toilets or balcony weren't swarming with thugs or plainclothes cops) do in them what no film yet dared to show.

Average Frenchmen, pornophiles or not. We see that the obstacle to the orgy is not simply in the offence that it would constitute (an offence that homosexuals commit by accepting its risks, used as they are to straight cops). Rather, the obstacle lies in the supple desires and pleasant bodies available to the film's characters, not the viewers. These are indispensable advantages in a porno, since they are already the rule in all films and novels. It's hard to understand the

aversion inspired by actors with small dicks, cellulite-ridden actresses, ugly breasts, cracked feet, shabby coitus, and flaccid flows of stingy cum that some films exhibit: "tares" that are nonetheless the common lot of mankind. Of course, it may be considered normal (and nothing could be more disgustingly normal) for a show to be pleasant to watch, to avoid showing us to ourselves, and to select human samples that are exceptional enough for people who don't look like them to want to recognise themselves in them. Unfortunately, this cult of the exceptional reinforces our conviction that we are sexually unfit: and, rather than making us love beauty more, it makes us more hateful in our own eyes. So here we are, poor cunts and miserable cunts, dreaming that one day, no doubt, Beauty will redeem our ugliness - just as God saves the simple-minded from their vermin, their spittle and their snot. We are not worthy. *They* are. So let's wank on the idea that, tomorrow, they'll descend on our kitchenette-peepi studio.

Pornography thus reminds us that, in order to obtain beautiful objects of desire, you either have to look like them or (and this is the execrable philosophy of Sade who, when it comes to exploring desire, has never done more than stage the ravings of economic power over other people's bodies) you have to be rich. Rich people don't watch porn (except with each other, in their own homes, and then some). A nice whore or a gigolo with no major manufacturing defects is worth 200 to 500 francs or more. Over the phone in Paris, you can get kids and girls recruited by matchmakers, and a pass costs just one month's S.M.I.C. Would pornophiles be losers who, unlike the elites who write our laws, can only afford to pay for a ticket to an X-rated cinema? Are lovers of green fruit who go to court only guilty of being insolvent? In the porn shops, the salespeople complain about the countless customers who come to "look" at the merchandise and never buy anything. They are, in fact, a mob of sad voyeurs. But let's rejoice

that we finally import these beautiful magazines - sealed in cellophane so that they can't be touched by the defectives who come there to fill their eyes without spending any money, like Rimbaud's *Effarés* sniffing at the window sighs of night-time bakers. The girls, boys and transvestites from the pavement next door are sent to each other for the price of two of these ruinous magazines. So everything, meat and paper, goes to waste. Business is tough.

Rest assured: every penniless pornophile, every flat-pocketed hustler is a virtual husband, and a future father, since marriage is the only decent and cheap solution to tail problems. Which just goes to show that the sex industry, in its own way, also encourages true love.

The exercise of desire has an extremely narrow aesthetic and economic code: this code excludes the majority of men and women. We also have a code of pleasure, which assigns to each sex a precise behaviour and necessary aptitudes: and this code also excludes many people. Both codes are reproduced by porn and, in an aggravated form, by erotica. Pornography fans, like erotica fans and lovers of fine romance novels, are convinced that sexuality must have a 'good form': they consider themselves unfit to experience it, and seek out fictions and spectacles that depict the ideal they are frustrated by. It's a circular movement of self-education not to make love.

This is where the difference between the actor-pornophiles in *Talking Sex* and the client-pornophiles becomes clear: the film doesn't show what we would do if we were free, it shows why, even if we were free, we wouldn't dare do anything.

However, this self-repressive movement depends on each person's adherence to the values that condemn their right to pleasure. And this adherence is the result of the difficulty of making love that we have encountered since childhood. No one would believe that a shoddy anatomy, an unattractive figure, humble genitals or difficult to use genitals constitute a handicap, if more beautiful, more gifted people hadn't made this felt, from the very first day of desire. Yet this exclusionary reflex would be rare if we were not all taught a rule of "sexual sharing" in the name of which we must, beautiful or ugly, reserve ourselves for a fruitful market, an eminent partner who decides to finally compromise our bodies. The rigour of morality, the tiny number of situations in which physical contact, sexual enjoyment, or even the simple freedom to speak to someone, are permitted, pushes us to internalise these values with a guilty, unhappy conscience.

In other words, the less freedom you have to make love, the more you cling to the codes that prevent you from doing so. Those who escape this logic are called debauchees: there is no middle ground between submission and indecency.

Or rather, the middle ground is commercial solutions: when you pay for porn, for whoring, you're not buying sex so much as the right to enjoy it away from institutions but without the threat of laws.

Pornography is therefore part of this system. But it would be ridiculous to hold it responsible for a situation that precedes and accompanies it, does not need it to maintain itself and may, in the long run, suffer from its presence.

It is this context that needs to be appreciated. The countries that have liberated pornography before us are very different from France. Not because France is Latin: we are even duller, tenser and more petrified than the sleepy Scandinavian populations and, sociologically, we are really not Latin. Nor is our Catholicism significant. Any debauchee who has visited the most Catholic countries on earth - Portugal, Spain, Italy - will have discovered the sexual paganism of the popular youth of these Mediterranean Christianities. Catholicism and its vindictiveness reign far above the heads and bellies of the "proletariat". The prohibitions are well known: they make things clandestine, but they can do nothing against their inexpugnable prosperity. Moral rigidity in our country is therefore more a sign of the bourgeois domination of the masses, and manifests the absolute power of the industrial disciplinary regime over our behaviour.

In the North, in any case, the emergence of pornography was not an isolated phenomenon, but a consequence of reforms which, in laws, mores and institutions, called into question the whole of sexual morality. This challenge was followed by impressive results: the current legislation in Denmark and Sweden, the concrete tolerances in the Netherlands and some American states, constitute unique precedents in the history of civilisation. The important thing is not so much the happiness that these freedoms would bring today to those who introduced them, but rather the society in which men will be born for whom this new morality will not be a conquest but an immediate, normal and, in short, invisible fact of life.

In France, pornography will have been permitted without any reform of the morality that it surpasses, a morality that we are trying, on the contrary, to save more energetically than ever, and which, alongside the opinions of an elite that is free-minded but incapable of acting on laws and morals, continues implacably to govern the private lives of the masses. It is this stagnation that gives pornographic production in our country its power (and its strange status as a national issue). For it offers a representation, at once mythical and saturated with concreteness, of the freedoms we do not have.

From now on, the important thing would be for us to experience these freedoms as something other than voyeurs. Such an experience would undoubtedly teach us that the free exercise of sexuality opens up a universe where the bourgeois beauties of erotica and the stereotypical pleasures of porn are simplistic and outdated. It's up to us to emancipate ourselves from the clichés and illusions that our sexual training and frustrations have produced. The expression of sexuality doesn't have to be beautiful or ugly, elaborate or

uneducated, genial or idiotic: it has to become the free expression of desire that is actually experienced, and no longer the staging of the eroticism we dream up for ourselves when we are denied the right to experience any of it.

LETTER FROM TONY DUVERT TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - 16 February 1977

Duvert had met the painter Claude Hastaire a few years earlier through Jean-Pierre Tison. Source: Letter from Tony Duvert to the painter Claude Hastaire, courtesy of the latter to Editions Bleues. It mainly concerns their joint project: in 1977, Tony "illustrated" a book of Hastaire's drawings, La mémoire immédiate, with a text. Source: Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.

Wednesday.

Dear Claude,

Thank you for your kind words. I've had a good look at the drawings: it will be a pleasure to preface them, but your letter doesn't tell me :

- When would you like to have this text?
- what length would you consider appropriate (specify number of typewritten or typed characters) Tell me at least a minimum and a maximum.

On the other hand, it goes without saying that I won't be writing 'art criticism' - I'm incapable of that, it would be a chore. I'll talk about the drawings in my own way, as if they were my own. So there's a risk that it will be very bad, or that it will have nothing to do with what you want, or that it will be insignificant.

Hence :

- if, after reading it, you don't like the text, you tell me (no, I won't be offended), I'll wrap it up and we won't talk about it any more;
- if, on the other hand, you like it, you keep it and print it (but I'd like to be involved in choosing the typeface).

In either case, there's obviously no question of you paying me for this text. It's not that I'm disinterested. The truth is this. I'm very, very poor (I don't even have a table), but I'm going to stop being poor - in 2 or 3 months, if the State pays me; if not, in a year or so. In the meantime, I don't need a subsidy, but anyone who can give me a small or very small loan without being impatient for it to be repaid on a fixed date is doing me a huge favour. So, if you think you're rich enough to do that, don't be shy - cheques inspire me tenfold. On the other hand, gifts, even under the guise of remuneration, absolutely dry it up. So please be so kind as to become one of my creditors (the list is prestigious!) and, if you don't want to

or can't, let's not talk about money, the preface is yours anyway. And a thousand apologies for the perverse complications.

With kind regards
Tony

29 rue Bretonneau
37000 Tours

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - February 1977

Source: Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.

Tours,

Monday. Dear Claude,

Thanks a million. I'm typing this so that we can agree on what you call a typed page, because mine are usually a bit special. Whereas the standard model is more like this letter: lines of 60 characters, and about 35 lines per page.

If you were thinking of longer pages, let me know, of course. For me, the length of a text is not a question of inspiration, but of deadline.

In any case, I'll agree to about 4 pages like this (but whole...), or a bit more, and send it to you at the end of March.

As for the nature of the text, I think it will talk about the things that your drawings make me think of, and not about the drawings themselves. So rather than a 'preface', it will be a small (and approximate) literary double of this Memoir, as if we were dealing, each on our own side, with more or less the same subject (well, I hope so). If you had something very different in mind, please let me know, I can change my plans.

I'd also like to know if the first page, the one with the three small photos, will look the same in the book. And whether the reproduction will have slightly more saturated blacks and a slightly less blurred grain than the photos you sent me.

One of the reasons for this is that I prefer not to see the originals or the author until my text is finished - I'm disturbed by everything!

Money: too much if it's a gift, not enough if it's a loan. Since you seem to want it to be a gift, and you're broke (I knew that, heh heh), it's not reasonable to want to continue. Anyway, I'll leave it to you, but if you stop it won't change a thing in the good feelings I have for you. Nor, alas, to the quality of my writing.

Well, here I am at the bottom of the page. These pages are short. Better to count 5 or 6, then.

Regards
Tony

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - March 1977 *Source: Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.*

Tours, Wednesday

Dear Claude,

Sorry, I'm going to be a bit late. But at the moment I'm not letting go of my book (1) (poor thing...). Could I still make it around 10-15 April? Of course, I can work faster if it's an absolute emergency. So let me know. And many thanks for your patience.

*Regards
Tony*

*29 rue Bretonneau
37000 Tours*

(1) When Jonathan died

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - March 1977 *Source: Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.*

Tours, Wednesday evening.

Dear Claude,

I'd just posted my note when I got your telegram (I assume it's from you: I know 3 other Claude's, but I can't imagine why they'd send me a telegram...). I also assume it's about the book. If it's because the project has been changed or disrupted, let me know. If it's simply because my text is late in coming, you'll tell me that too. As I wrote to you, I prefer to take my time, because I find it very difficult to work on two things at once, so I alternate, for fairly long periods,

according to what fits best and is good to pick. But it goes without saying, I repeat, that I can, if there is an emergency, drop my novel immediately and complete this preface in a few days. For the moment, it's in the form of notes, vague ideas, little developments with no follow-up, and I'm letting the whole thing mature, firstly because it's less tiring, and secondly because, usually, it works better for me than working voluntarily. But apart from these comforts, I'm entirely at your disposal if you need to move faster.

To see each other? You can imagine what a pleasure that would give me.

But how can I do that? I'm in perfect condition to work, and I don't want to take a break by going to Paris, because then I'd need days, maybe weeks, to get back into shape. And I've only got 3 months left to finish this novel, which means I can't take these long breaks. On the other hand, if you're brave enough to come to Tours, there are excellent trains. However, I won't be able to put you to bed: just feed you (well). Get you drunk too, of course. It's up to you.

In any case, I hope above all that nothing has happened to force you to postpone this book project or to give up on it. If there were a financial problem, I think in that case we'd have to do a nice mock-up with a slightly long preface, and then we'd show it to Jérôme Lindon, my publisher, who might, or even probably would, agree to let us do it. The problem with Lindon, above all, is convincing him to make a book that's not too ugly: a very exotic thing for him.

Best regards

Tony

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - March 1977

Source: Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.

Tours, Friday.

Dear Claude,

I'm really glad to hear that everything is going well; your telegram had me worried. And now I realise that I'm the only thing standing in the way of this book's rapid completion. If I could be ashamed of anything, now would be my chance.

1) I might as well give up the idea of meeting you; these days, I sleep during working hours, and easily 10 hours at a time (so tired am I of brainwork, which is always very episodic for me); this is what has prevented me from telephoning or telegraphing you; this is also what would make it problematic, if you were to make this journey, coming in the morning and leaving in the evening, for me to be 'on the road'.

accessible' at the right moment. I'm so fond of my sleep (which is always excellent and very deep, thank you) that I'd easily murder anyone who tried to reduce or disturb it; and I'd knock myself out if I had, for whatever reason, such a crazy idea. The truth is, my bedtimes are slowly evolving day by day, and no doubt within two weeks I'll be getting up and going to bed (albeit very temporarily) like everyone else.

2) From what you've told me, there shouldn't be any serious problems. Since the book is practically finished, I'll hurry up and finish my work, so that

you'll receive it in a week or so. As for the questions you wanted to discuss together, I'm sure you'll be able to resolve them perfectly well without me. But I'll take them up anyway:

3) the typeface. You told me you preferred an italic typeface*, and I agreed. They're all pretty much the same, so just choose the one that complements the roman of your choice (since I assume you'll be doing the title page and subtitle pages in roman). I obviously prefer an italic that's not too sharp, not too pungent, but if you use a large enough font (12, 13, 14...), the overall effect is already rounder and more supple, especially if it's not too tightly spaced. My text is not aggressive (but really not); you'll have a much better eye than I do for judging what's needed in terms of overall effect. As far as I'm concerned, the more it's not too much, not too little, the better. The same goes for the layout.

4) As this "preface" is not a direct commentary on your drawings, it would be better, as you suggest, to call it simply a text. You can choose whatever you think best: "text by..." or "with text by...". (1). The second option, it seems to me, highlights the drawings more clearly, accentuating their predominance in this case. But that's already chicanery. In any case, my text won't have a title, it will start with nothing written above it, no 'preface' or anything. *But if you like the word, use it...*

I'm really sorry to miss this wonderful opportunity to see you; but really, if I want to get the best out of my bloody novel, I have to listen to myself. Touraine is very pretty in spring, its light has three * in all the michelins, and I don't even take advantage of it. When I think that I'm going to miss your galette and your little pot of butter (and the innocent little victim that normally accompanies such gifts and makes them so delectable - but don't tell me you weren't planning to bring me one: and it doesn't matter what sex you are, at that age all children are boys), yes, when I think of what I'm losing, I'm biting everything I've got.

(Fortunately, I no longer have the lecherous suppleness of my youth...)

A thousand apologies again. But maybe I'll see you soon anyway (if I work hard I'll treat myself to a trip to Paris around mid-May).

*Regards (and big kisses** to Claude-bis)*

Tony

*29 r. Bretonneau
37000 Tours*

** The most beautiful italic I know (and I know very few) is Garamond,*

when it's really well drawn. But this typeface is a little too common. The ital. Du Baskerville is very good too, but a bit bland and chaste (I've never seen it in a slightly large typeface, I don't know). In any case, they are the softest I can remember. In Roman, the most beautiful typeface on the planet is a Plantin that is perfectly faithful to its 16th-century design. Rather rare. Simplified" versions abound. As for the ital. of Plantin, I have no memory of it.

NB: These 3 characters look pretty much alike, and each and all 3 are somewhat 'very proper'. And very commonplace because of the intensive use made of their parodies. So don't take this mini-information as a suggestion...

*** This is not a t but a modest s.*

P.S.: The text will probably be 4-5 pages like this. Maybe more if I selfishly develop a few things I like. But?!...

(1) It is this last formulation that has been retained (NdE).

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - March 1977

Source: *Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.*

Tuesday

Dear Claude,

Thank you again for entrusting me with these marvels and with the responsibility of talking about them. It would be great if you could have, and send me as soon as possible to Tours, duplicates of the photos of the 3 study groups at the beginning of the book.

You'll have my text in 1 week - yes, yes!

A big kiss.

Tony

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - March 1977

Source: *Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.*

Tours, Tuesday.

Obviously, I'm late. Of course, it's for honourable reasons. And it goes without saying that everything will turn out well - except that I really wonder whether the stupid little text I've done (dispatch: very soon...) will suit you, or whether you won't send it back furiously. These little things cause me such terrible problems, and for such a derisory result, that I don't think I'll ever agree to do them again. Fffff...

Thank you for your patience.

*Best regards
Tony*

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - March 1977

Source: *Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.*

Thursday.

Dear Claude,

Another annoyance (J.P. (1) told me how you take part in his - I admire you and feel more ashamed than ever). Libé(ration) is asking me for a

article on kid-zizi stories (2). I'll drop everything and do it, it has to be finished tomorrow.

That's another good excuse... But be patient!

*Many regards
Tony*

[on the postcard: Moussem d'Imilchil - Fête des fiançailles et Armoiries de la Ville de Ouarzazate. Tony's comment: *Dromedaries and travellers - Made in China*].

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - 15 May 1977

Source: *Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.*

Thursday

Dear Claude,

I'm sorry to have kept you waiting so long to send you so little. I really

wonder whether this little bit of text will be of any use to you, and whether it might not be better for your drawings to appear without a preface. But I'll let you be the judge. At the very least, I hope you'll forgive me for not having been able to do more.

*Give me some news.
With kind regards
Tony*

(1) Their mutual friend, journalist Jean-Pierre Tison (Ed. note)

(2) Libération published a feature on paedophilia in its 24 March 1977 issue, but no text by Tony was included. (Ed. note)

LETTER TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - May 1977

Source: Un Homme Parle, Editions Bleues.

Tours, Sunday

Dear Claude,

Thank you for your letter, which really cheered me up. I'm delighted that we both had such dark thoughts, and that they were able to coincide.

Can I have proofs of the text?

Excuse me for being so brief - like a certain white rabbit, I am, oh dear! oh dear! perpetually too late.

*Many regards
Tony*

IMMEDIATE MEMORY - 1977

Here at last is the text promised to Hastaire, La mémoire immédiate, as published in 1977 by Cachan. Source : <http://antoinebrea.blogspot.fr/>

Intro by Antoine Brea :

The Kandinsky Library at the Centre Pompidou has a small book entitled La mémoire immédiate (Immediate Memory), published in May 1977 at the request of the painter Claude Hilaire, known as Hastaire. I'm not sure you can find it anywhere else. The book reproduces a series of drawings by the painter (mostly empty interior scenes plunged into half-light), with a text by Tony Duvert. I didn't have to go to the library, as two enthusiasts were kind enough to send me a copy of Duvert's text. I thank them warmly.

Tony Duvert evokes the naked forms, the abstractions that reality traces out in certain places, at certain moments, and which are engraved hard on the memory, shaping like a dead memory, another memory, different from the theatre of memories that we constantly recompose to watch ourselves live, but which go up in smoke. It is my turn to copy these lines from an unusually meditative Duvert, very absorbed, as if preoccupied.

To do this properly, you would have had to show Hastaire's drawings alongside. I couldn't find them. What's more, I have to say that Hastaire's work personally puts me to sleep. As we shall see, the text in any case cannot be reduced to a study of specific drawings; it stands on its own.

Text by Tony Duvert

As a very young child, I used to love the siesta on summer days, shortly after lunch. I never slept. The bedroom was big and cool. The blinds had been closed. On the other side of the window was the garden, with a large chestnut tree almost touching the windows. Those sun-drenched afternoons were transformed, through the palmate foliage and behind the metal shutters, into strange, brief nights, where the shadows were pierced by discreet flashes of light. It radiated imperceptibly from everywhere. A moment's habituation and, on the edge of a chest of drawers, a piece of bedwood, a fold of curtain, a groove in the parquet floor, the light burst forth, shy and straight. These incomprehensible lines conjured up another world, where familiar objects fell into a

naïve twilight, as anonymous, broken, geometric and vibrantly muted worlds gradually came into view.

Even though we hated naps, we saw it when we were little. Besides, we didn't know how to see anything else. The world was limpidly uninhabited and, at the slightest glance too far, it revealed the sensitive deserts that made it up.

I'm astonished by people who look at photos of family or friends and seem to be moved by them, people who stroke an old object, people who visit the places where they grew up. Our truly lived images are not there. They begin when all meaning gives way, moves away, abolishes itself. The cement of an anonymous threshold, the winding of a silent staircase, the angle of two walls, accentuated by an impassive light that barely contrasts with the padded walls of a bedroom, are like the permanence or instantaneous birth of this other memory. Old and dying, as you begin to suffocate in a bed at the end of a darkened room, you will see nothing more than this intangible present, these linear and abstract lights, these vehement shadows that you discovered so long ago, when, on those beautiful old days, you slowly reached childhood in a room with shutters closed to the summer.

This is the beauty and pain of spaces that are built without us. At the same time we ignore them and feel their being; rather, we recognise it, manifest as soon as ours separates from the objects, people and paths with which it was furnished. Alongside the spectacles we create for our own use, and which are exhausted entirely in our effort to live them, there is, always certain, the evidence of an inhuman world that has no need of this theatre, and which speaks mutedly of the infinite. Long years after the things we have lived through, what reawakens them, what traps us in a memory when we thought we were free of all the pain of memory, is not a portrait, a story, an old letter, but these apparitions of naked forms - a ray of light along a yawning door, the silhouette that disappears around the corner of a house in the evening, the deep glow of absolute blackness, the lines that make up the interior of the solids where we live, here, at home, where we don't look, and which seem to be so many hard, immaterial signs of a solitude that we don't look at either.

Who were we really, the moment we first saw these shadows, sketched behind our shadows of happiness or drama, our illusions of events, our desire for the few beings we had fleetingly

managed to bring closer to us? None other than the frozen spectator of a reality which, without these ghosts dancing in front of it, would have remained invisible to us because it was intolerable: the cold exterior of things without a future.

And this is what remains of the past in a memory that neglects trinkets and scenarios. Just a few passages, now illegible; just a few blurred, crossed-out faces, floating in the sad immobility of memory. Then an infinite number of mute nostalgias resurrected by a patch of white sky, an odd, characterless wooden panel at the bottom of a dirty garden, a string hanging from a post - and that second between two lives when you enter a room before turning on the light.

Then there is not only this reality. That of things that our gaze had thought to avoid - but which have incomprehensibly absorbed the essence of the acts we were performing in front of them. Against our will, they will forever make us part of our truth in every minute that we are subjected to them, and through time, and by the sole constraint of this continuous presence of what we did not choose to make present while we were pretending to create something. Our creations have failed to populate the places and times in which we were, leaving us with nothing but boredom, knick-knacks, old hurts and inconsistent shreds. Nothing to relive in what we tried to live - everything to relive, on the contrary, in these deserts that made us avert our eyes.

Knowing this can inspire a demand: to contemplate this other present, immemorial and cruel, alongside our own. The real world, where nothing is on stage any more. Everything is swallowed up by the poor sources of life that we strive to be. Here we are lost, in the unbearable fullness of lines that delimit only absences from us. And yet we must impose ourselves on this gap. And to recognise ourselves in these empty canvases against which the miserable magic of what we believed to be real, and the ashen being of flesh that is no longer embodied, rose. As if their appearance had only expressed this absence, and tirelessly pointed to the painful inhumanity of the all-too-human that we carry within us, and which is none other than death.

LETTERS TO CLAUDE HASTAIRE - 20 May 1977

Source: Un homme parle, les Editions Bleues.

Tours,

Tuesday. My dear Claude,

It's been days since I should have thanked you for your book; but I haven't - with all the good reasons, impediments and absences, etc., that I have.

I only knew a tenth of the drawings; the whole thing is impressive, and gives me all the cockroaches I love. I vaguely want to rip out some of the pages and frame them on my walls - but that's none of your business.

As for the book itself, it's admirably done: if only novels were made on this model! Two small curiosities: what is the name of this type of laid paper (if it is one), and the name of the typeface used. And two little questions: did I really write "moîteur"? Did I really write (penultimate page of text) 'So there's not just this real'? I didn't introduce complete nonsense into everything that follows, and that really surprises me. I don't remember drinking so much at the time (1). But who would have had the crazy idea of adding that word?

Apart from that, I still don't intend to leave Tours until I've sorted out the fate of my little characters: which normally means that in September, with everyone duly buried, I'll be off to do life in Paris. I hope to find you busy with the same things, and to tell you at last what a pleasure your drawings have given me.

Best regards
Tony

PS. If this is the sheet you're reading, it means that this time what's in the envelope is really the ad hoc letter, and not some piece of paperwork. You can destroy the one I sent you by mistake. I have no memory of it, it must be one of those things I type up while having my coffee at dawn, before it's hot. If it was important, it would come back to me. But a thousand apologies (2)

(1) No, Tony hadn't been drinking, those mistakes aren't in the typescript. (NdE)

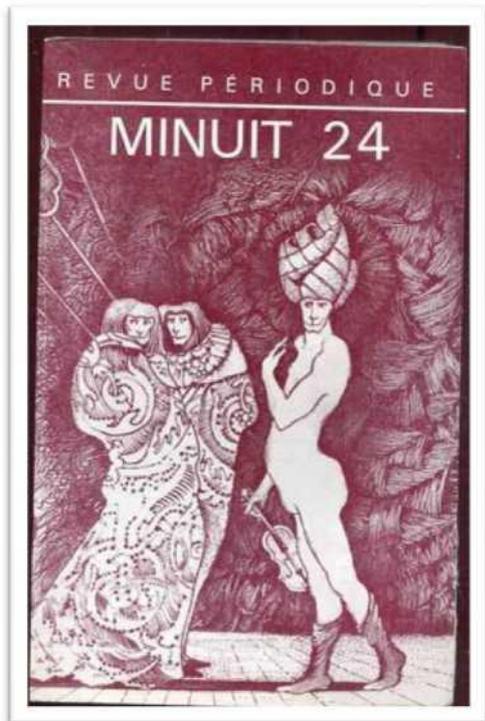
(2) The text Tony sent Claude: on the "paternal substitute".

No. If you have a bird in your garden, you'll see that it makes its nest out of anything it can find: bits of wool from the jumper you've knitted, hair from the cat, etc. If, on discovering its nest, you conclude from the materials that this bird likes red jumpers and cats, and that this motley nest is a neurotic or perverse equivalent of a bird, then you're in the right place. If, on discovering its nest, you conclude from the materials that this bird likes red jumpers and cats, and that this motley nest is a neurotic or perverse equivalent of the feline or pullesque 'person', you've got your finger up your arsehole, and you're one of those archaeologists who, because a Mayan stele vaguely resembles an Orly beacon, [think] that the Mayans had flying saucers.

(NdE)

BALLADE DES PETITS METIERS - April 1977

Poem of 14 pages, composed of 17 chapters, one chapter for each trade. When it was published in 1978 by Fata Morgana, 6 new, previously unpublished trades were added to this text. Source: Bimonthly magazine number 24, April 1977. Director of publication, Jérôme Lindon.



SMALL TRADES WALK

To Jean-Pierre

The

He planted his pump at the entrance to the school and knew every child by name.

My grandfather assured me that, in his day, the demoraliser didn't have a pump: he used a little rush pipe to suck up the snot with his mouth. And, to demorturate the nostrils thoroughly

without swallowing anything, he used such art that the rascals would rather have had two snouts than one, to endure this delicious service any longer.

Working at the pump wasn't as appealing. I remember that some of my classmates even went so far as to ignore the demorcher and blow their noses into their fingers, soiling the pavements and class coats.

The torch

The torchbearer carried on his back a small box containing old newspapers cut into sheets and tissue paper scented with toilet perfume. As soon as the sun rose, he would start his rounds through the village, and his song would wake everyone up. There was always a rush to call him, but his profession was too humble to allow him into people's homes. When people wanted his services, they put their arses out on the doorstep, where they also placed a full chamber pot. The torcheux collected the turds in a handcart. He refused, however, to take little children's faeces and colic: in that case, you had to give him a penny to be wiped anyway.

The torcheux sold his harvest to the merdeux - who, despite his prosperity (he was a wealthy farmer, and often became mayor), worked shamefully at night on the edge of the village. He mixed the turds with water and chopped straw; the product, macerated for some time, was sold to the villagers, who used it to smoke their fields and the potted flowers in their windows.

The shit man exaggerated the amount of straw and water he added to the fertiliser: it was to make himself rich. Because of this profit, which he took for granted, the shit man's load was sold at auction. As for the torchbearer, he was just a lowly employee of the shits and arses. He was almost despised. And yet, without the scorcher, there would be no shit. But the humble never know how to defend themselves or their usefulness.

The clock-reader

Being a clock reader made you rich, because clock owners know what a good reputation means. However, the clock-reader sometimes also read watches - not without tarnishing his glory and spoiling his eyes.

There's no point in expecting him to come before noon: the hour must be allowed to ripen slowly, and only the clumsy would pick it early in the morning. We waited for the sun to approach its zenith - and finally the reader appeared.

He is invited; he shakes his feet on the threshold, waves his broad hat and enters your home with compunction and respect. He is seated on a good chair in front of the clock and, there, his hat barely pushed back, his chin barely supported by a finger, he contemplates the dial.

After a long silence, he gravely states the time he has seen. Then he rises and walks away with a final ceremonial bow.

Its hour excites conversation throughout the family meal. In the afternoon, the ladies who treat themselves to coffee talk vanityingly about the hours they have been told on various dates - but they often lie about the number, because there are flattering hours and others that are hardly estimable.

The story then travels from gossip to gossip, all the way through the village to the municipal washhouse where, between two claps of the beater, it is still talked about after dark.

The illiterate, however, despised the clock-reader and mocked him in the street: but he, with the superbness of a civil servant useful to the rich and heavy with erudition, chased them away with a shrug of his head.

The window breaker

Sometimes a wife, suffocated by married life, became more cantankerous than nature. If it was a day when the window breaker came, everything would be fine.

This man, smiling and youthful, would come in with his supply of stones, tell you a few jokes, play a little trick on your behind: then, taking his turn in each room of the house, he would quietly break all the windows, the splinters of which would fall outside.

The noise made the gossips come, the children run away and the husbands tremble: those were good days. After that, the woman in crisis had to move in with a neighbour and stay there until the windows were tiled again.

In the village, there were several houses with shattered windows that were never repaired: this was the way men and children had found to free themselves from certain women, even if it meant catching a cold.

The skinner

When a woman gave birth to her thirteenth child, it was customary to celebrate this happiness with a great feast. One of the other children was sacrificed, to be the roast of the feast. However, this roast had to be less than seven years old; if there were several in the house, the roundest was chosen; if there were none, a neighbour was asked.

Then the child skinner was hired (usually the wolf herder from the communal woods). He immersed the child in a basin of very hot water, which softened the skin, then rubbed it with gravel to purify the surfaces and bring out the blood, which eats the bad fats. A bath in ice-cold water would then whiten the skin.

The child was hung from a good branch, and the four acolytes of the skinner entered the scene. The first acolyte would stand in front of the child and make a series of grimaces to distract his attention while he was being flayed. This grimace artist had to be skilful and have an understanding of character: if his antics were too banal, they had no effect; if they were too obvious, they would shake the skinned child with laughter and the knife work would go all wrong.

The three other acolytes were two dogs and a strong lad. The boy tied up the dogs and whipped them mercilessly: their yelps had to drown out the cries of the child being flayed, as soon as the task drew to a close and the grimace of the grimace-maker became ineffective. These howls of beaten dogs and raw children inspired a whole local polyphony, of very rustic inspiration, which is sung at weddings.

Once the skinning was complete, the child was gently strangled with a shoelace: death was quick and the meat better. As for the skin, after a few chemical operations it was washed and then dried: for this drying, another child the size of the first was employed. Another child the same size as the first was used to dry it, sewn into the skin and beaten with wide strips for three days in succession. In this way, the skin retained the shape of the body and became wonderfully transparent.

Torn up, sewn back together, her hair combed, she held on so well that you would have thought she was an empty child. It sells for a lot of money to those who have a passion for it: priests, women, schoolteachers, ocean-going sailors.

The writer

The writer kept a record at the post office of who received letters and who did not. According to this list, he would send anonymous letters: rude or distressing, to those who were inundated with mail, to reduce their pride; exquisite and ingenious, to cheer up those who had nothing.

He didn't sign, but he could imitate any handwriting: and the letter you received always seemed to come from someone you knew. You thought about it until you were tortured. Was it a letter from the writer? If so, you should have forgotten about it. Or was it from a friend, neighbour or enemy who had neglected to sign? So we had to answer him, meet him, find out.

Because of this ambiguity, each letter from the writer led to great movements in the village, to meetings, love affairs and fights that should never have taken place. Without him, we would often have shut ourselves off and, deprived of lies, we wouldn't have known who we were.

The bird gardener

He would go from orchard to orchard, tending the trees (not that we liked fruit where we came from: we preferred meat and cake).

The bird gardener skilfully constructed his trap, grouped tree species, grafted, hybridised, as if seized by a delirium of love: and these bouquets, these fruits, these perfumes attracted myriads of passerines from the sky, each adding its own colour and song.

So when the first cherries arrived, with the cool, blond sun caressing our bodies, nothing soothed our winter melancholy better than nibbling on the tree, at the whim of the hand that picked them, a few bright little birds.

When I was a kid, I was so fond of them that I hardly spat out the

feathers; I used to crush these fluffy, throbbing creatures in my mouth, all drunk, all swollen with fruit, and their little beaks, between my lips, would still cry out a song.

The groper

We hated it in the village when children indulged in solitary pleasure.

So there was a child groper. If a child was found to be touching himself, the groper would be called, who would take the child to a bush or a barn, depending on the weather. There, he would lavish the child with caresses of such malice that the poor child would have been hard pressed to obtain so much pleasure on his own. So, after a few sessions, it was the child himself who came to see the groper.

As the wait outside his house was interminable, impatient kids scurried around, two by two, three by three or more. But these childish pleasures lacked the violence of those the groper knew how to distribute.

Being a groper didn't pay much, and exhausted the man who had this job to death: during the caresses, he had to let himself be caressed so that the hands of the children being groped didn't give in to vicious idleness. Groperes who didn't die of exhaustion fell into impotence, and often, as they got older, they became wipers. It was better than nothing.

The jumper

The jumper was the jester at weddings; he mingled at wedding nights. His job was to deflower the husbands while they deflowered their wives.

He was accompanied by a young boy, who prepared his vit for him. One of these kids, when he grew up, would inherit the job of jumper - provided he was very well built, pretty and well trained.

The truth is, however, that the villagers were cheating on this old wedding custom.

Well-to-do husbands would bribe the jumper, who would refrain from sodomising them on their wedding night. As for anal blood, in the morning they would show off a handkerchief in which the jumper had only crushed a leech that had first been put on his apprentice's buttock.

As for the poor young men who didn't have the means to bribe the jumper, they frantically practised sodomy amongst themselves, so as to be less surprised on the big night.

The jumper wouldn't have complained. Later, these young people (as their adolescent practices left them nostalgic) secretly invited the communal

jumper and compensated him very well for his services. That's what made him so prosperous, because we don't get married that much here.

The spotter

Although our village was isolated, we liked to visit. But who would have taken the road that led here? Some years, however, a tramp, a beggar, a thief, a child seized by adventure, a mule in love, all unhappy with his fat, barren life, would cross the main street. We pretended that he had come on purpose.

And on the hills, near the spring, a lookout had been placed. All day long, he watched at the four cardinal points. His keen eyesight detected the slightest movement of man or beast: if an unfamiliar silhouette moved in the distance, he would sound the alarm - lest the lost ones forget to head for the village.

But the watchman's zeal was almost always in vain: no matter how many worlds he imagined and how wildly he waved his bell, the rare strangers he discovered, wandering away from our wanderings, were just a few of us, bolder than the rest.

The judge

If anyone was impatient with delinquency or crime, they first went to the prison. It was a pretty henhouse where you would collect, count and wash the eggs, then contemplate the tickling of the rabbits with their big red ears. The prison warden would check you in: but you had to bring money for food. You were locked up for as long as you paid your pension (it wasn't expensive) and, after a few days, a few months, a few years, you were released with a certificate of imprisonment.

You immediately went to the judge's shop to choose your crime. You showed him the certificate, which he examined with the utmost care. He asked meticulous questions about your tastes, your desires and your future ambitions. Then he would retire to his back room and rummage around for a long time. He would return with a bundle

of offences or crimes described in detail: each one corresponded to the time you had spent in prison. He would advise you to commit one offence rather than another, or to combine two lesser ones; he would explain how to aggravate or mitigate a crime; then you would say which you preferred. He would note down your statement, display it in his window and wish you good luck.

All you had to do was wander around the village and the fields to find the opportunity. You had to be clever, because everyone had been warned. They

didn't have the right to stop you, because you had paid, but you could duck and cover. The really patient criminals still succeeded in the long run, but that was because they had been discreetly encouraged to commit a useful crime: robbing a rich man, spanking a miser, ransacking an insufferable man, boning a charlatan, drowning a mother, cutting the throat of a sententious man.

Some of the would-be criminals were fools and the judge was amused not to notice. For example, one of us dreamt of robbing a bank. To pay for it, he imposed a three-year prison sentence and counted several million eggs. Afterwards, the judge agreed to let him carry out his hold-up, and the fool happily left. Only there was no bank here. So our simpleton had to steal a turnip here, a beet there, rape a few old ladies who thought he was nice, and stun a few babies who laughed their heads off. When he died, he still hadn't served his time in prison. When you're not intelligent, it's better to remain honest.

The censor

On the contrary, every market day, between the goose park and the open-air liquor store, with its benches of drunkards and fishwives, you would see the censor set up camp, parking his little donkey cart there. A few strokes of the cane to provoke the braying of the poor beast, and we were warned that the censor was going to officiate. He was also a second-hand bookseller: but his main job was to cut out books, which he did with a long razor that was shinier and cleaner than the barber's. Like many people who are good with their fingers, he couldn't read: that didn't matter, because he wasn't asked to appreciate what he was censoring. They simply ordered him, handing him a book they had read with indignation:

- Here, cut this and this, and this page, and these two lines, and these two again.

This was how we got rid of the passages we didn't like. But the censor was the only person who sold and bought back books - all of ours.

came from him and returned to him. So books that had circulated too much, by dint of being pruned to the taste of their successive readers, were soon reduced to an empty slipcase, from which sometimes the title (there are bad titles) and even the author's name (there are impossible names) had disappeared.

In return, the censor carefully preserved the pages he had cut out, placed in a crate, and sold them: three sous a handful, if you fished at random, and five sous if you pretended to choose. In short, there was no shortage of reading material.

His father's child and his mother's child

When, in my youth, we gave up celebrating the thirteenth child by skinning one of the others, the kids immediately thought they could do anything. They couldn't even stand the lead ball whip and, to avoid being beaten, they proposed an institution so ingenious that the village council adopted it.

Poor parents. But the councils are made up of old men, who are only interested in the freshness of their skin. As if the scars of the whip weren't as beautiful on a child's bottom as the wrinkles on an old man's face, and didn't express, like these wrinkles, the attainment of wisdom!

It was therefore forbidden to hit boys (not girls, in fairness). More to the point, parents were no longer allowed to correct their own children: they were only allowed to do so to the children on duty, who were waiting in full view on the mall.

For the boys had organised a round to be beaten, in groups of two, each for one week of the year. They would erect a canopy under which they would place stools, then put on their attributes: his father's child would hang a flaccid, dripping boar's dick around his neck, his mother's child would hang some old mummified cow's heart in coarse salt.

And they wiped away the domestic dramas that the other children had caused.

Somewhere in the village, a kid was tearing his new suit. His mother, however, would return the itchy slaps and shout to her husband instead:

- Hey! Look at your son! Come on, boy! Come with me! I've got to slap him! Let's go and see his father's child!

Or an apprentice, a schoolboy had spent his day in the fields or woods. The father, clenching his fists, shouted to his wife:

- Hey! Look at your son! Come on, boy! Come with me ! I've got to hit him! Let's go see his mother's child!

And, leaving their guilty party there untouched, they went to the little stand where the only children who could be beaten were waiting, playing cards, marbles, nose twisters, tweezers or waking pigs. And the parents brought a jug of wine.

They would put it in front of the child they wanted to molest. The kid would drink, laugh out loud, make fun of the figures, and that would attract people. Then the mother, for example, would cry out:

- Ah! Your father's child! You did this and that! You did!
His father's child gulped down the wine as quickly as possible, and his mother knocked:

- Here you are! Your father's child! There you go! And take it! And take it!

And take it! Huh? Huh?

But the witnesses interrupted the correction, reasoned with the adult and consoled the child.

That was at first. Later, the scene changed. We were becoming too sensitive. The parent who wanted to hit a service child was now prevented from doing so by his own spouse, who in turn was angered by this injustice:

- Old cocksucker! Old cocksucker! Why are you hitting that one! Leave him alone! It's your filthy son who did this, and this, and this! What the hell!

And, forgetting the child on duty, they fought ferociously like two dogs coveting the same tail. Then the little boy, quite at peace, savoured his jug of fresh wine without haste: and he began to sway on his behind with a dangerous grace, while, in his troubled, sleepy and slightly giggling eyes, the man and woman who were fighting seemed to be dancing dances.

The ferryman

To the west of the village, to reach the forests, meadows and nearby valleys, you had to cross a river with a very wide but shallow bed. Almost everywhere was fordable, all you had to do was follow the large stones that emerged. So no bridge had ever been built.

But in spring and autumn (not to mention a few mild spells in the off-season), the water level would rise: and it would do so with such speed and capriciousness that you could be caught in the middle of the ford.

This is why a ferryman's post had been set up. If your foot slipped or you were swept away by a flash flood, this man would emerge from his shelter and, passionately watching your efforts, he would urge you to save your life. When you finally reached the shore, he would congratulate you,

dried you in front of his fire, gave you good soup, good bread, good fat and good marc.

On the other hand, if you drowned, he would moan desperately over your agony and then, once the tragedy was over, he would unhook his boat and come and fish out your body. For every corpse rescued from the water, the commune paid him compensation.

The thinker

When you have a thought about something you can, of course, put up with four or five days of colic, insomnia, sexual impotence, sometimes bulimia: but you get slapped in the face. So sooner or later you go to the communal thinker.

This philosopher lived in a dry-stone hut near the cemetery, at the crossroads. He was not allowed to show his face: he went out at night with his face covered and his feet shod with felt so as not to arouse the barking of the dogs. A tombstone with no inscription closed his door: and in the evening, when he pushed it as he was going out, it collapsed with a powerful thud that shook the whole village and announced his arrival to the terrified kids, the old ladies and the gangs who copulated. And everyone tucked their heads into their necks, like hens when a vulture descends.

Anyone wishing to consult the communal thinker could only do so during the day. You approached his hut, spoke through the stones, and said the thought that was tormenting you as best you could. And the thinker would respond by shaking a pot in his hut, or by farting, or by breaking a bone, or by dropping a snatch of hoarse song in the air: it didn't matter how. The consultant was turning over and over in his mind the noise that his confidence had determined, and that was all he thought himself from then on. His health was returning rapidly.

As no one wanted to be a thinker, this profession was reserved for some cripple who could not defend himself. It was an unfortunate fate, and the last stage of life before death itself. Nevertheless, many cripples looked out for this job when, one day, they learned that the cripple knacker was going to pass through the village. So, the night before, they would go out into the street and watch for the communal thinker on his walk, in order to kill him and take his place, their only chance of survival. As there were many of them, this murder was not enough for them, and they would start killing each other: the most vigorous of the counterfeiters would thus become the head thinker. It was unheard of for two cripples to team up and share the role of thinker: it's true that they wouldn't have had enough to eat.

The good-for-nothing

Our mothers were sometimes maniacs when it came to housework. But order in the home is nothing but a plague. The husband and children hide away in the study and friends no longer dare to come, so frightened are they by the reigning shrew, a broom in each hand, a mop in each shoe, her feather dusters in her hair. Where else can you enjoy a quiet place, where it's like being at home, if not at home? But the jellyfish, bristling with scrapers, scrubbers, washing machines, dishcloths and needles, is spreading its domestic delirium to the last corner of the last room. Doesn't she dig her fingernail into the mouse holes to extract the crumbs from their nibbles or the hairs that fall from their moustaches?

We don't even dare take refuge in the cowshed: she waxes the cows, she polishes them, she swaddles their buttocks and picks their big ears. And then we'd stain our clothes on the straw: this touchy woman - she who makes us feel so foolish with the strange frusks that her sewing rage forces us to wear - would go off into thunderous shrieks.

No. To free yourself, you have to hire the best of maids, the wisest of servants: a good-for-nothing.

When the mother sees her rival, she doesn't explode. She has no right to refuse the fight, and she's determined to win. Presumptuous housewives! The good-for-nothing is a marvel of intelligent industry against which no one can fight.

The trade can be practised at any age. A very old good-for-nothing still provides services: and, almost as young girls, some women are already experts at it.

The good-for-nothing works extremely hard. She follows her mistress everywhere and perfects, according to her own ideas, the housework that the other does. She rewashes the dishes, which slip from her fingers and fall to the floor; she irons the washing, which falls to shreds under her brush; she bricks the floors until they are rutted; she adds shine to the windows by pouring oil on them; she torches the kids so hard they shrivel up in their knickers; she cooks the soup seven times over; she reweaves the clothes, doubling their thickness and increasing their colour tenfold; she washes, scrapes, curls and curls her boss into a pot of tripe. She washes, scrapes and curls her boss into a pot of tripe. And the shrew goes back to the zealous work of her good-for-nothing, repairs the damage, is immediately spoiled by her repairs, and repairs again, until the damage is irreparable.

Little by little, all the objects in the house, now unusable, pile up in a mountain of rubbish in the middle of the garden. And the shrew, exhausted and defeated, loses all her strength.

It's his turn to die. All that's left to do is to throw his snarling corpse on top of the rubbish heap.

Usually, a week was enough. The good-for-nothing would finally join us in our hiding place, receive her wages, kiss us goodbye and go off to do her work elsewhere. Incredulous, moved and light-hearted, we timidly returned home.

The wheel-sticker

We were home-loving, sedentary people: and few people in my village had the audacity to go abroad.

Sometimes, though, one of us felt the urge. And for months, even years,

he would talk to his friends and family about the project. An overwhelming prospect: soon we would have to pay the wheelsman.

In fact, no one really wanted to leave: those who did spoke only of their distress, and hoped that in time they would be helped. This was the custom. People contributed, listened to the unfortunate man and his sad words, and waited in fear.

Finally, one evening he said that he would leave at dawn the next day and that a cart would have to be hitched to him. Everyone nodded in silence. It was time to tell the bâtonneur and discuss his price.

At dawn, the cart was abandoned at the edge of the village. The man who claimed to be leaving would arrive slowly in the cold, grey morning, his luggage slung over his shoulder, without anyone accompanying him. Slowly, he climbed into the cart, released the brake, cast a melancholy glance behind him, and half-heartedly stimulated the horse.

Immediately, the bastard came out from behind a tree, his beard held high, his eyes furious, his mouth full of invective, and he jammed his large iron bar into a wheel. The driver would pretend to protest: the other would shout louder, his eyes burning like the devil's, the hairs on his beard shooting lightning bolts. The driver would then weep with secret joy: he had been saved. He would slowly make his way back to the village, and all the inhabitants would come out to welcome him. It was a moving moment. I was only there once, when I was a child. Since then, people have left for good, one after the other, alone with themselves, and there are no more stickmen.

DISTRICT (1968) & DISTRICT (1978)

DISTRICT, 1968 version :



Cover of *Cahiers du Chemin*, number 3, 15 April 1968, in which the first version of *District* was published. The magazine is small, 9.5 centimetres wide and 18.5 centimetres long. Duvert's text runs from page 56 to page 84.

The order of the chapters in this version is as follows:

- I - SITE
- II - CHARACTER
- III - WINDOWS
- IV - EXIT, END
- V - MARKET
- VI - A POSTER
- VII - THE AMERICAN SEA
- BASS
- VIII - LUPANAR
- IX - METRO
- X - PUBLIC GARDEN, NIGHT

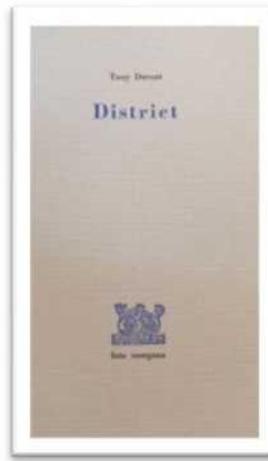
The 1968 and 1978 versions each have 10 chapters. Each chapter is numbered in the 1968 version. This numbering will disappear in the 1978 version.

Each chapter was rewritten in 1978, some more than others. In the 1978 version, the order of these 10 chapters will be slightly modified.

- The three chapters *CHANTIER*, *PERSONNAGE* and *FENETRE*, placed first in the 1968 version, will keep the same place in the revised version of 1978 but...

As Tony Duvert has changed the order of the chapters in this revised version of *District*, the text below will not, for the sake of clarity, follow the order of the chapters in the 1978 version, but rather that of the 1968 version.

DISTRICT, 1978 version :



Cover of the revised version of *District*, published by Fata Morgana in 1978.

The book is 12.5 centimetres wide and 21.5 centimetres long. 60 pages in all, only the even-numbered pages are numbered...

The order of the chapters in this version is as follows:

- CHANTIER
- PEOPLE
- WINDOW
- METRO
- A POSTER
- LE BAR
- LUPANAR
- PUBLIC GARDEN,
- NIGHT
- WALK
- EXIT, END

- *SORTIE FIN*, in fourth position in the 1968 version, will be placed in final position in the 1978 version.
- *MARCHE*, in fifth position in the 1968 version, moved up to ninth position in the 1978 version.
- *UNE AFFICHE*, placed sixth in the 1968 version, was demoted to fifth position in the 1978 version.
- *LE BAR AMERICAIN* lost its adjective in the 1978 version. Placed in seventh position in the 1968 version, it will be placed in sixth position in the 1978 version.
- *LUPANAR* was in eight and will move up to seven.
- *METRO* was the penultimate chapter. It was moved up to fourth place in the 1978 reorganisation.
- *JARDIN PUBLIC*, *NUIT* closes the 1968 text. Duvert preferred to close the text of the revised version with the chapter *SORTIE FIN*. *JARDIN PUBLIC*, *NUIT* therefore moved up from tenth place to seventh.

I. CHANTIER

Trucks, cars. Houses are being built. The wounded are being evacuated. Silence falls. And night. Some of the wounded have diarrhoea and squat in a corner.

Children played. A few days passed. There were mounds of ochre sand. To make pies. The cot was built, but not quite. It had no floor, the children would fall, no cellar, no ground. No earth under the cot. The children went to hell.

The signs that had announced the buildings were taken down. We didn't burn them: we carried them in a wheelbarrow to a shack made of pressed metal,

CHANTIER

Trucks. Cars. Houses are being built. The wounded are being evacuated. Silence falls, and night.

Some of the workers had diarrhoea, and you could see them squatting in a corner.

Children played. Days went by. There were piles of sand that looked like giant anthills. For the cement, for the children. The cot was built, but not quite. It had no floor, the children would fall, no cellar, no ground, no earth: the children would go to hell.

The signs announcing the new buildings were taken down. We didn't burn them: we piled them up on a wheelbarrow and carried them to their destination.

screwed, riveted. Snow covered the hut. Under the brazier, the snow was melting, rolling along the ground, digging a gutter, evacuating the gravel that had accumulated further on, near the taxi rank.

Another day. We were getting used to it. We'd approach the building. You'd run your hands and fingernails over it, leaving a bit of blood. Our blood is white and earthy. Their blood gnawed at the glass, wood and plastic doors, and they hummed under our caresses as we went in and out, leaving sweat behind too.

In the afternoon, the women screamed and went to the hairdressers to have their hair dyed red. Then the heads were dried and sucked out of the magazines. The whole street passed in front of the shop. Customers inside looked at customers outside, or strollers outside looked at strollers inside. We went home. It was dark.

The street was quiet. Cars went by, children. Newspapers were sold. No one stopped.

Chairs were pushed aside, cutlery was placed on tables, gas and electricity were set alight.

Wood, metal, fabric under the hands. A sort of fire in the heads that sagged on white pillows, hollowed out in the middle by a puddle of grey. Like newspaper ink, sweat from hands, boiling beef, clothes hanging from hangers, resting on chair backs.

in a hut made of corrugated iron, even the sides. Snow covered the roof. Under the brazier, the snow melted, the water dug gullies, pushing gravel that accumulated

further away, at the edge of the pavement, near the taxi stop.

We were getting used to it. You'd get close to the buildings. You'd run your hands and fingernails over them and maybe leave some blood behind. White, earthy blood. This blood gnawed at the doors, the glass, the fake wood, the plastic, the steel. Sweat was left behind.

At midday, the women were shouting, the children were coming back from school. Then they shouted, they were leaving. Then they would scream. They went to the hairdresser and had their hair dyed. Their heads were dried. They read magazines, they read photos of heads. The whole street passed in front of the shop. The snow. Passers-by, customers, looked at each other through the window and avoided seeing each other. We went home, it was dark. The children came home. Women shouted, plates clattered, food cooked.

The street was quiet. Cars drove by. The children. Newspapers were being sold. No one was there.

Chairs were moved, cutlery was placed, plates rang on the tables, gas burned, electricity burned.

Wood, metal and fabric were all fake. A sort of fire in the heads that fell on white pillows, or pillows with big gay flowers, hollowed out in the middle by a puddle of grey. Like the ink in newspapers, the sweat on hands, vegetables and clothes hanging from the backs of chairs lacquered with paint, plastic-coated and gay.

The floors creaked. It was raining. The shutters were closed, the blinds lowered. The lights no longer shone. Except for those of the trains on the horizon, their windows flashing. Time to fornicate. Cigarettes by the beds went out, and in the carriages ashes fell with

the jolts of love or rail, onto grey clothes, hands, jowls, sheets. In the silence, which they did not break.

Another lorry was being unloaded. Long, straight, black pipes were piled like logs in the red or orange mud, the colour of dung and blood. On top of them, we'd put others, cantilevered, shorter and angled. And then there were the brown guys with the sharp noses, opening their bowls, pausing, pissing on the pipes.

We laughed in the street at night. Young voices. With vocal chords that are soft, mewling, and others that rasp their laughter, they mingled in each throat. Other voices responded, brief, high-pitched laughter, a woman's croaking, around the sighs of the male voices. It all drifted away, like the fatigue of having laughed too much, the sternum, the diaphragm distended, torn by laughter - going further, beyond the muddy streets, frozen by fluorescent tubes, the windows, the building site, over there, where there was a dark pit, twenty metres deep.

There was no more laughter anywhere. We waited for the day.

It was daylight. Children were shouting. Others were crying. Laughed. It was the same cry. It was the children. We could hear them.

And the voices of mothers, harsh voices, It was raining. The blinds were down. The lights did not shine, except for those of the trains on the horizon, the station is close, right there, their windows passing. Time to mate, the grey face, the belly as it can, the cheerful pillow. The cigarettes by the bed are going out, the ashes in the carriages are falling with the jolts of the railway, powdering the grey clothes, the hands, the thighs, the

sheets. In the silence.

Another lorry was being unloaded. Long, shiny black pipes were stacked like logs in the red or orange mud, the colour of dung and blood. Smaller pipes, some angled, were cantilevered on top. Brown-haired guys sat on top, their noses sharpened, opening bowls, eating out of the pipes and pissing behind them. A new site.

There was laughter in the street, at night, in the summer. Young voices, with vocal chords that were soft and mewling, and others that were raspy, fat and bursting; these laughs mingled as if in a single throat. Other voices responded, brief, high-pitched, the yelps of women and unwashed girls. It would fade away, vanish, like the tiredness of having laughed too much, the chest torn open by laughter - it would slip away beyond the muddy streets, frozen by the light of the big street lamps, or that of the windows, or of the building site, over there, the new one, where there was an obscure, orange, black pit, twenty metres deep.

We stopped laughing after that. We waited for the day.

It was daylight. Children were shouting. Others were crying. Others were laughing. It was the same cry. These are the children.

You could hear them.

And the women were screaming. Voices without

bitter, strong, of women in black coats, navy blue, anus brown, grey hair, black, anus, spoken voices with wrinkles, eyelashes in the wrinkles, flaccid openings from which sounds and liquids emerge.

The pipes were buried. The ground had been opened up, a muddy, orange vulva, the

slug-coloured earth oozing in heaps near the holes, the pipes would carry gas, or water, to the middle of the site, where people talked, where children ran.

Quiet everywhere, no noise, motorbikes, trains, planes, jackhammers, bicycles, jaws, doors, you couldn't hear a thing.

But sooner the merchants called, the shops were invaded, emptied, people went into the shops, came out with their booty, left mud on the windows, their mark, they would come back, they were happy, the streets were filled with buyers on foot, in vehicles, dogs on leads, children in their hands, meat and bread in their hands, and their wallets. It was women with their hands full who were coming home.

II. PEOPLE

A bookshop. It's also a toy shop. The children come in and out in their turn, but more briskly, jostling each other, without hiding their greed, pleasure or dismay at spending money. They look at the children's books in the window, the toys between the books and above them, the pens in open white satin cases, the lamps that shine a bright white and yellow light on the red crepe paper on which the books, toys and pens are placed.

A guy looks in the window. He is not Weeping, without laughter, the voices of mothers. Hard, bitter, strong, these women in black, navy blue, anus-brown coats, voices with wrinkles, eyelashes in the wrinkles, decent black lines to mark the anus-brown gaze, flaccid openings from which sounds, looks, liquids emerge.

The pipes were buried. Trenches had been cut in the ground, the muddy, orange earth oozed out, shining in little heaps at the edge

of the trench. The pipes carried gas, or water, to places where people talked, where women were limp and dry, where children ran.

Quiet everywhere, no noise, motorbikes, trains, planes, jackhammers, bicycles, mothers, doors, cars, you couldn't hear a thing.

But sooner the merchants called, the shops burst open, were invaded, emptied, you came back with your booty, you walked in the mud, you were happy, the streets similar to motorway interchanges were crossed by shoppers in coats, with a dog on a lead, a child in the hand, or the purse. They were mothers, with their hands full, on their way home.

PEOPLE

A bookshop. It's also a toy shop. Children come in and out, briskly, jostling each other, without hiding their greed, pleasure or dismay at spending money. They look at the children's books in the window, the toys, the pens in white satin-lined cases, the white and yellow lamps on the red crepe paper on which the books, toys and pens are placed.

A figure stares into the window. He is

He's still old, but he's dressed in black, his skin is grey because autumn has fallen, a sudden, pale, too mild autumn that worries him. He is old when the children are young, because the children don't look at him.

In the bookshop, the shop assistants are handing out sweets, liquorice, sugar things that smell like snow, but the snow isn't falling, in autumn it's the leaves. You can't see the little coins between the children's fingers.

The guy thought he'd like to sell things to children. There are a lot of them, because it's

the end of the school day, which is next door, and when they come out of class, they walk past the shop, come to buy primers, look at the plastic machine guns, the bears, the daggers.

The man's coat is closed. His hands are in his pockets, fiddling with a packet of tobacco. One hand, rather. The other, in an empty pocket, is hugging itself. His ribs ache. The children come and go. Pain in the bones of the legs, and in the lower abdomen, in the penis. The children have no penis. A lizard sleeps between their thighs. He thinks about that lizard, about making it wake up and run across the grass. They don't think about it, the lizard will run on its own if it feels like it, at night, under the sheets, or in their heads, the little beast will run who is just a little dragon, now asleep, the guy thinks about her, no more blood in his head, his blood digs into his belly like hunger, weighs there like hunger, burns in his belly, his whole body is already the colour of ashes.

He looks at the children's faces, recognising the features and ugliness of their parents. He sees old faces through the children's heads, the wrinkles, the marks, a human figure takes shape, appears in this white worm flesh. He doesn't like children, he has nothing to say to them, nothing to say about them, he hates them, he needs them.

He's not old yet, but he's dressed in black. Autumn has fallen, a sudden autumn, pale, too mild, worrying. The man is old, because children don't look at him.

In the bookshop, the shop assistant is handing out sweets, liquorice, sugar things that smell like snow, but snow doesn't fall, in autumn it's leaves. You can't see the little coins between the children's fingers.

He thought he'd like to sell some things to the children. There are a lot of them: it's just

after school, which is next door. When they come out of school, they walk past the shop, buy primers and read the prices of machine guns, bears and daggers.

The man's coat is closed. His hands fiddle with the contents of his pockets. His ribs ache. Children come and go. Pain in the bones, pain in the lower abdomen. The children. A lizard sleeps between their thighs. He thinks about this lizard; make it wake up and run. They don't think about it, it's forbidden, they buy the liquorice and admire the toys, it's allowed, the lizard will run on its own if it wants to, at night, under the sheets, or in their heads, the little beast will run. The man thinks of her, no more blood in his head, his blood digs into his belly like hunger, weighs there like hunger, burns in his belly, his whole body is ashes.

He looks at the children's faces, where he can see the old age of their parents, he sees old faces on top of children's faces, the wrinkles, the marks, the bestial old age of fathers and mothers imprinted on their white flesh. He doesn't like children, he knows who they are, he has nothing to say to them, nothing to say about them, he hates them.

Dirty little adult faces, dirty little vices, dirty little stupidity, meanness, cowardice of little adults. But they move. Adults walk slowly, chew, love, suffer, sleep slowly, adults think, children move. Elephants are slow and flies are fast, thinks the guy, and that makes him laugh. In front of the shop window, he thinks he likes flies and listens to them like little puppies chirping around him.

The children shine in the light of the shop windows. He likes this light. He smiles, it's night, the street is empty, the children are scared, he likes that fear.

III. WINDOW

After a few years, the white paint on the ceiling has become dirty - radiators, tobacco. The walls are lined with objects that, having accumulated for too long, are no longer likely to be looked at. Sitting down, sitting at the table, lying down - these are all tasks that reveal nothing, object or presence. The floor, wiped clean, is nonetheless marked by the footsteps that have walked on it, by the sharp, hard objects that have fallen and cut into it, by the stains of liquids, wine, water, ink, sperm. Every groove in the floor is frequently (un)cleaned of the small debris that marks your home. Clothes hung on door hooks, placed on a chest of drawers, straddling files, rolled up on the floor, no longer belong to anyone. The room admits that you are not alive. Its space loses all geometric rigour, appears as the fruit of a conventional and haphazard arrangement; the solidity of its topography is diluted, each span of which had been furnished with a memory, a glance, even letting the eyes wander over these places that no use, ornament, dangerous projection, deterioration,

Dirty little adult faces, dirty little vices, dirty little stupidity, cruelty, cowardice of little adults. But they move. Adults walk slowly, work, suffer, torture, sleep slowly; adults die, children move. Elephants are slow, flies are fast, thinks the man, and laughs. In front of the shop window, he thinks he likes flies, he listens to them like little puppies chirping around him.

The children shine in the light of the shop windows. He likes this light. He smiles, it's night, the street is empty, the children are scared, he likes that fear.

WINDOW

After a few years, the white paint on the

ceiling has become soiled (radiators, tobacco). The walls are decorated with shabby objects that, piled up for no reason, don't catch the eye. Sitting, sitting at the table, going to bed - these are all drudgery and fatigue that even sleep can no longer repair.

The floor is worn: traffic, falling objects, dust, stains, cleaning.

We put on, take off and look after clothes that don't belong to anyone. Everything expresses that you're not alive.

scrofula, had brought you out of invisibility. It becomes a corner of shadow, reduced to the prescribed dimensions, where you are like a cyprin in the aquarium, a narrow globe decorated with vulgarly coloured pebbles, where you turn a hundred times in the tepid, sparingly measured water.

So you leave your bed, chilled by the morning, to approach the furniture where the clothes are, naked and bent over; you don't look at them, too eager to be supported, enclosed by them - the clothing becomes a truss, repressing an overflow of being, from which pain and pride would be born, and emanating only a little perfume of grey, shameful sadness. Your body has gone limp; the only stiffness on your arms and thighs is a horripilation of the epidermis: the shivering caused by the cold. Shod, tied, vaguely washed in terms of the parts of the body that need to be shown to your fellow men, you gradually stand up on your legs.

You look at the walls and ceiling with an early morning eye, incapable even of disappointment, indifferent presences, like an underground bench, a café bar, a waiting room console, a street pavement, that can do nothing but weary you. You feel more acutely the gradual fading and slowing down of the blood in the arteries, which harden and relax

under a flesh that has become nothing more than a heavy envelope on a painful, badly erected frame of bones that fit together awkwardly, cartilaginous and heavier with each passing year. You hesitate for a moment before pressing the door button with a hand that isn't there, because you no longer remind your body of yourself. You think that you work eight hours, sleep eight hours, wait eight hours every day, and you look at your watch to see that before you leave you might have the leisure to sit on the edge of the bed, take a packet of cigarettes out of your pocket and smoke one slowly. You decide that A home? No, a refuge, a corner of shade, reduced to the acceptable dimensions, where you are like a fish in its aquarium, in its glass ball lined with multicoloured gravel, where it turns a hundred times a minute.

You get out of bed, freezing in the morning; you approach, naked and hunched over, the cupboard where you've put the clothes you wear every day. You don't look at them, you're in too much of a hurry to get inside, locked in, warmed up, imprisoned.

Shod, tied, vaguely washed for the parts of the skin that are left uncovered, you stand up.

You examine the walls, the ceiling, the furniture; you feel the worthlessness of it all, and you know you are the same. You're no longer made of flesh, you're just a heavy, painful mass crushing a vague frame of fragile bones.

Just for a moment, you hold yourself back from opening the door and leaving. You remind yourself that you work eight hours, sleep eight hours, wait eight hours every day. You keep an eye on the clock.

We're early, of course. We've got time to sit on the edge of the bed, to get out. You pause, ruminating on the steps you'll take five or six minutes later to get out and get back to work - down there, and first in the metro, under the street, under the others. You toast your cigarette; you watch the minute hand out of the corner of your eye. You feel satisfied, little by little. Then, in spite of yourself, even though you know the answer and are tired of this daily examination, you look at the window, which is like the face of your life. Without the slightest shiver of bitterness, doubting just a little the clarity of your view, you check that instead of a window there is only a wall.

IV. EXIT, END

A party has come to the square. Girls, old ladies, bitches and sows wallow in the watermelon peelings. The masquerade is a Babel: drummers, cigar-chompers, churners, suckers, suburban wiseguys, belly-button decorations, swaying, stomping. Wine and sunshine. During the rut, they stick their index fingers into the natural orifices that indicate the women and the hens that are about to lay their eggs. It's a strange time of year; the leaves are falling fast. And these outnumbered smokers, with their heels up their arses, bang their balls into the split tree trunks that rise up with all the rigour of Sunday.

The priests begin their procession, broom in hand, host in ear, making their way

through the streets, blessing the asses. Bowls of cider on the urban zinc to get their fingers wet. And the cockades! Triumphant in the waltz, the women with their Auvergne profile growl, lined with copper and filings, knives pierce, large children are thrust into the sacked guts. To enclose the mob, they have horse-drawn carriages, which poop on the kids.

cigarettes, smoking one slowly. We think about what we'll do later to get off and go to work - down there, first the metro, under the street, under the others, with them. We smoke. The minute hand turns.

Then, before leaving the room, we glance out the window. With a little bit of bitterness, but without ever really believing what you're seeing, you check, as you do every day, that there's nothing outside either.

EXIT, END

A party has come to the square. Girls, old ladies, bitches and sows wallow in the peelings. The masquerade is a Babel: drummers, gossipers, braggarts, suckers, suburban wiseguys, swaying and stomping. Wine and sunshine. During the rut, they stick their index fingers into the natural orifices that point to women, like the cloaca of hens about to lay their eggs. Strange season. The leaves are falling fast. And these unnumbered walkers, heel to toe, bang their balls into the split tree trunks that rise up with all the rigour of Sunday.

The priests begin their procession, broom in hand, host in ear, making their way through the streets, blessing the asses. Bowls of cider on the sticky zinc where you get your

fingers wet. And the cockades! Triumphant in the waltz, the women with their Auvergne profile growl, lined with copper and filings, knives pierce, large children are thrust into the sacked guts. To enclose the mob, the barriers are horse-drawn carriages that poop on the ground.

without breeches and cut every road leading to or from the square. Seated in the carts, the emergency sextons, in imperial falbala, wear their mustaches of honour on the brides' necks. The crowd erupts in cheers. It is very difficult to cross the square.

As long as you jump over the trolleys, you can.

And suddenly, straight ahead, the street is deserted.

But really silent. Iron shutters on the shop windows; wooden shutters on the windows; the houses, as if abandoned, seem to demand the rain, the fireworks, the bottles, the nibbles that we expel, palm raised, before going back under the eiderdown to, tomorrow, have black liver.

You know you've just passed the crowd of owners, the candied jubilation where the wine flows; you know that, behind them, a few hundred metres away, the city begins; you know that, in front of you, for two or three kilometres, you have shacks, factories, rubbish heaps and curved roads. And the street, straight as a drawbar, which you walk along leg by leg, will join up with these roads.

The houses are crowded together, to the left and to the right. Shrunk in the middle of courtyards with little beds of roses between the stones. Wisteria on the bars of the gates, they smell of the dirty laundry of the orphanage. They have stoops, these shacks, with three grey cement steps where small flints cast sunlight, a marquee of tiles or cathedral glass and a doormat as red as the vicar's hair, on the threshold.

Further on, there are no more houses. It's after one last "bougnot", his market garden, the coal stalls, the enamelled sheets of pastis and sodas, the black cat in the cellar staircase,

the bicycles on the millstone. Then there were the big empty plots, sometimes enclosed like gardens.

The weeds would grow right up to the belly, and cut every access road. Seated in these carts, the sacristans of honour, in imperial falbalas, press their moustaches to the necks of the brides. Ovations. It's hard to get through the crowd.

As long as you can get under the cars, you can do so and get out of the square.

And suddenly, straight ahead, the street is deserted.

But really silent. Iron shutters on the shop windows; wooden shutters on the windows. And the mediocre houses smell of slaps, wine, rain, black moods.

Straight ahead, for two or three kilometres, we have villas, shacks, factories, rubbish heaps and curved roads, which the street will join.

The houses are crowded together, to the left and to the right. Small houses set in gardens adorned with roses and pebbles. From the wisteria to the bars of the gates, they reek of the dirty laundry of the orphanage. They have stoops, these shacks, with three grey cement steps where small flints cast sunlight, a marquee of tiles or cathedral glass, a doormat as red as the vicar's hair.

Further on, there are no more houses. It's after one last "bougnot", his market garden, the coal stalls, the enamelled sheets of pastis, the black cat in the cellar staircase, the

bicycles leaning against the millstone wall.

Now it's just a lot of wasteland,

Rosehips, scrapes, catnip, branch fences where the black tendrils of bindweed dry on the peeled bark, torn posters in the shape of cones, powdery thickets where the undergrowth burns, hedgehogs, holes, pits for petty theft, old ox bones - there's plenty for children to play with, to rummage through and to kill each other.

In some of these plots, hidden by the elder trees, are low huts made of canvas, cardboard and string, the dwellings of widows in chasuble, the huts of gardeners and tramps, now dead, where you can go naked, with your knickers down, your shirt high under your armpits, white and quivering, your belly wriggling, all strained, when it rains - rain is the mother of all vices.

Sometimes, too, sheds open onto the street, warehouses, carpentries, with beams, cliffs, sawdust, carcasses of walnut chairs adorned with balls and goat's feet, rusty locksmith's workshops, forges, rabbit skins, old rags, a battered van for the morning round, a collection of tyres, elsewhere, cracked green bottles, angular metal acrobats, grayed pottery, bowls from the Great War, witch-hair bundles, barbed wire, oyster and solens shells, mouldy cassocks, buried under the wriggles of earthworms, Sunday pictures, piano strings, spoiled ribbons, pumpkins bursting with soup, anthills, Breton cupboard doors, red bindings of prizes for excellence, sheep's jaws, soles, pots, windows, brown, boiled suitcases, gaping with flowered paper like a hotel room, unknown manuscripts, tied with leg twine, shreds of carpet, sowbugs, earwigs, millipedes, grey slugs - big school hats, hollow plaster gnomes,

sometimes enclosed like gardens. The weeds grow up to their bellies, rosehips, scrapes, catnip, fences of branches where the black tendrils of bindweed dry on the peeled bark, posters torn into the shape of cones, powdery thickets, burnt brush, hedgehogs, holes, potholes, old ox bones - there's plenty for children to play with, to rummage through and to kill each other.

On some of these plots of land, low huts made of tarpaulin, cardboard or string, hidden by elder trees, dwellings of widows in chasuble, huts of gardeners, of chimney sweepers, now dead, and where you go to get naked, your knickers down, your shirt high under your armpits, quite white and quivering, your belly twisting, all strained, when it rains, the rain being the mother of all vices.

Sometimes, too, sheds open onto the street, warehouses, joineries with beams, cliffs, sawdust, carcasses of walnut chairs adorned with balls and goat's feet, rusty locksmith's workshops, forges, rabbit skins, old rags, a battered van for the morning round, a collection of tyres, elsewhere, cracked green bottles, angular metal acrobats, grayed pottery, bowls from the Great War, witch-hair bundles, barbed wire, oyster and solens shells, mouldy cassocks, buried under the wriggles of earthworms, Sunday pictures, piano strings, spoiled ribbons, pumpkins bursting with soup, anthills, Breton cupboard doors, red bindings of prizes for excellence, sheep's jaws, soles, pots, windows, brown and boiled suitcases, of flowered paper, unknown manuscripts, tied with leg twine, shreds of carpet, underneath sowbugs, earwigs, millipedes, grey slugs - big school hats, gnomes in hollow plaster, peeled-off saints, polychrome virgins, country tears, snails who

Peeled-off saints, polychrome virgins, country tears, snails that mate and fart, pedal car

chassis, blond hair, sharp eyes, splayed incisors, childhood memories.

Beyond them, the factories begin, marking the place where the railway tracks run through the wastelands, at their deepest points, out of the houses, towards the marshalling yards in the suburbs. And you'll find letterboxes made of rain-bleached plywood or zinc cracked by the postmen's claws, perched on posts in the clouds. And down there, up ahead, the sky is pale blue, almost grey, like provincial eyes.

V. MARKET

Maybe it's a cylinder shaped like an umbrella stand. Or one of those big bags in which you take home your shop purchases. Or a large shoebox. A green, red or yellow plastic planter, an upside-down truncated cone with a base about thirty centimetres in diameter. In any case, it's a container. It's full. It's grey and covered in dust: the cigarette ashes we've regularly emptied into it.

You unfold a newspaper from some time ago that you no longer want or need to read. It's crumpled and creased, no longer legible, and looks as it always has: dirty paper. The contents of the wastepaper basket are poured over it.

The streets are empty. As usual, because the old men and women, in the early afternoon, are lurking behind the curtains, knitting, reading the morning paper; the shops are closed, no one is walking in the street. No one is out in the sunshine enjoying it.

The heap of rubbish on the sheet of paper is roughly the shape of a turd, long-moulded, with a bulging centre; and its matter has all the incoherence of a "turd".

mating and drooling, pedal car chassis, blond hair, sharp eyes, splayed incisors, childhood memories.

Beyond begin the factories, empty today, with railway tracks scorching the short grass. And on a post in the clouds, you'll find letterboxes made of rain-bleached plywood and zinc scratched by the postman's claw. Finally, all the way up there, the sky is pale blue, almost grey, like provincial eyes.

MARKET

It's a shopping bag, or a shoebox, or a plastic planter: in any case, it's a container. It's full and covered in dust.

You unfold a newspaper you no longer feel like reading, and pour in the contents of the wastebasket or container.

The streets are empty. As usual: because the old men and women, in the early afternoon, are lurking behind the curtains, knitting, reading the morning paper. The shops are closed, no one is walking in the street. No one in the sunshine.

The pile of rubbish on the sheet of paper is roughly the shape of a turd, with a bulging centre. digestion.

Now that the market is over, the traders have gone, and before the road sweeps and burns, little people in grey knitted shawls and military medal trousers, greedy, sleepy heads, chapped stomachs, black bone hands with horn plates, old people prowl the square, pushing children's cars or soapboxes on four wheels salvaged from their grandchildren's

skates. They collect wood and shavings from fish and meat wrappers and crumpled cardboard boxes, all of which they pile up as fuel.

The turd has a beginning and an end. The first thing to be ejected from the bin, the box or the bag is the lightest stuff: bits of gaseous paper, rolled into a fist and grown to the size of it; matches burnt at the end and blackened, blunt by the fire, for a third of their length; cigarette butts twisted by the pressure applied to them to extinguish them, crumpled with transverse folds where the paper has sometimes cracked to reveal filamentous excrement. This is also the orange peel floor. Not all of them. These are very small, lifted with the thumbnail, slowly cut into curved strips on small oranges, with a very thin skin that stuck tightly to the fruit, it carried away small pulpy yellow cankers. Light, intertwined peels; pick one up and you've got a rich garland, which immediately unravels into two or three strings.

This is the fish corner. A smell of dirty genitals. People flock here because the merchants abandon the unsold tide on the spot, among the fir branches gleaming with scales and the glaucous puddles of crushed ice. But the dogs, the cats, or a few old men who are quicker, have already taken away the best of the debris.

Now that the traders have gone, and before the road sweepers come, little people in grey knitted shawls and military medallion trousers, old people with greedy, sleepy faces, who had been waiting on the sidelines since the morning, prowl the market square: they push dilapidated children's cars, or soapboxes mounted on four wheels salvaged from their grandchildren's skates. They collect wood, cardboard and packaging shavings, all of which they pile up as fuel.

The top of the rubbish heap is light: bits of

paper rolled up in a fist, burnt matches, twisted cigarette butts, crumpled with creases from which tobacco threads emerge, thin orange peels, cut out of small fruits with the thumbnail, the nail having carried away a little yellow pulp.

Long, intertwined barks: take one and you'll bring back a rich garland, which can be unravelled into two or three rosaries.

This is the fish corner. The smell of dirty genitals. People flock here because the merchants leave the waste from the tide here, among the fir branches with their glaucous scales and the puddles of crushed ice. But the dogs and cats have already taken the best of the debris.

Half-eaten heads remain, the suppliers have already taken their share, and the flies. There are also guts, purple, red and brown pipes, slimy pockets that stick to the soles of your shoes, but where you can sometimes find a beautiful slug with pink or yellow spawn.

The layer near the central bulge was disappointing. All we found to throw away was a large quantity of tobacco packets. The Gauloises, which had been twisted, were dripping brown juice, and the pipe had been wiped on them. Of grey, ordinary corporal, packed, they yawn like empty coal sacks. They are mounted one on top of the other, propped up by matchboxes, a blue biro (gnawed at one end, strong canine and premolar marks, drooling with hardened ink at the other), interlaced with threads torn from the edge of a worn garment, grey,

brown threads that unravel, releasing flames, threads with knots like bad wool, sudden strangulations, loops, and whose ends get lost in the heart of the tobacco packets.

Opposite the fishmongers, there's nothing interesting at first glance: it's a stall for hosiery, soap and other hardware merchants. But if you lift the cracked sheets of strong paper, the bristol advertisements and the flattened cases, you'll find strings. White, hairy strings. Hours untying all those knots. Twine is used to tie lots of climbing vegetables to their stakes, to make belts, braces, ties for shutters that slam against walls during the day and against each other at night. It replaces the elastic of grey woollen socks, and with two or three twists in the fat of the thigh it holds the stockings in a gutter of flesh where they graft themselves. You use them first to tie down what you bring home from the market.

The centrepieces of the building: large Half-eaten heads remain, fit for soup, where the flies take their share. There are also purple, red, brown, slimy guts that stick to the soles of the feet, but where you can sometimes find a beautiful pink or yellow spawning slug.

In the middle of the rubbish there are lots of empty tobacco packets. They are dripping with brown juice, a pipe has been wiped on them; they yawn like coal sacks. They are mixed with matches burnt further than the first ones.

There's a blue biro, gnawed at one end (strong marks from canines and premolars), and long grey-brown threads that are coming loose, no doubt torn from a worn garment.

Opposite the fishmongers, there's nothing of interest: it's the stalls of the hosiery, hardware and soap merchants. But if you lift up the cracked sheets of strong paper, the bristol advertisements and the flattened cases, you'll find white, hairy strings. Hours: untying all those knots.

These strings are used to tie vegetables to their stakes, to make belts, braces and fastenings for rattling shutters.

They replace the elastic bands on socks and, with two or three twists in the thigh fat, hold the stockings in a gutter of bluish flesh.

Firstly, they will be used to secure what we bring back from the market.

The centrepieces of the rubbish pieces of thick white earthenware plate. A long comb with spaced teeth, heavy with soot. A book - cheap, bought as toilet paper in station kiosks, torn out of five, ten, twenty pages in the toilets, then kept in the pocket: after a dozen journeys, it is reduced to a hollow cardboard box. In this case, a few pages remain, torn halfway and at an angle, with khaki fingerprints.

Other pieces: two empty tubes. One is flat, punctured at the base, the film of paint covering the 'aluminium is white, with no writing. The other has been rolled up to its mouth, the spiral is brightly coloured, touched by sticky fingers whose prints have collected dust, sheep and lumps. A bouquet of flowers, marigolds and anemones, discarded long after the wilt. Black corollas, curled up as if under fire and dripping with liquid rot; the upper leaves are little dry rolls of mouldy green; those at the bottom have the softness, the equivocal shine of a piece of rotten meat; the stems are sticks, the tips of which have been subjected to water like an acid, which has reduced them to a cage of longitudinal needles empty of any pulp; This has sunk to the bottom of the vase, along with other leaves, one or two pebbles that had been put in to keep the flowers in a certain direction - a grey and black dregs,

diluted in a little tap water; this bottom of the vase is poured into the basket, it makes a small plastic and compact heap on shreds of emerald green cloth which, as evidenced by traces of sewing and well-marked folds, belonged to a suit lining.

Fruit and vegetables are the best. The season is rich, putrefaction goes quickly, and there are several kilos of vegetables on the ground for anyone who wants to pick them up. Tomatoes, leeks, radishes, chicory, turnips, Brussels sprouts, pea pods. Apples, pears, grapes, peaches, whatever state they're in: the fresh part is for lunchtime dessert, the crushed part is for dinner, and the peaches are always ready to be eaten. pieces of thick white earthenware plate. A long comb with spaced teeth, clogged with grime. A book - cheap, you buy them as toilet paper in stations, tear off five or ten pages in the toilets, then keep the book in your pocket. After a few trips, it's reduced to its cover. Here, a handful of pages remain, torn halfway and at an angle, with khaki fingerprints.

Other items: two empty tubes. One is flat, punctured at the base, white, with no inscription. The other is rolled up to its mouth; this spiral is brightly coloured, touched by sticky fingers whose prints have agglomerated dust and sheep. A bouquet of flowers, discarded long after they have wilted: marigolds, anemones.

The corollas are black, curled up as if under fire, and dripping with liquid rot. The dry leaves at the top are little grey-green rolls; those at the bottom have the equivocal softness of a piece of rotten meat; the stems are sticks, the tips of which have been subjected to water like an acid that has drained them of all pulp.

The bottom of the vase (a greyish dregs, two pebbles and a few shreds of leaves) was poured over a piece of emerald green cloth, which, as the stitching marks and folds show, belonged to a suit lining.

Fruit and vegetables are the best. The season is rich, putrefaction goes quickly, and there are several kilos of vegetables on the ground for anyone who wants to pick them up. Tomatoes, leeks, radishes, chicory, turnips, cabbage, pea pods. Apples, apricots, peaches, plums, whatever state they're in: the fresh part is for lunchtime dessert, the crushed part is for dinner.

pourrie provides a compote for the evening, well cooked and annealed with the sugar of the commune, or another, or without sugar.

It's a covered market, tarmacked from end to end. The council stops its lorry, the sweepers come down, it's about time. There are large cardboard boxes and plastic bags next to the clothes seller. Further on, a pair of laces, new in its ring, the shoe seller smokes and smokes again, and drops his cigarette to serve the people, and his cigarette falls to the ground, pierced by saliva, barely smoked, so he lights another one, and puts it back down to talk, give change, open boxes, and it falls, and two packets pass through it, each one will be good to smoke for us when it's dry.

The dung is dwindling, enriched by a variety of tiny objects, all mixed up in a mud with a metallic sheen. Mysterious fragments, like this little wedge of red plastic, this short metal pipe, these transparent crystals that could be broken glass beads. A microcosm of staples, screws, tinfoil, fly and collar buttons, metro tickets, little balls of yellow cotton, whales, pennies, balls of hair plucked from brushes - all of this could only be inventoried under a microscope, like the tests for radiolarians, diatoms and foraminifera when the green mud of the ponds or the plankton of the shores have been calcined.

They set off, fresh-eyed and stiff-headed.

The wheels squeak, the brooms scrub, a fire of planks sizzles on the pavement, blazing higher and higher, they go up the streets, each one on his own side, they have laid out on their booty the waxed cloth that twenty years ago they had stuck on the kitchen table, when they had children, the thick white wooden table, and the sun, without heat, shines hard, it is completely yellow.

pourrie provides a compote for the evening, well cooked and annealed with the sugar of the commune, or another, or without sugar.

It's a covered, tarmac market. The council stops its lorry, the sweepers come down, it's about time. There are large cardboard boxes and huge plastic bags near the clothes merchant; further on, a pair of laces, new in its ring. The shoe merchant smokes and puts down his cigarette to serve people, the cigarette falls to the ground, pierced with saliva, he relights another, puts it down, gives change, opens boxes, and it falls, and two packets pass through: each one will be good to smoke when it is dry.

Mysterious fragments, like this little wedge of red plastic, this short metal pipe, these transparent crystals that could be broken glass beads. A microcosm of staples, screws, tinfoil, buttons, fly and collar buttons, underground tickets, yellow cotton pellets, whalebone, pennies, balls of hair torn from brushes, all of this could only be inventoried under a microscope, like the tests on radiolarians, diatoms and foraminifera, when the green mud of ponds and the plankton of shores have been calcined.

They set off, fresh-eyed and stiff-headed. The wheels squeak, the brooms scrub, a fire of planks sizzles on the pavement, blazing higher and higher, they go up the streets,

each one on his own, they have covered their booty with the oilcloth that twenty years ago they had stuck on the kitchen table, when they had grandchildren, those of the skateboards, the thick white wooden table, and the sun, without heat, shines hard, it is completely yellow.

VI. A POSTER

I have every right to stop in front of a poster, a large photo, and try to understand it. It shows a sofa. On the left, the wall; on the right, the end of the photo. A naked body, flat on its back on the sofa.

A groove divides the back, running from between the shoulders down to between the legs. In front of the spinal groove is the nape of the neck, tilted slightly towards the outside of the poster: we can clearly see an ear from the front, and less precisely the profile of a face.

The mouth and chin are hidden by the shoulder in front; the curve of the back hides the other shoulder.

The hair is higher than the rest of the body: the highest point, although the head is not erect, but in the extension of the furrow that cuts the back lengthwise; the hair is at the end of this furrow, but it is the perspective that makes it seem higher than everything else. Even though they really are.

On either side of the groove, half the back. Because the naked body is lying on the sofa in such a way that the soles of the feet protrude from the poster, and an oblique line is drawn fictitiously from the crotch to the head, from the bottom left corner of the poster to the top right corner. The feet, which are almost joined, are slightly apart. The hair is a patch of black, or dark grey, representing blondness, and from the hair to the feet, the body is oriented like a compass needle pointing north to the right, and ahead. And the blue point of the compass, which is magnetised, and which is red on other compasses, is the head of the subject being photographed, while the white

point, which is sometimes blue, is the feet.

They look messy. You can only see

A POSTER

It shows a sofa. On the left, the wall, then the beginning of the photo; on the right, the end of the photo, then the wall. Maybe it's the other way round. There's a naked body, flat on its back on the sofa.

A groove runs down his back from between his shoulders to between his legs. In front of the spinal groove is the nape of the neck, leaning slightly towards the outside of the poster: the right ear is clearly visible, but the face, in lost profile, is less clear.

The mouth and chin are concealed by the right shoulder, which is in front; the very convex curve of the back conceals the left shoulder.

The hair is higher than the rest of the body, even though the head is not erect but in the continuation of the furrow that divides the back; the hair is there, but it is the perspective that makes it seem higher than the rest. Although they really are.

On either side of the groove, half of the back. The nude body is lying in such a way that the soles of the feet, in the foreground, protrude from the poster, and a diagonal line is drawn by this body from the lower left corner of the poster, where the feet are, to the upper right corner, where the hair appears. The feet are almost together, or slightly apart. The hair is a black patch, representing blondness; and, from the hair to the feet, the body is curiously oriented like a compass needle pointing north just over there. And the blue point of the compass, which is magnetised, and which is red on other compasses, would be the model's head, while the white point, which is sometimes blue, would be her feet.

They look messy. You can only see the soles of the feet are dirty. In fact, you can also see the right outer edge of the right foot, almost in profile. As for the left foot (far apart from the other, at second glance), you can only see the underside. This is because the body is lying on its stomach, oriented as we know it. The right leg is shown almost in profile, while the left leg shows almost the inside of the knee, with the calf visible almost from behind.

These dark areas, which suggest the dirtiness of the feet, are unevenly distributed. The sole of the right foot is indicated by a very dark line, a black sole. On the bottom of the left foot, there is an almost black area, the underside of the toes, the detail of which is poorly captured by the giant photo, or confused in the overly greasy print. In any case, the toes are black.

The middle of the foot is clear and smooth.

The shading of the feet and head, and the grey shading of the hollow of the lumbar region, while the foundation is very light, suggest that the photographer's interest was focused on the part of the body between the lumbar region and the calves. The light comes together there, although at first glance it doesn't seem to, since the darker parts, apart from the soles of the feet, are not black, but at most a slightly grey.

The whole poster is a very elongated rectangle enclosing a body that is also very long. This elongation of the body is an effect of perspective, so obvious is the disproportion between the length of the legs and the length of the back, which seems short.

It looks like one because it's curved. Their soles are dirty. You can also see the right outer edge of the right foot. As for the left foot, you can only see the underside.

The feet stretch like the rest of the body; the toes are an extension of the right leg seen in profile, or almost, while the other toes are an extension of the left leg seen from behind, or almost.

The dark areas suggesting dirtiness of the feet are unevenly distributed. The sole of the right foot is indicated by a black tongue. On the bottom of the left foot there is also a black area, the underside of the toes; the detail of this is obscured by the overly greasy print on the poster. Anyway, they're black.

The middle of the feet is light and smooth, so the shadow on them suggests that they are very clean and well scraped.

The shading of the feet and head, the grey shading of the hollow of the lumbar region and the very light base suggest that the photographer's interest was focused on the part of the body between the hollow of the lumbar region and the hollow of the knees. The light comes together there, although the dark parts are not black, but of a certain grey.

The poster as a whole is a very elongated rectangle enclosing a very elongated body. This elongation is an effect of perspective; however, seen from the front, the poster remains very elongated, whereas the body would perhaps not remain so if it could be seen from another perspective, which is not the case.

The body appears elongated and ill like the wood of a bow when the bowstring is drawn, or rather would give the impression of being curved in this way if we imagined the bow, not vertical, as we hold it to draw, but horizontal, or better still oriented as the body lying on the sofa is exactly. In this way, the middle of the bow's convexity would not be halfway up the wood, but rather in the

furthest third - shortened, like this very back - the last third from the end of the bow, from the soles of the feet.

The whole, as I said, is stretched out over a space that is also stretched out, and gives a rather pleasant impression, which is only an impression, of length and considerable slenderness.

The body rests on the elbows. We can see the right arm (not the forearm), which forms an acute angle with the torso (the profile of the torso), and we can see a little of the hollow of the right armpit, not enough to show the fleece, if it exists. All we can see of the right arm is from the shoulder to the elbow, the elbow being planted almost vertically in a sofa cushion, the material of which is not very supple, because this elbow, like the whole body, does not hollow it out.

This position of the arm (we can assume that the other, invisible arm does the same) straightens the torso, like a peg, just as a peg or an arm would straighten the torso of a person lying on their stomach, naked or not, reading a newspaper or brochure, and straightening their torso by standing on their elbows, with the sole aim of putting that distance between their face and the printed object which allows easy reading for those who are neither farsighted nor short-sighted. This raising of the torso explains the convexity of the back and the hollowing of the lumbar region.

The middle of the back, as I said, is in remarkable clarity; it is hairless. proportionate (legs too long, back too short) because it is curved, like the wood of a bow when the bowstring is drawn, or rather it would give the impression of being curved in this way if we imagined the bow not vertical, as it is held to be drawn, but oriented as this body is, and seen in the same perspective, like the compass needle assumed earlier.

Then the middle of the bow's convexity (considered from the shooter's point of view) would be in its furthest third, the last third from the bottom of the bow, and the other two apparent thirds would in reality only represent the half of the bow that goes from this bottom to the middle.

The whole model gives a pleasant impression of slenderness, which is only an impression.

The body rests on the elbows. We can see the right arm (not the forearm), we can see a little of the hollow of the right armpit, not enough to distinguish a fleece, if there is one. The right elbow is planted almost vertically in a sofa cushion, the material of which is not very supple and can barely be dug out.

This position of the elbow, of the arm, straightens the torso, like a peg, just as a peg or an arm (an arm bent at the elbow) would straighten the torso of a person lying on their stomach, naked or not, reading a newspaper or brochure, and straightening their torso by standing on their elbows, for the sole purpose of establishing the usual reading distance between their face and the printed object. This raising of the torso explains the convexity of the back and the concavity of the loins, both of which are extremely accentuated.

The lower back is hairless. The skin is very fine-grained and the flesh itself is hard.

The libidinous observer notes that the grain of the skin is very fine, the flesh itself hard and tight. This back seems asexual, although its length, its vigour, its suppleness even, and the narrowness of the hips give it a rather masculine air. We don't see enough of the face, though, the length of the hair is too

ambiguous, we don't uncover enough of the torso (hidden by the right arm, for the part that interests me here) - to clarify, by examining the secondary sexual characteristics, such as the beard, moustache, nipples, sideburns, sideburns, the sex of the body whose back we see.

The position also contributes to this ambiguity. It could be the back of a young girl or boy of fourteen or sixteen, waiting on a sofa for some kind of treatment that requires this posture. I wouldn't dare assume anything else.

Moreover, there is no printed text, company name, registered name, slogan, invitation, harangue or advertising suggestion to give meaning to this immense photograph. The various passers-by who pass by the huge poster are not interested in it, and I myself, having examined it, cannot even approximately interpret its curious symbolism.

VII. THE AMERICAN BAR

So many stories. You have to look in the whisky trail. There's this rumbling, that's a given. Every three minutes you hear rumbling. More like scrap metal being silently dragged across the sand. Silently. They're carrying scrap metal. Iron. Chains. The sand carries men.

We listen to the scent of whisky. All he has to do is talk, and we'll listen, a little better from glass to glass. It speaks. Does not speak. We walked on the sand, dry, or not so dry. Dry, little by little, slowly, so slowly

and tight, it almost looks shiny.

This foundation is asexual, although its length, its vigour, its roundness even, the narrowness of the hips, the elegance of the thighs, give it an absolutely masculine air. But we don't see enough of the face, the length of the hair is too ambiguous, we don't uncover

enough of the torso, to specify, by examining the secondary sexual characteristics, such as the beard, moustache, nipples, sideburns, lipstick, the sex of the body whose back we see.

Perhaps the position also contributes to this ambiguity. It could be the back of an adolescent aged fourteen or sixteen, of one sex rather than another, waiting on a sofa for some kind of treatment that requires this posture.

Moreover, no printed text, company name, registered name, public incitement, electoral slogan or advertising suggestion appears on this nude. The various passers-by who pass by the huge poster take no interest in it, and no one tries to guess at its possible message.

LE BAR

So many stories. You have to look in the whisky trail. There's this rumbling, that's a given. Every three minutes you hear rumbling. More like scrap metal being silently dragged across the sand. Silently. They're carrying scrap metal. Iron. Chains.

We listen to the scent of whisky. All he has to do is talk, and we'll listen, a little better from glass to glass. It speaks. It doesn't talk. We walk on dry sand, or not so dry. Dry, little by little, slowly, so slowly that we don't even notice it.

that we don't hear it drying up under our feet either. Yes, the noise continues, the noise, gentle, completely peaceful, which is not in our head, which is silent, the noise does not resonate there, the noise resonates next door, we know it resonates, but we do not hear it, which remains far from our head, in

the fog that wears irons.

Men walk, tell me where you're walking, I'll tell you where you're going, who could do better, your path is reasonable, the sand erases the tracks, little by little, long before you reach the end.

It's cars making that noise. Just cars. With men in them, making the jeeps moan with their feet. There's even a flame, along the bar, along a coppery wall. We were expecting it. The flames are licking the walls, it's their duty, everyone's duty, to wear down the walls with their teeth, the teeth are white, it's their duty to be white, and liquid, it's their duty to fill up with saliva and spit it out like an oyster, like drooling flames, because the flames don't rise, like lightning, they fall. And there they are. They run down the half of the wall where the cannons have made yellow and black wounds, to the ground, and lose their colour and their heat in a cascade, until they become cold and black and white and liquid like ice cubes that burn your fingers when they have melted in your fingers.

To play, we fiddle with the ice cube in the glass, take it out, the ice cube is a cube I think, which is shaped like a cube when it is melted, shaped like a tongue and a throat, the ice cubes vanish one by one like rice, it looks like it in a blur, All that's left is a puddle of oily yellow blood from which these liquid, tapering flames escape in long gullies, making an Asian sizzling sound, the yellow of gold, will-o'-the-wisps in the fog, there on the table. We raise our glasses to our mouths in fits and starts, devouring them as we go, the sand from each glass spurting out of our nostrils as if we were drinking a glass of wine. we don't hear it drying up under our feet. Yes, the noise continues, the gentle noise, completely peaceful, which is not in our head, which is silent, the noise does not resonate there, the noise resonates next door, we know that it resonates, but we do not hear it.

Cars make that noise. Just cars. With men in them, kicking and moaning. There's even a flame, along the bar, along a coppery wall. We were expecting it. The flames lick the walls, wear down the walls with their teeth, the teeth are white, white and liquid, they fill with saliva and spit it out like an oyster, like drooling flames, because the flames don't rise, like lightning, they fall. And there they are. They run down a wall of yellow and black wounds to the ground, and lose their colour and their heat in a cascade, until they become cold and black and white and liquid like ice cubes that burn your fingers when they've melted in them.

To play, we fiddle with the ice cube in the glass, take it out, the ice cube is cube-shaped when it's melted, shaped like a tongue and throat, all that's left is a puddle of oiled yellow blood from which these liquid, tapering flames escape in long gullies, making a yellow sizzle, will-o'-the-wisps in the fog, there on the table. We raise our glasses to our mouths and devour them, the sand from each glass spurting out of our nostrils like when we play with our children in the dry sand and our whisky-haired children play with us.

When we're playing with our children in the dry sand, and our whisky-haired children are already burying us, the earth comes out all over us, the colour of which is green and black, a mask of fat runs down our bodies like lava, so we burst out laughing and having fun with the children who pinch our knees.

The roar, I saw the propellers, above us, the helicopter in the soft red night, passing over our heads, our thousands of heads rise, see bombs falling and burst out laughing, then dive into the glasses where, I say, the bombs burst, chunks that cut into our thousands of faces from which the mud flows, we are not responsible, the helicopter turns around its propeller, I threw my glass, a piece of shrapnel hit it, it fell, the sand swallowed

it. The sand swallows the fire, which crushes the metal and the skulls, which burns the metals and the colours, with a heavy mouth with closed eyes that is wide open, which yawns, dozes and devours and falls asleep on the sand on the table to digest. We didn't do it on purpose, it just happened, we're not, we're drinking, etc., I can't tell if it's day or night, there's a patch of light, and beyond that light it's no longer day, in the night fires light up the night, it's done on purpose, it's the others who are doing it on purpose. We can't see anyone, the table is smooth, my glass is cracking, a warm night has fallen, from far above, over our heads, whose heads? There's no one there any more, the black ball of heat has fallen, every time the sun is red a meteorite falls, and we're in the dark, fire is pouring out of it, a fire as thick as a garbage dump is spilling onto our feet, no, it's other bodies that are roasting and dancing under the meteors, we're standing in front of our glasses and we're fiddling with the ice cubes that rise up in the glasses and come out one by one as light knows how to do. Who could be afraid of alcohol?

We're already burying ourselves, the earth is coming out all over us, green and black in colour, and a fat mask is running down the sides of us like lava - so we burst out laughing and having fun with the children pinching our knees.

The roar, I saw the propellers, above us, in the soft red night, the helicopter flies over our heads, our thousands of heads stand up, see bombs fall and burst out laughing, then dive into the glasses where the bombs burst, pieces that cut into our thousands of figures from which the mud flows, the helicopter turns around its propeller, I throw my glass, a piece hits it, it falls, the sand swallows it. The sand swallows the fire, which swallows the metal and the skulls, which burns the metals and the colours, with a heavy mouth with closed eyes that is wide open, which yawns

and devours and falls asleep on the sand on the table to digest.

I can't tell if it's day or night, fires light up at night, it's done on purpose, it's other people who do it on purpose.

We can't see anyone, the table is smooth, my glass is cracking, a hot night has fallen, from far above, over our heads, whose heads? There's no one there any more, the black ball of heat has fallen, every time the sun is red a meteorite falls, and we're in the dark, fire is pouring out of it, a fire as thick as a garbage dump is spilling over our feet, no, it's other bodies that are roasting and dancing under the meteors, we're standing in front of our glasses and we're fiddling with the ice cubes that are rising one by one in the glasses as light knows how to do, one by one. Who could be afraid of alcohol?

VIII. LUPANAR

One breast, a skylight slams shut. The corridor, the entrance hall, perpendicular to the street, is open to the wind. There is a white tiled floor, hollowed out by passageways; grooves, black scratches that remain so even if you scrub for a long time. The night.

Near the threshold, there is a naive puddle of vomit in the shape of a tongue: wine, claret mixed with juices and whitish, glandular globules; vomit on entering and leaving. You've stepped in this puddle and got your fingers wet with it; purple marks stain the tiles; palms, index finger trails on the walls, whose paint is orange.

Through the skylight at the end of the corridor, the shadow of an inner courtyard rises. Through the door opposite, the bluish flashes of a sign on the mezzanine floor of the building opposite. It's windy in the street, which has a steep slope: it gushes into the

corridor, rattles the skylight, makes the doors creak on their hinges, which every two metres hollow out the left-hand wall - left-hand when you enter.

These doors are painted a darker orange than the walls. Or it's a patina imparted over time by the bodies that collide with them.

The tiles in the corridor are poorly cemented. In the wind, or with a movement of the stone, invisible footsteps remove them from their recesses; they clatter together, but these clackings are drowned out by the current of air, and all that can be heard is the sound of coins being shaken in the rumour of a toilet flush.

Pieces of paper, wet with rain, the corridor sucks them in, they get stuck in the doors, calm down, they come from the street, from the gutter, from the tarmac pavement, people have passed by, sewn into their coats, hands in their pockets, they are crumbling bits of paper.

LUPANAR

One breast, a skylight slams shut. The corridor, the entrance hall, perpendicular to the street, is open to the wind. There are white tiles that have been gouged out by passageways; black scratches and scuffs that remain even if you scrub for a long time. The night.

Near the threshold, a puddle of vomit spreads out in the shape of a tongue: red wine, mixed with juices and whitish, glandular globules; vomit on the way in, on the way out. You've stepped in this puddle and got your fingers wet with it: purple marks stain the floor tiles; palms and index fingers streak the walls, whose paint is orange.

Through the skylight at the end of the corridor, the shadow of an inner courtyard rises. Through the front door, the bluish flashes of a sign on the mezzanine floor of the building opposite. It's windy in the street, the wind rises up the street and takes the corner of the corridor, penetrates to the back, rattles

the skylight, makes the doors creak to the left and to the right.

These doors are painted a darker orange than the walls. Or the patina of the bodies that collide with them.

The tiles in the corridor are poorly cemented. In the wind, or with a movement of the stone, invisible footsteps move them in their cavities; these noises are lost under the sound of the draught or the flushing of the toilet.

Pieces of paper, wet from the rain, the corridor sucks them up, from the street, from the gutter, people have passed by in their coats, hands deep in their pockets, they crumble up useless papers and throw them away, at the cost of a short hoofing.

useless papers and throw them away.

The ceiling of the corridor is unpainted plaster. In the shadows it looks immaculate, with no cracks, splits or stains. Yet flakes of plaster, loosened by the damp from the water pipes in the ceiling, crumble to the floor every time a tap is turned on, causing the pipes to vibrate.

The puddle of vomit is no longer purplish; the blue sign has faded. The liquid seems mauve, puerilely pink, fluid. There are a few reflections shining on it from the crossroads at the top of the street, where three streetlights illuminate benches, a public works prefab and a vespasienne under a few maple trees.

Along the vertical slabs of the vespasienne, made of mossy slate or deeply blackened zinc, a small trickle of water flows, singing like a spring. And the mosses gently receive the water and the light.

You sit on a bench; it's not a seat, but a sign suggesting a resting position: half

crouched, femurs horizontal, back squared, or arched towards the knees, pelvis oscillating between these two weights, balance beam out of order. Migraine. An absence of head, with a migraine in it. A wheel in place of a head, neck, temples blazing old, face swallowed, head under the heels, walking, rubbing, prowling. Periodic explosions, muffled dances, the sound of a cleaver, squeaks that make each vertebral horn sound up and down.

The metro is sexualised. Men's gazes lowered on women's legs: only to feed the solitary vice of the stumbling metro.

And then, in the pit, in the middle, there are rails, two by two, head to tail. Heads aching under these wheels, weighed down by bodies far above.

You can look out from between the rails,

The ceiling of the corridor is unpainted plaster. In the shadows it looks immaculate, with no cracks, splits or stains. Yet flakes of plaster, loosened by the dampness of the water pipes that run through the floors, crumble to the floor every time a tap is turned on and the pipes vibrate.

The puddle of vomit is no longer purplish; the blue sign has faded. The liquid is mauve now, puerilely pink and fluid. It reflects a few glimmers of light coming from the crossroads at the top of the street, where three streetlights illuminate benches, a public works prefab and a vespasienne under a few maple trees.

Along the slabs of the vespasienne, made of mossy slate or zinc, runs a trickle of water, singing like a spring. And the mosses gently receive the water and the light.

You sit on a bench. It's not a seat, but a sign suggesting a resting position: half crouched, femurs horizontal, back squared, or arched towards the knees, pelvis crushed between these two weights, balance beam out of order. Migraine. An absence of head, with a migraine in it. A wheel instead of a head, face swallowed, head under the heels

that walk, rub, prowl, follow one another. Periodic explosions, muffled dances, chopping noises, squeaks that make each vertebral horn sound.

Men's gazes lowered on women's legs: only to feed the solitary vice of the stumbling metro.

In the pit, in the middle, there are rails, two by two, head to tail. Your head aching under these wheels, weighed down by bodies far above.

rise from the depths of this pit, climb onto the quay, choosing a small staircase at the end of the quay; walk along the quay to the other end, where you will find a corridor.

A possible corridor, where the bodies move with a characteristic friction, akin to that of bottle crates being slid across a lorry bed. Grouped by six, eight, twelve, they follow the corridor, pass through gates, sway in front of blue enamel panels, until they reach a vast tunnel.

Immediately a cry seizes them and makes them vibrate. There is a blackish, pyramidal, collapsed mass (a pyramid whose base sucks in the top, which refuses to do so and soars upwards, falls again, the sinews of the burdened neck are revealed under the skin, wrinkled like the belly of lizards, streaked with a rhomboidal grid where the dust of time settles, A pile of tarry matter, against a wall, but thrown back towards the centre of the corridor by the curvature of the vault - and from it comes a cry that sounds like a song, uttered with closed eyes - harmful, so pure that we vibrate one by one.

It is a woman who utters these cries for money, which tear fabric and flesh: and sometimes a coin falls to the ground, close to the source of the cry.

A woman sings. A voice so beautiful that the corridor is out of all proportion. The corridor is a hollow half-cylinder, lying along

its length, where a song jostles, clattering on the white earthenware tiles that envelop the vault. A long viscera, a long chest where men and women walk suburbantly.

The corridor ends in a cesspool. Clusters of men poured out of it, spilling onto each of the stone footings between which the pit where the rails were laid opened up.

People stop here, make a procession to the

Upstairs, after the staircase, is a corridor, where the bodies move with a characteristic friction, akin to that of bottle crates being slid across a lorry bed. Grouped by six, eight, twelve, they follow the corridor, pass through the gates, sway in front of blue enamel panels, until they reach another corridor.

Immediately a cry seizes them and makes them vibrate. There is a blackish, pyramidal, collapsed mass (a pyramid whose base sucks in the top, which refuses to do so and soars upwards, falls again, the sinews of the burdened neck are revealed beneath the skin, wrinkled like the belly of a lizard, A heap of tarry matter, against a wall, but thrown back towards the centre of the corridor by the curvature of the vault - and out comes a cry that sounds like a song, uttered with closed eyes. It's an old woman who's making this noise: and sometimes a coin falls to the floor near the source of the scream.

A woman sings. A voice so evil that the corridor is out of all proportion. The corridor is a hollow half-cylinder, lying along its length, a song collides with the white earthenware

X. PUBLIC GARDEN, NIGHT

Our gaze is battered by lines that interfere, a hell of wet, gelatinous lines, where the buildings are obscene lips, closed, hardened, ready for sucking, and the sky falls and falls

tiles that envelop the vault. A long viscera, a long chest where men and women walk suburbantly.

The corridor ends in a cesspool. Clusters of men pour out of it, spilling over each other; stone soles between which the pit where the rails are located opens up.

People stop there and keep quiet.

and fall silent. There are pleasant silences, and more and more smiles from the young women: with charming modesty, they show us the washing, the desserts, the bras they are using; and we smile back, a little anxious, confused, because we know we are unworthy of such kindness, so pretty, so stubborn.

Posters are vast sheets of concave paper on which our words run. Movable stains that make a fixed drawing (it would represent a whore after the removal of her ovaries, or, if you prefer, an eggshell when a spoon penetrates it: this is experienced). Spoon-shaped gazes tinkling slowly in the glare of the posters.

There are pleasant silences. The smiles of the young women multiply: they show with charming coquetry the laundry, the entremets, the bras, the child they are using: and in turn we smile, a little anxious, confused, so much we know we are unworthy of such kindness, so pretty, so stubborn.

Posters are vast sheets of concave paper on which our words run. Movable stains that make a fixed drawing (it would represent a whore after the removal of her ovaries, or an eggshell when a spoon penetrates it: this is experienced). Spoon-shaped eyes tinkling slowly in the glare of the posters.

again.

A few steps away, trees, a limestone gutter where the river flows geometrically. Tar, metal, belly wrinkles, it's the night that plunges in. Some streets, between the fields of standing stones, lead to the river, to the

banks, where the lorries turn.

Two people walk as if on the edge of the water. Sniffing the slime of the water. Side by side, touching. Around them, through them, an appearance of a vigil of arms, bayonets, cannons, all at sunset. Under their arms the river passes and stays. Up there it fills with scrap metal, the clouds are convulsively shat upon, spurting and freezing, sperm in the cold water as well. Convoys roll by, between each call of the metal each step measures its silence.

Five o'clock in the morning. They cross the bridge. The lampposts bend towards the moving water, with its mingled layers of bright white and yellow spindles. They are

PUBLIC GARDEN, NIGHT

Eyes beaten by lines that interfere, a hell of wet lines where buildings are closed lips, hardened, and the sky falls and falls on them.

A few steps away, a limestone gutter where the river flows geometrically. Tar, metal, belly wrinkles, the night dives in. Some streets lead to the river, to the banks, where lorries turn.

Two people walk side by side, touching. Under their arms, the river flows on and on.

Up there it's filled with scrap metal, convulsively shitting clouds freeze in the cold sky; rumour of convoys, and every step measures the silence.

Five o'clock in the morning. They cross the bridge. The water is moving, with ripples mixed with bright white and yellow spindles. They are on the other side of the river, towards the garden, nothing to see. On the other side of the river, towards the garden, just them, the stone is grey and it's cold.

Two of them on the bank, sitting on the mooring bollards, phalloid mushrooms, funereal stools, their iron gleaming, greasy, crying out for ropes and scraping wood against the stone, silt that the water deposits, flesh that turns the trees green with sleep in the early morning, the wind rushes through their icy legs, stripping them bare. Engines revving at half speed, bird calls suddenly erupting in panic, cars driving louder.

This piece of unwashed sky refuses to lie down, in the pasty dawn it sleeps with the river and thinks nothing of it, old flat-tailed lover, dips in the rippling waters like the wall of a vagina and its spine cracks and dies.

They walk. Grey, purple in the grey, a play of mirrors reflecting the glow of the concrete at its highest point (there, at the edge, so close they walk, right next to the water, the two of them, beside each other, wherever they go, from one end of the loop of the river to the other).

They enter the bushes, blue trees, coming and going, they kneel in the bushes, licking their faces - the two of them, they are happy.

This bush is enclosed in a flowerbed that emerges from the sand with other bushes, rusty flowers that ooze little frigid liquors, exuded along the black metal gates. The square is closed for the night, they are there, under the shadow of the leaves, which is dust that drinks everything up.

When footsteps sound on the asphalt, from a distance, they separate. The flowerbed is empty, not glistening, with the juicy liquor of the potting soil, where the ants get stuck.

At the back of the square, the parapet, at the bottom, upside down, the bridge, the river swimming, because it's going to be daylight. It's summertime. the stone is grey and it's cold.

The two of us on the bank by the mooring bollards, our flesh green with sleep, the trees

in the early morning, the wind rushing
through our legs, freezing, stripping us bare.

Engines are revving, birds are squawking,
cars are getting louder.

The badly washed sky refuses to stretch
out, in the pasty dawn it lies with the river, it
soaks in the undulating waters like the wall of
a vagina.

They walk. Grey, purple within the grey, a
play of mirrors reflecting the glow of the
concrete at its highest point.

They go into the bushes, blue trees, they're in
the bushes, they kneel down, they lick each
other's faces, their hands hard and very cold -
the two of them, there, they're happy.

This bush adorns a lawn, along with other
bushes, rusty flowers oozing dew, dew also
beading on the black metal of the gates, the
slimy fences. The square is closed for the
night, and there they are, under the shadow
of the leaves, a dust that drinks everything
up.

When footsteps sound on the asphalt,
from a distance, they separate. The garden is
empty, not glistening, with the liquor
glistening on the grass or the earth, where
the ants circulate.

At the back of the square, the parapet, at
the bottom, upside down, the bridge, the
river swimming, because it's going to be
daylight. It's summertime.

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE - 11 January 1978

Source: Un homme parle, les Editions Bleues.

Tours, Thursday [11/1/78]

Dear Claude,

In fact, your text is going to make people think that you painted between 1 and 12 January 78 - or that you will paint them during the exhibition itself, like pastry chefs display their masterpieces as they bake them. It's living art!

Having said that, the reproduction that adorns your card is very beautiful; at least I find in it, for my own selfish use, a demanding and violent classicism that is extremely touching.

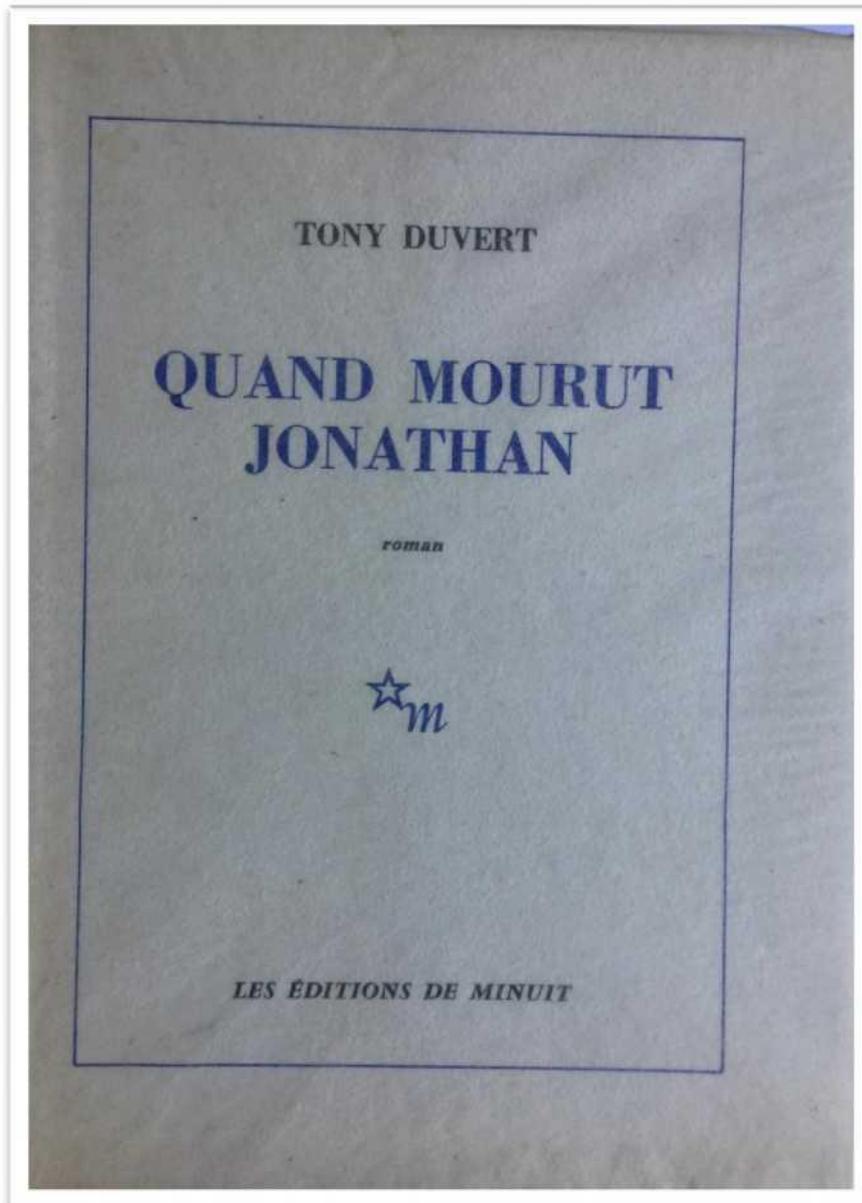
But when will I see more? I'm still paralysed by my book (by the way, good luck with ours - you were too kind to call it that, by the way, because unfortunately I had nothing to do with its appeal).

He may still be free in February, and present in Paris, if not in Metz.

Best regards

Tony

RELEASE OF *WHEN JONATHAN DIED* - 18 April 1978



Source: Original numbered edition.



LES PETITS METIERS - 1978

Re-edition of the poem published in 1977 in Minuit's bimonthly review No. 24 under the title La ballade des petits métiers. The 1977 version contained 17 chapters - one chapter for each trade. Tony Duvert added 6 previously unpublished chapters to the 1978 version. Unusually for Duvert, apart from this addition, no other changes were made to the original text.

LA BALLADE DES PETITS METIERS

Revue Minuit, no. 24, April 1977.

- The demoraliser
- The torch
- The clock-reader
- The window breaker
- The skinner
- The writer
- The bird gardener
- The groper
- The jumper
- The spotter
- The judge
- The censor
- His father's child and his mother's child
- The ferryman
- The thinker
- The snowman*
- The engraver*
- The executioner*
- The painter's dream*
- The musicians*
- The doctor*

Order of chapters

- The demoraliser
- The torch
- The clock-reader
- The window breaker
- The skinner
- The writer
- The bird gardener
- The groper
- The jumper
- The spotter
- The judge
- The censor
- His father's child and his mother's child
- The ferryman
- The thinker
- The good-for-nothing
- The wheel beater

SMALL TRADES

Published by Fata Morgana, April 1978.

Order of chapters

The good-for-nothing
The wheel beater

In all, 17 chapters on 14 pages. In italics, the 6 chapters added by Duvert.
In all, 23 chapters on 85 pages.

THE 6 CHAPTERS ADDED :

THE SNOWMAN

When I was little, there was a boy who couldn't stand growing up. He was older than us, but he was interested in us. We'd had to give up on apprenticing him, so we hired him out on the farms. Of the two services he was asked to do, he chose the one that a child can do and refused the other: we thought he was clever.

However, he was put to good use. A false child, he accepted what real children wouldn't, whether it was lessons, caresses or blows. It was a blessing to have this idiot: he earned a good living.

Of all his jobs, it was that of snowman that we children preferred. A winter job, when there's nothing to do in the fields. During our school hours, he would break wood, get slapped by the women and brutally force-feed the geese for Christmas. But when night fell, he would come and wait for us near the school, in the black and white street where the damp mists spread the smell of the chimneys. He would cover himself waist-deep in snow, just as you cover yourself in sand, but standing up. All we had to do was enclose the top. We'd turn him into a big snow statue, as thick as three men: he'd swear that you could breathe really well under there, and the little ones would stick their noses into the snow boy to see. They'd come out all wet, their cheeks on fire, their nostrils burning, their faces blissful and laughing like someone who'd seen something. Funny things!

Then the man was demolished. The big boys often hid a stone in the ball they threw: the innocent man worried them, they were afraid of becoming like him. They hit him very hard, aiming for his face. At first, the snow cushioned the blows: then it collapsed and a piece of the face appeared, bright red - red with blood. Soon, a large scarlet stain disguised the front of the man. As for the little children, out of shyness, they would only send him balls that had barely been kneaded; others would give him a ball of their own.

kicks up the backside, to make the snow fall away and exclaim his arse eh your

arse r'garde his arse!

After that, it was completely dark and we were leaving. The boy finished clearing himself. He washed his wounds with a bit of snow, and used the lantern to look for the little gifts that the children had scattered for him, because we always left some behind - nuts, a whistle, a bird feather, a numb frog, a gum ball with fir juice, a slingshot, a leaf, a lamb's bone, a pencil, a red fruit, a bouquet of the little flowers that pierce the snow just before spring. He came home alone, his hands full, his nose bloody, his eyes brave with happiness. We loved him.

THE ENGRAVER

The old engraved ciphers of the former owners were displayed on the pediment of some houses. This work of art was several centuries old, and the following story was told about it.

By a miracle, a child of long ago was able to say the word no from birth. But he could never be made to say another word in his life, even though he understood them all.

He was much admired for writing *o's* and *n's*, ornate or simple, at an age when ordinary infants can barely eat their own feet.

As a young boy, he enchanted his mother, who only tormented him to make herself look good. Delighted to have a child whose responses were so predictable, if she was pitied above, she was envied below: and many women would also have liked to have had a brat who wouldn't have said anything worse than that. But they didn't dare wish for it too much, for fear that this baby would be a girl.

Our boy's knowledge was such that, when he grew up, he got rich drawing *N's* and *O's* in fine manuscripts with the monks. He also engraved them on stone and wood, and traced the initials of lords or villagers whose names suited him, of which there were many in those days. A prince of Croatia even invited him to his palace and gave him a pension.

What no one would believe is that this engraver led exactly the same life as any other man. An old man, he even knew how to say no with such precision that gossips and children considered him a saint. He taught his art to several apprentices, left no descendants, and died without saying a word. THE BOURREAU

I was also told about a legendary child who always said *yes*. But he knew other words. *Yes* was simply his favourite answer, which allowed him to be as nasty as a moth without ever being reproached.

First, he made his parents so unhappy that his father threw himself into a well: it was the communal well, and the water was all rotten. As for his mother,

she remarried a miller, who died as a result.

After that, he grew up in the company of pigs, whom he kept, and in that of henchmen, women and priests, to whom he made conversation. So he became an executioner and cut off seventy-seven necks.

Gâteaux, yes, had become a question for him. And he repeated:

- Yes? Yes?

poking and pinching neighbours, passers-by, children and travellers.

When he died, people sighed with relief, so much had they suffered that this mirror existed in the village. His corpse was thrown to the wolves, and they have been ferocious ever since.

THE PAINTER'S DREAM

In our country, it was customary to have a portrait of oneself to show. Photography, even in the old taste, would not have been suitable. We had to be represented by an imaginary artist. This man was a little painter who was better than skilful, very docile, intelligent and always welcome.

It lived in our rooms and ate our meals; it had no home of its own; it fashioned its own tools, collected, processed and ground its own minerals and colours; it made love at random, depending on the mood of its hosts, their children and their animals.

We put him up while he did the portrait we'd commissioned. Not that he needed to see you: he just needed to hear you. These portraits didn't reproduce the model: they embodied what you dreamed of being.

A woman would say, or an old maid: I would have liked to have a small nose, big, soft, lively eyes, cheerful teeth, a lip that turns in the air like that when I want to please, a belly like this, a thigh like that, a hand that speaks. The painter painted this portrait of our desire for ourselves. We'd look at the result and add: No, I'd also have liked a little curl there, towards the forehead, and red cheekbones, and a knee that shines, and arched feet, the left one a little behind, just bent that way. The painter retouched.

Accomplished men were no less flirtatious than others: never did we see males wanting to be handsome.

Once the portrait was done, it was displayed in the best place in the house. And for ever you put up with it better yourself and tolerated others better. You'd go to someone's house; he'd hide his face mischievously and say to you:

- Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait! Come and see me!

And he led you before his image. This was him. Not his head of chance, his stomach of eater: no: but all the beauty that he would have liked to blossom

in his bed, to walk in the luminous freshness of spring, to approach the faces that he loved. It was really for you.

- Look at me!

We looked. We valued others for the way they looked, not for the ugly legs that chance or age had given them.

The portrait was the work of the sitter - the representation, infinitely intimate, of what he would have chosen to be if he could. And the greatest painted beauties were rarely conceived at the instigation of the greatest real beauties. The more successful one felt oneself to be by nature, the more one demanded resemblance, and the more mediocre, vain and rotten with pleasing pettiness the image became. The ugliest, on the other hand, had portraits in their homes of such beauty as to bring tears to your eyes: they *knew*.

THE MUSICIANS

Every festival day, there was music in the village. There were no professional musicians: it was certain villagers who fulfilled this role. They formed a kind of guild, very closed, where the art of playing and the instruments themselves were secretly passed on.

The concerts took place in a certain building - a single room, a roof, numerous windows that were always closed. When the time came for the musicians to play, people would circle around this house, clinging to the windows, crushing each other, climbing over each other, waiting for the tickle, the smell of others, the stretch of their legs.

Finally, the musicians appeared in the middle of the room and took their ease as if they were alone. They unveiled their instruments and, after having piqued the public's curiosity for a long time by making all kinds of preparations, they played.

At least, we could see them play. Because you couldn't hear anything. All the instruments were mute, and the art was purely gestural. It was up to each musician to imagine - according to the figure of the musician, the size and shape of his instrument, the animation of his playing, the expression on his face - the noise that could be made inside.

Around the house, there was a marvellous silence, which would never have been possible without the silence inside.

This concert lasted until dusk. You'd come back exhausted from the sensations and the noise, and you'd sing to yourself all the most beautiful things you'd imagined as you gazed at the musicians through the windows. It made for a great din, and it was soon up to whoever could shout the loudest.

THE DOCTOR

I was a healthy kid, I climbed trees, I swam in the winter, I broke bones, I would have digested an ostrich. I only saw the doctor once (he was hiding so that people would believe him more).

A snake had bitten me while I was stealing apples. The creature clung to my skin and wrapped itself around my wrist; I was still so small that its tail was beating against my side. I didn't like it very much, but it surprised me with its warm, smooth touch and its beautiful little head of a mouse, skinned alive, dry, flat, without whiskers or ears.

I ran to the doctor's farm. The word "farm" is inaccurate, as he only bred animals for spells; the word "doctor" is also inaccurate, as today we would call him a healer or a sorcerer: but these nuances are unimportant, as our misfortunes are always commensurate with the charlatans who buy them.

The doctor detached the snake from my hand, pronouncing koz, toz, zoz, and skilfully pulling on the head. He shoved the reptile into his pocket, pretended it was dangerous, and breathed hard. I now believe that it was a little snake, still in its teens, which liked people in its own way: young dogs, too, bite you in the blood just to smile at you. But you mustn't spoil the job: my father had five goats full, and saving a child from death is worth the hindquarters of a kid. So the snake was dangerous. I'd tell Dad, even though he preferred his livestock to his offspring.

The doctor pulled a green rooster from his henhouse. He wedged it in his lap, tucked its head between its legs, and set about plucking its entire backside. They were beautiful feathers! I coveted them so much that I stretched out my bitten hand to get some. But the doctor swore it was a curse, and he kept them all. The snake rolled around in his pocket and he patted it to frighten it, and I was scared too.

Finally, he took his cock in a ball and applied its arsehole to my wound. Then he massaged, pressed and released the bird's belly so that its arse could suck out the venom, if there was any. Meanwhile, he explained:

- If the rooster dies, it's because the snake was poisonous. But if it lives, you won't die either.

It was a reasoning for children: I believed it. We gazed at the cockerel and, until evening, I checked on him, for I was very worried about myself. But he remained healthy; his bare bottom kept its pink and yellow mottles - even though he shamefully hid his bottom in the straw.

After a month, the rooster laid a parchment egg, from which came a kind of lizard that my healer called cocodril, and which was very nasty. This is the

usual product," he said, "of fertilisation through the anus. I blushed. With what we kids were doing, we should have been spawning cocodrils every night. But the doctor was delighted: he told me that the teeth of this ferocious reptile, crushed with wolf's gall and a bushel of moths, encouraged women to marry. A lot of naive lovers bought this for a good price. And, as they soon repented, they went on to buy the antidote.

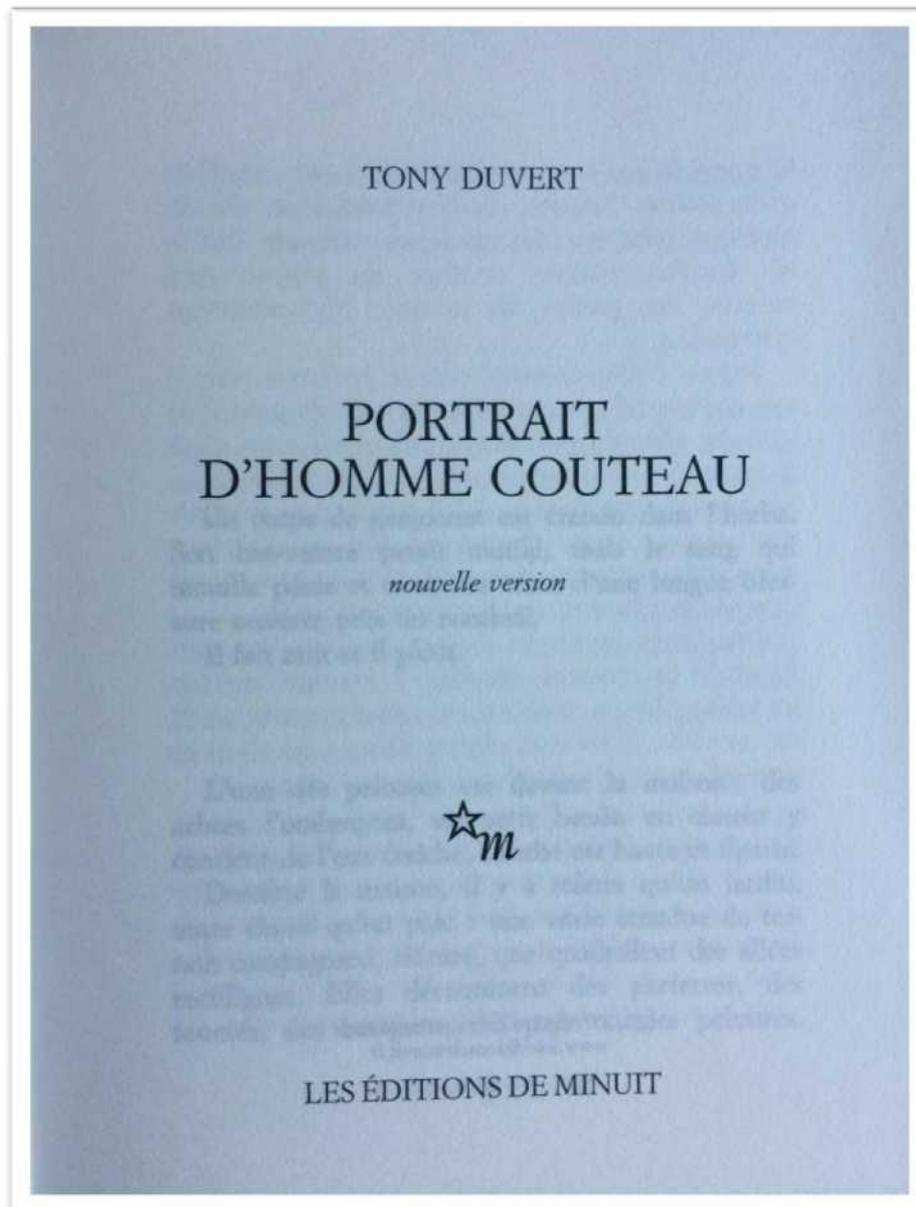
This counter-poison was a vervain purée soaked in beaver dung. The doctor slaughtered these poor beasts, which we loved; he avoided them and abandoned their corpses with disdain; we collected the skins.

Beavers, which are said to be closer to monkeys than water dogs, are clever. They quickly understood why they were being hunted. And as soon as they saw the doctor on the riverbank, they saved their lives by cutting off their genitals. The doctor picked these bloody eggs from the grass and reserved the bullets from his rifle for the animals that refused.

But these were often beavers that had already given their all. Intelligent, and annoyed at being killed for nothing, they soon knew what to do: instead of fleeing, they were seen to lie flat on their backs, thighs apart, facing the doctor, in order to clearly prove that they had been scuttled. Then, spared, they got up and walked away looking deeply hurt. But the doctor rarely apologised, because he was very vain of himself.

RELEASE OF THE NEW VERSION OF *PORTAIT D'HOMME COUTEAU* - 1978

Source: Edition de Minuit.



LETTER TO MICHEL LONGUET - August 1978

Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015, page 134.

Dear Michel

Thank you for these memoirs of a settler, you've made me very happy, but now you're bloody sentimental. You devil. My silence (as you say): I simply have terrible problems, a dreadful feeling of doldrums and very poor health. I didn't go to Paris in July, I might go in September, but I'd rather nail myself into a barrel, with or without brine. I'm still thinking of you. Are you continuing your

journalistic work, which you promised to show me, by the way? Please forgive me for being so brief, I know it's almost worse than not writing at all, but I'm really not doing very well. Don't forget to send my regards to Alain [Priquet] and to apologise to him. My misfortunes won't last forever and I'm really looking forward to seeing you both.

Big kisses
Tony

LETTER TO MICHEL LONGUET - 30 August 1978

Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015, page 134.

Tours, Tuesday 30

Dear Michel

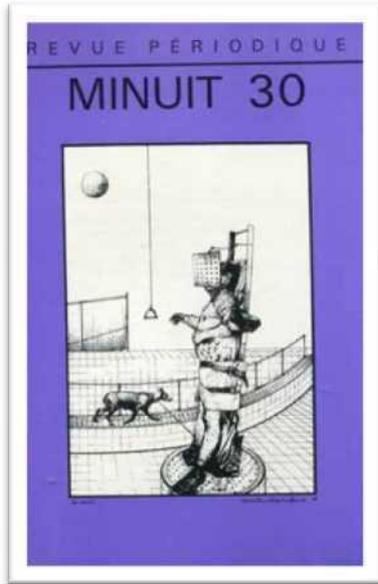
Teugnot's drawings are delectable and Sud-Ouest is unforgivable for not continuing. I've been laughing all day every time I've looked at them. And you can guess that the drawing in your letter, which is the nastiest of the three (grrrr), made me laugh even harder. I see you and I imagine you in trouble. And I'm ashamed that I can't help you in any way. Unless, if I tell you mine, it might distract you a bit. Yes, I hope to go to Paris for a few days in the autumn and we'll see each other. But I don't know when exactly. As for my 'health', don't worry. There's nothing wrong with me and the barrels have nothing to do with it. Just enormous fatigue and insomnia, in other words too much work and too many worries. On the other hand, I'll probably have finished my new novel, which is quite big, around October or November. But really, work is not health (nor is unemployment, it's true). Give-

I'll be in touch with you soon, and think about breaking a few barrels for me with Alain, he'll certainly help you finish them.

A big kiss
Tony

THE HARD-HEADED BOY - September 1978

Source: *Revue bimestrielle Minuit, issue 30, September 1978. Director of publication, Jérôme Lindon. This short story was published in Gilles Sebhan's Retour à Duvret in 2015, pages 243-259.*



THE BOY HAS A HARD HEAD

Inspired by the Arabian Nights.

It is said that there was a king, a very great king, a king by trade, whose name was Splendour- du-pal. He reigned gloriously over the seventh island of the seventh sea. And his many subjects said of him:

- We have a king, a very great king, a king by trade, who reigns gloriously!

One day this king, tired of love, married a woman. And he begat a son. And the child was so beautiful, so radiant, so gentle that he was named Moonlight.

Then time followed time. Prince Moonlight reached his fifteenth year: and his beauty, ceasing to be infinite, became like an oasis. And he suddenly felt the torments of desire.

- What a strange thing," thought his father the king. But let's see what would make him feel better.

The king's harem consisted of three hundred and sixty children, one for each morning, three hundred and sixty teenagers, one for each noon, and three hundred and sixty young men, one for each evening (in those ancient times, the years were not long).

The king led his son to the harem. The servants bowed before and said:

- Welcome, O Bike-Face!

For this was the nickname that the people, amazed by his beauty, had given to Prince Clair-de-lune.

Now the young prince first mated with the three hundred and sixty boys, and then he said:

- O the child like a watermelon, for he pisses while we pierce him with élan!
Then he came to the three hundred and sixty teenagers and said:

- O grandmother goat in the sun, O thousand goats, O old ones, O rancid ones!

Then he came up to the three hundred and sixty young men with strong bodies, and said:

- O donkey! are you a prince's mount? O prince! are you the donkey's mount?

And he fell back into his melancholy, while the king began to moan:

- Before your prime, my son," he asked the prince, "you made love like the rest of us. So why do you feel the torments of desire now?

- It's because I don't want anything more," explained Clair-de-lune.

The king offered him monkeys, rabbits, figs, fish, lungs, a flaky pastry, a lizard, a frog, a gazelle, the queen, the king, a dog, a jar of turds, a sugar loaf, a sherbet, a dish of rice with cream and cinnamon, a sword, an enema, a skull and crossbones, a coloquinte, a mirror, the pal.

But Clair-de-lune refused sadly and shook her head: her love of who knows what was inconsolable.

He was wasting away. He was indifferent to exquisite foods, rhyming poems, even dances. He hated day and night, dawn and dusk, the desert and the rippling lakes, noon and eclipses. He no longer washed, wore his hair crumpled and his clothes torn.

The people, seeing this, lamented:

-Clair-de-lune is no longer like the moon on its fourteenth day!

He

is not even like the moon on its twenty-ninth day! Now her face is as dry as the hen's feet of the witch Mother-of-Thorns - curse her!

In despair, the king shouted across the kingdom that he would give a drachma to anyone who could find a cure for the prince's melancholy: and anyone who couldn't would be impaled!

This proclamation plunged the inhabitants of the seventh island into confusion.

But young Clair-de-lune had a good heart: and he thought that, if the king executed all his subjects in this way, the kingdom would be worth nothing when he inherited it. So he pretended to be loosened up, and even cured, while each subject came to the palace and offered his invention for a joke or pleasure. Many drachmas were handed out, but the palace remained dry.

But at night, the prince flooded the silks of his bed with tears: and his face turned yellow like the vulva of a scorned she-camel!

As for the king, he was astonished:

- How," he said, "all my subjects have successfully entertained you, and your face is turning as yellow as the vulva of a scorned she-camel!

- That's true," replied Clair-de-lune deftly, "but you can be sure, sire my father, that without them I'd be dead!

- Well," said the king at last, "take a walk around the market!

For when neither wisdom, money nor palms could solve a problem, this was the remedy that this monarch recommended.

So Prince Moonlight set off for the market. He let himself be hailed by the shameless merchants, who did not recognise Bicycle Face in this poor figure. He politely brushed off the solicitations of the shameless perforators, who didn't recognise him either. Then, fed up with the shouts, the gestures and the colours, he reached a miserable district, near the renderers, the tanners and the ochre adobe ramparts; and, in order to rest, he asked for hospitality in a small shop.

At the back of the shop sat an old man, who wished him a peaceful good morning, gave him a rickety stool, and offered him no merchandise, copulation or anything else.

This discretion surprised the young prince and aroused his curiosity.

- O old man, father of old men, why do you offer me no merchandise, no copulation, no nothing?

- You can congratulate yourself," said the other, "for calling me Father of the Old Men: otherwise I'd have given you a hard time!

For this old man, in reality, was a genius, the leader of geniuses, who took on the body of an old man to sit at ease under a ceiling of reeds and palms, in the hot hours, in the exquisite coolness of the rendering district - whose numerous flies were his henchmen.

- What would I do with trade and money," said the false old man, "when my stomach is smaller than a dried fig? What would I do with copulation when my father's child is sadly beating my knees?

- O venerable ascetic!" murmured the prince, reaching up to kiss the bottom of her frayed dress.

- However, Prince Clair-de-lune (for I know who you are), there are rumours in town of a certain adolescent who doesn't like boys, or adolescents, or men... And I know what he needs: and I could help him find it!

- So you recognised me, despite my yellow face? said the astonished prince. But I must tell you that I'm not looking for anyone: it's only desire that torments me! But speak, venerable one!

- Prince Clair-de-lune, you wouldn't say you weren't looking for anyone if you knew there was a certain young child.

- Er," says Moonlight.

- A child as beautiful as a lily, as happy as a gargoyle, as sweet as chocolate mousse...

- Er," says Moonlight.

- A child as valiant as a young man, but with a smooth white sex; as hot as adolescence, but as fragrant as God's orchards; as lascivious as a pearl-toothed infant, but with no incontinence in his various orifices...

- Er," says Moonlight.

- A young boy gifted with eternal childhood, whose soul is full of dreams and poems, and whose voice is like the springs of the Ile-aux- cabrioles, and like the water games of the Jardin-à-bascule, and like the cry of the drunken birds of the Arbre-aux-petits-mirlitons!

- Shut up!" suddenly exclaimed the teenager. Because now I recognise the child you're portraying: and it's the wonderful little Hard-Headed Boy! Now, old man, father of old men, why do you want to make me suffer? Everyone knows that the Hard-Headed Boy does not exist.

And the tears of a deep heart came to wet Bikeface's thin cheeks. But the genie, the chief of genies, pulled a tiny case from his pants and, opening it, said to the prince:

- Here's the Golden Needle. Stick it in the armchair in your bedroom. And make sure it's upside down! And then do what you're going to do: and you'll meet the Hard-Headed Boy.

Distraught, Clair-de-lune took the Golden Needle, pinned it to his collar, saluted the old man and, throwing his legs to the wind, ran to the royal palace.

Who was unaware of the legend of the Boy with the Hard Head? Who had not heard his supernatural beauty and his strong little arms praised? Who hadn't dreamt of his unheard-of poems, his ravishing voice, his cantillations so heavenly that you fell on your behind, wiggled, wet yourself with urine and cried tears of happiness sweeter than jujube sorbet?

When the king saw Clair-de-lune galloping towards him (with his pink face, twinkling eyes, smiling lips and the slender ankle of a gazelle!), he stood up, took him in his arms and said:

- Clair-de-lune, the teenager! Are you cured?

- Sire my father, listen to me!" exclaimed the young prince in a burst of joy. Now I know what I need. I want to marry the Hard-Headed Boy!

At these words, King Splendour-du-pal's soul turned black and he fell unconscious.

His servants rushed in, laid him on a divan and drenched his face with rose water, orange water and palm water. Finally, he regained consciousness.

- Clair-de-lune, my son, O fluffy, albeit small, skull of the nightingale!" murmured the king. How can you want to marry the Hard-Headed Boy when you know, and I know, and every one of these men knows, that the Hard-Headed Boy does not exist! He doesn't exist! He's just a legend, a fable by the Master of Stolen Stories - damn him!

- But no, sire my father, the Boy exists! He does exist! And the proof is that all you have to do to reach him is pass through this golden needle!

Then the king tore his cheeks, and divided his beard into two handfuls, and broke his teeth on his crown, which he was biting with grief, and he moaned:

- My son has lost his mind! Alas! Clair-de-lune has nothing left but a fly's

brain (daughters of Satan, oh purulent ones)!

And he had himself buried up to his neck in the Place des Malices-diurnes, in order to extinguish, through physical suffering, the violence of his moral pain. But that was not enough. So he ordered all the town's inhabitants to gather in the square and step on his head. But that was not enough. So he wept terribly.

- My father is mad! thought Prince Moonlight at the same time. I'm going to marry the Boy with the Tough Head (the marvellous, the eternal! the little one!) and my father, he buries himself to the tips of his beard, and the people walk over him, and he weeps. A delirious man - and yet a king by trade!

And the people in the square murmured:

- Look at that king! It's ours! Look at him! He's being stepped on! And Bikeface, his son, wants to go through a needle! A curse!

And all that vehemence, and desolation, and all that.

He, Clair-de-lune, had gone up to his room and carefully placed the Golden Needle in the middle of his armchair. Since then, he had been waiting opposite and contemplating it, sitting among the velvet and goose-down tiles. But nothing happened.

- The Old Men's father lied to me!" cried Clair-de-lune at last.

And he was seized with anger, and turned about in his chamber like a furious bear, and condemned to the pale the servant of the door, the servant of the latch, the servant of the hinges, the servant of the pale: and he smote his head against the walls, and lacerated his robe, and his stockings, and his beautiful green-striped shorts, of which the poet said:

*Your eyes, O Moonlight, are amber sugar
flamboyant, celestial oranges that
quench the thirst of the mortal traveller - oh the juice!*

*Your smile, O Moonlight, is the mischievous eyelid of the young elephant, son of
the trunk - O eyelid!*

*Your rump, O Moonlight, is the chalice into which the slimy bee with thighs
streaked with plant gold drinks - O chalice!*

*But your green-striped shorts, O Moonlight, are a warrior's paradise! And the
salt of children! And the soul of the enamoured! And the temple of heritage! And
the equinox!*

O the infinite pants, the shine, O the stripes! Such!

However, Clair-de-lune had torn his green-striped pants: and he would have torn his skin off, had he had sharp nails. And he worked and worked so hard that he collapsed, exhausted, in his armchair.

Immediately, by some magical effect, the Golden Needle recalled his presence, for the prince leapt into the air and let out a cry in an unknown language.

And at this cry a winged horse appeared in the room: and his robe was silver, and his wings were gold, and his eyes were sapphire, and his forehead was set with a scarlet gem in the form of a star.

- Clair-de-lune, my master, the pretty one, the brave one, says this horse, you called me, here I am!

Amazed beyond belief, the young prince, having detached the Golden Needle from the delicate spot where it had been pricked, stroked the horse to check that it was not a dream: and the horse sparkled under his cool hand. And the teenager asked:

- Where will we go, brave horse of the best horses?

- I obey," said the horse, "whoever wishes to marry the Hard-Headed Boy (my beautiful friend, my little brother)!

Then Clair-de-lune did his ablutions, tidied up his hair with its teeming curls, put on an embroidered robe, soft on beardless skin, and new pants of emerald and mother-of-pearl. He put on his lemon-yellow sandals, pinned the Golden Needle to his collar and, having called for a bag of food and drink, mounted the winged horse without spurs, bridle or saddle. He kissed its silver mane, he flattered the curve of its golden wings, and the happy horse, passing the window, took off.

They flew, faster than a waterspout, over the seven islands of the seventh sea, and all the other islands, and all the other seas. Soon, the handsome, brave teenager and the stalwart horse were far beyond the world - which looked like a tiny, musty sesame seed cake at the bottom.

And when they were out of the world, the horse descended gently towards a garden with a thousand flowers and a thousand groves, strewn with singing birds, flooded with fast, babbling brooks, and where the spring sun shone, as soft and lively as a child's kiss; and where the velvety lawns stretched out, similar in their delicacy to the blessed thighs of love, and in their colour to Clair-de-lune's pants! And a breeze lighter than birdsong caressed the birds, the flowers, the groves, the lawns and the sun.

- Now," explained the horse, "if you want my advice, I'll give it to you. Hide behind that grove and wait for the Boy with the Moorish Head (my good friend, my little brother!) to come to the fountain. And then you can do what you want! And when you want to call me back, all you have to do is use the Golden Needle (you know how).

And the winged horse disappeared.

The young prince approached the fountain; he knelt down and kissed the

edge of the pool, which the Boy-with-a-hard-head would perhaps soon touch; then he hid behind a bush and waited.

Soon, the sound of footsteps was heard. And there stepped forward a boy of eight or nine, of supernatural beauty.

Indeed, her hair, more dazzling than the sun at its zenith, dishevelled, stiff, short, was invaded by dust and dry grass; her cheeks, whiter than camphor and pinker than rose, were stained with chocolate, earth and tomatoes; Her cheeks, whiter than camphor and pinker than the rose, were stained with chocolate, earth and tomatoes; her eyes, bigger and happier and brighter than the crystal spring for the thirsty, had a little black shit in the corner; her figure, slimmer and plumper and more supple than the orange branch on which the fruit dances, was disguised in rags pierced with indiscreet snags; her two hands, more delicate than the saffron stalk, were as dirty as two feet. And, in his childish voice with its lilting accents, he improvised these inspired verses:

*On the way
D' Saint-frusquin
I've found three little rabbits!*

*I put one on
In the cupboard*

*He said to me:
It's too dark!*

*I put one in the drawer He says to me:
Go and sit down!*

*I put one on
In the cupboard
He said to me:
Don't you have the time?*

*I don't care
With tits
He's giving me hickeys!*

*I'm screwing the other one
Behind my back
He's munching my little pit!*

*I'm putting the other one in
My calçon
I've got a job to do, you little roustons!*

*Rabbits are no good
Going for a walk in Saint-Frusquin!*

When he heard these sublime verses, the young prince recognised that this was the Boy with the Hard Head, and he fainted with happiness.

When Clair-de-lune came to, the Garçon-à-la-tête-dure had thrown off his rags and plunged into the fountain basin, where he was taking a delicious and refreshing bath, dousing his head with a shoe. He scratched his ears, his nose, the corners of his eyes, and his hair, and all the treasures of his perfection, and he rubbed himself up and down with the insistence, the antics, the mischief of the dolphin who, near the shore, calls the adolescent to play in the laughing waves.

At the same time, he improvised these melodious verses, which he accompanied by slapping his sole on the elastic surface of the water with one hand:

*The other morning
I wanted to
Fair' caca
In the street!*

*There was the wind
Who blew
And my poo
Swinging!*

*Oh dear
It's running up my arse
D' fair' caca
In the street!*

*D' fair' caca
In the street!*

Prince Moonlight couldn't resist any longer, and slowly, so as not to frighten the little boy, he came out of his hiding place.

- I salute you, O Garçon-à-la-tête-dure, O l'éternel! the little one! he said, curtsying to the marvellous child, as beautiful as the lily, the spring and the

chocolate. And the diamonds on his dress sparkled shyly as he approached the fountain where the child was glistening.

- Yep. Hi! says the Boy with the Tough Head. I'm so hungry! Give me a cake!

- Behold, O face of delight!" said Prince Moonlight, pulling a cake from his bag.

- No, not that one!" said the Boy with the Hard Head.

- And what kind do you want?" asked the prince.

- I want slug oil! And hurry up!

Fortunately, the teenager had a few of this kind, which only the king's cook in the mortal world could make.

- Behold, the eternity of the narrow arch!

- OK, then. That's fine. That's fine. Now get me out of this water. And hurry up!

And, as the April sun broke through the passing shower with its candour, the child sprang from the water into the prince's hands: and he stood radiant on the edge of the fountain. And the prince, dazzled, felt his soul invade his eye. And he wiped the little boy in a sheet of white feathers, in an

gauze of slivered almonds, in a veil of melting sugar, in a shawl of dove's breath. Then the Boy-with-the-hard-head jumped down from the coping and said:

- OK, then. That's fine. That's fine. Now give me a slug oil cake!

- Behold, O dilation of dilations!

And while the child was eating, and alternately pinching his eggs on each side to keep himself occupied, he counted:

- One, two, three, five! Seven, six, eleven, twelve! Sixty! the young prince told her about the magical journey he had made to meet him, the Child of Children, and to hear his delightful voice and his renowned poems as far as the seventh island of the seventh sea.

- OK, then. All right, then. So, listen to this one! said the Boy with the Tough Head. And he improvised these verses, laughing and slapping his palms, in turn, on the sides of his thighs and on Bikeface's chest:

A boy

I slept

On a bed

From a crane!

He had his paws in the air!

And I saw

I saw

That little arsehole!

*And I saw
I saw
Both her little bare feet*

*The boy
Who slept
On a big hole in the crane!*

- And now, please, give me a slug oil cake," said the child.
- Behold, O lips of sugar, O flexible, O neck stretched by the tear of honey!
- OK, then. That's fine. So now we're getting married," ordered the Hard-Headed Boy.

By the fountain, there was a soft, silky lawn under trees covered with fragrant fruit. And there the boy was

gently carried by Prince Moonlight, and gently, as befits boys, they did what they did. And when they had done so, the Boy-with-the-hard-head cried out:

- OK, then. That's fine. That's fine. But what I'd really like is a slug oil cake!

Then they did it another time, and then the child improvised these bold verses:

*Hey, you didn't see
My little pencil?
It's not round
It's sharp!*

*Did you see?
It is very long
It goes to the bottom
It's for your arse!*

They immediately did what they did. Then the boy said:

- OK, then. I'm good. But what if you happen to have a slug oil cake?

Then, having thus restored themselves, they had the idea of doing what they did. However, when the little boy wanted a new cake, the young prince realised that he had run out.

- OK, then. I'm fine. I'm fine. Then give me a drink!

Clair-de-lune took out a golden bottle adorned with jewels and handed it to the child. The child lifted it to his mouth, spat it out violently and shouted:

- Hey, sons of a thousand cocksuckers! Eye of the dung! Old woman's arse! Nose droppings! I don't want to drink that! The juice of snakes' asses! Give me

syrup of chips, the real one! the yellow one! the sweet one!

Luckily, the young prince had a bottle of Chip syrup, the real, yellow, sweet stuff. The Boy-with-the-hard-head emptied it at once, and said:

- Give me another.

- I don't have any more," admitted the young prince.

- OK, then. All right, then. Let's get married.

And they did what they did, under the tree whose fruit had a round, fragrant shade.

Then the child, bursting with gaiety, and his soul caught in the fumes of the syrup of chips, improvised these licentious verses:

Tongue in cheek

L'est tout' molle!

Put it back on

It's driving me crazy!

Fine on the ass

Ma ch'mis' is flying!

Piss' on it

Let it stick!

A poem that suggests they did what they did. And from then on, they continued to share these magical pleasures until dusk, singing and marvelling at them.

Then they saw the timid blond and blue clouds of the day's flight, and the little boy said:

- OK, then. That's fine. That's fine. Now go home. And I'll hurry, because I'm going home.

- But where do you live, O legendary one? Do souls have a home?

- Where do I live? Me me?" said the little boy mockingly. And, in reply, he improvised these learned verses:

Chez Tonton-la-gargouille

That's my ball-buster

The one with his arse in an umbrella

And what is queer

Because he's feeling me up!

He who pulls down his pants

So I can put my carrot in it

He who lifts my shirt

*To get him to pull my pecker
Because it comes out of the milk!*

- No, I haven't got any milk," corrected the little boy modestly. But I could. I'm already pissing him.

But the man he was caricaturing was none other than the greatest poet of the millennium, the same one who had taught him to excel in rhythmic impertinence: the Master of Stolen Stories - the marvellous, the eternal! the great!

And this master had never accepted more than one disciple among the millions of boys and artists who sought his teaching. For he distanced himself from men out of love for them. And this disciple was the Child of all children, the Boy with a hard head!

Then Prince Moonlight, amazed that when you are outside the world, you can meet those whom the world reveres, expressed his desire to see the master of the eternal child. But the master replied:

- No, it's fine. We got married. Now go home!

- O heavenly tongue between my teeth, jam of my belly, tadpole of the secret orifice, O Boy-with-hard-head, my life is yours! Please accept it!

- No, I'm fine. Bye, now!

And this farewell saddened the young prince immensely. He did not know that a mere mortal is only allowed to marry the Hard-Headed Boy for one day (for such is the law of this singular world). And Clair-de-lune, at the very least, would have enjoyed this pleasure during the three days that are customary for successful marriages.

- O eye in my eye, heart in my heart, bellybutton in my bellybutton, eggs in my eggs, O Garçon-à-la-tête-dure, allow me, at the very least, to stay with you for the three days that are the custom of successful marriages!

- Well, no. We got married. That's fine. Bye, then!

- O honey from the lips of the bear, O scarlet star from the flower of the cactus, O unctuous fat from the belly of the fly, O delectable child! O snot in the nostril, almond in the apricot, nectar from the clover, balsamic syrup from the cedar bark, O julep! Let me stay with you for just one day!

- Well, no," said the little boy kindly (despite his hard face). But if you want, you can give me some slug oil cakes. I like them very much!

- O child! But you know I don't have any more.

- So much the worse.

And the young prince felt death veiling his eyes and constricting his breast, and he said:

- O delicious source of my bitterness! So I shall leave you only for the

darkness of hell, for my death is written in your harmonious words!

But the eternal child contented himself with a somersault in the grass that the twilight dotted with red gold, and he improvised these ironic verses:

Ouch, ouch, ouch!

Si t'es mouru Tu s'ras foutu Dans un bahut T'auras plus d'air Et les p'tits vers T' bouffront l' derrière Aïe aïe aïe !

However, he sang this answer with tears in his eyes.

- Tears! O the dew that waters the fawn with capricious hoofs, while it delights in the moving meadows of dawn! But you have said goodbye, hard-headed boy! Will I ever be able to come back?

- Well, no, it can't be," says the child.

- I will obey you," murmured the prince in despair. And his face expressed so much sadness that the little boy improvised these lines, in a broken and comical voice, while wiping his eyes with the back of his fist:

Asshole

What did you get?

You don't look so good

In your bum?

Asshole

What did you get?

You don't look so good

In your arse?

And he mixed tears, laughter and kisses, while Prince Moonlight, having pricked himself to call the magic horse, mounted the animal and disappeared into the light clouds of the sky.

Soon he had returned to the world, crossed the seas and continents and reached the seventh island of the seventh sea. And he was in the palace of the king, his father, who had dug himself up in the meantime and gave a great feast to celebrate the return and recovery of Moonlight, his beloved child.

According to the laws of civility, nothing was said until they had savoured the feast, enjoyed the festivities, emptied a thousand decanters of old wine, and sweetened their throats with the chopped vanilla snow from Mont-aux-abeilles. Then the king asked the young prince:

- Am I to believe, my son, that you really found the Hard-Headed Boy by going through the needle?

- Yes, sire my father, I'm not lying to you (my word on my eggs!): I found

him! And he was as beautiful as a lily, as happy as a gargoyle, as sweet as chocolate mousse! And his sex was white and smooth, and his warmth was that of an adolescent perfumed like the orchards of God, and his lustfulness was that of pearl-toothed infants, and his orifices had no incontinence! And he, O eternal one, sang like the springs of the Isle of Hummingbirds, and like the water games of the Rocking Garden, and like the drunken birds of the Tree of Little Kittens! And I married him! I married him. And now here I am.

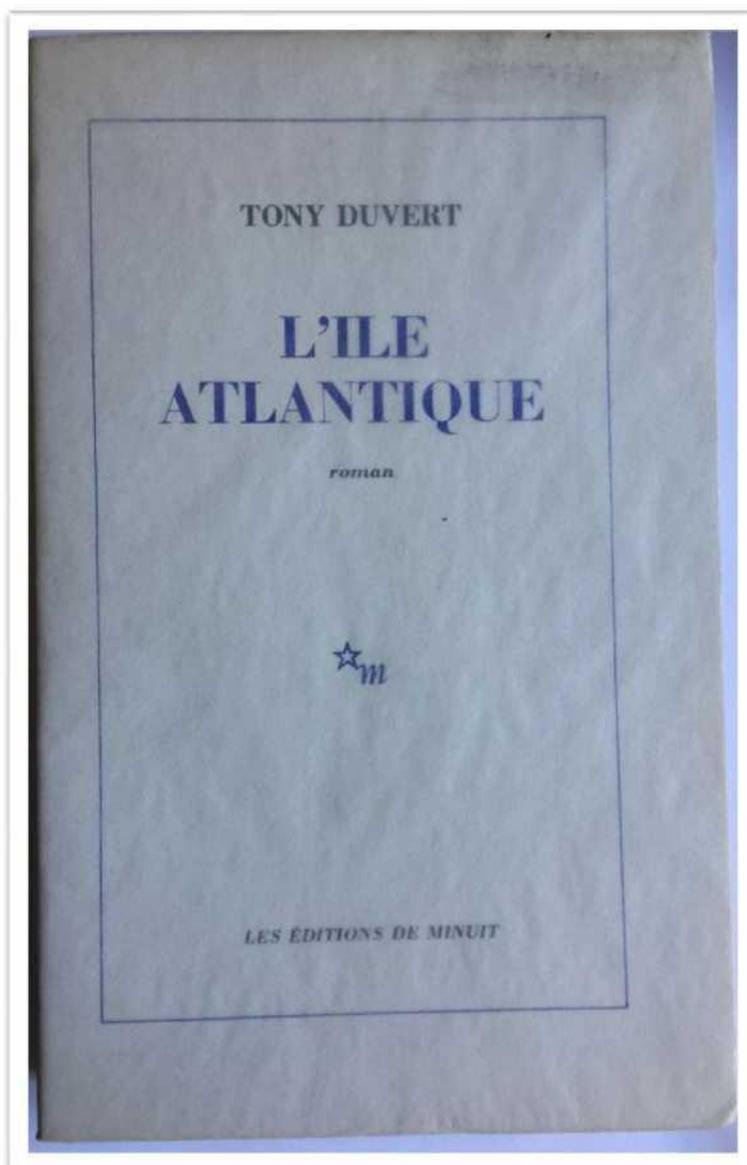
- And were you happy?" asked the king.

- Yes, sire, I was," sighed Clair-de-lune.

- Don't sigh, once is better than never," sighed the old king.

LEAVING THE ATLANTIC ISLAND - January 1979

Source for the date: first numbered edition of the book. To mark the book's release, a meeting was organised at the La Hune bookshop on Boulevard Saint Germain on 15 March 1979. In the days that followed, Tony Duvert met René Schérer at whose house he was invited to dine.

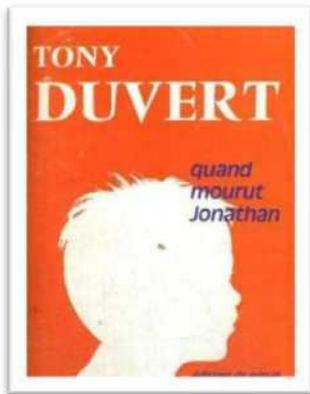


Source: Original numbered edition.

LETTER TO A FRIEND - January 1979

Source: *Retour à Duvert*, Gilles Sebhan, 2015, page 103.

It took me a lot longer than expected to finish this new book [*L'île atlantique*]. There's no loss, (1) in fact, you'll see. I can hardly believe it. I'll also show you an incredible project for the cover of the aforementioned book with a drawing by André (his father's son, don't you see?) Of course I refused indignantly. The Lindons are not about to forgive me. But I really didn't want a repeat of the cover for *Jonathan* (2). It was a sabotage I'll never digest again. Ah, family publishing. I also saw that little Mathieu, whose nappies of essays the *Nouvel Obs* imperturbably publishes, now calls himself the director of *Minuit* (the review). I'll come to believe that daddy's eyes get so tired looking for fleas in talented people that all he has left to do is look at his offspring with a tired, indulgent and pessimistic gaze. You're a duck. But a virgin. What a family. And *that gets me published.*



(1) Tony Duvert is referring here to his publisher, Jérôme Lindon, of Minuit.

(2) Tony Duvert would have liked the book to have been published without the orange cover featuring a portrait of a child in profile.

LETTER TO RENE SCHERER - 14 March 1979

Letter to the philosopher René Schérer, kindly communicated by the latter to Editions Bleues.

Tours on 14 March.

Dear René Schérer,

It's rather my turn to thank you - for your letter, of course, but also for the articles you kindly devoted to my latest books (1), which gave me such pleasure that, if it hadn't been for my bear-like nature, or rather my self-imposed total withdrawal, I would already have expressed my gratitude. There are few men by whom I wish my books to be read.

are loved: but you are one of the very first, and your disapproval would dismay

me. Even though you read, perhaps, too little literature - I mean, too abstractly - for my taste and my works. I swear to you that my books are not romantic pamphlets, and that I write them for their own sake! As soon as they are put to the test in a novel, my strongest convictions are challenged: 'fiction' reintroduces a reality that my ideas could do without! - But what an ideal form of self-criticism. And it shows me that truly committed literature can only say: I don't know. And if I don't like that 'message', then I won't write novels: I'll write essays - those places of omniscience. They're tactically very useful. And I'm preparing some. But there are so many infirmities in these certainties that will have to be defended.

I hope you like the Island; it's not too ambiguous. I'm told that the book is funny, easy and hilarious, but I found it hopeless from start to finish. Go figure! (But what dogs.)

I'm making every effort to become sociable. It's my resolution for this year... You can imagine how happy I'd be to break my retirement to meet you - since you've so kindly suggested it. The difficulty is that I don't live in Paris these years, and I don't have a telephone. So I'll have to arrange that a bit in advance. I'll leave the initiative to you. - By the way, I'll be in Paris, because of the book, from about the 15th to the 20th.

Please accept my sincerest thanks.

Tony Duvert

My home : 29 rue Bretonneau
37000 Tours
In Paris: c/o J.P. Tison
(address and telephone number)

(1) *L'enfant ou le troisième sexe*, in *Nouvelles littéraires* no. 2519 (12/2/76), on the *Journal d'un Innocent* (Ed. note).

LETTER TO RENE SCHERER - March-April 1979

Letter to the philosopher René Schérer, kindly communicated by the latter to Editions Bleues.

Tours, Thursday.

Dear René Schérer,

Forgive me for thanking you so belatedly for your welcome and the inexhaustible kindness you have shown me (and forgive me for still being so formal with you; it'll pass!). I've literally been overwhelmed with obligations - some of them pleasant, incidentally. Finally, I got round to reading your Puerile Eroticism, which delighted and enticed me. You almost made me believe that spanking is a joy that all children dream of. And what fine, sharp ideas, and how delighted I am with this trial! This lively journey into the French countryside of another century has made me sigh with envy. That's the kind of happiness you get from good novels. Thanks be to you!

I'll be back in Paris in mid-April. If you don't mind, I'll bother you a bit - at least on the phone. But will you be there?

You have my warmest friendship and my admiration.

Tony Duvert

*29 rue Bretonneau
37000 Tours*

LETTER TO RENE SCHERER - March-April 1979

Letter to the philosopher René Schérer, kindly communicated by the latter to Editions Bleues.

Monday

. Dear René,

Yes, I had received letters from Pastor Rossman a few years ago. They had found me, alas, at a time when I was too wild.

That doesn't mean that, even now, I can't keep up a 'correspondence' with anyone - as soon as I start working on a book. The interference between my letters and my book is very painful and tiring, and I'm incapable of switching from one thing to another (which is also why, even if it means having a hard life, I don't do any 'second jobs'). In short, if Mr Rossman wants to write to me so that we can talk things over, he'll be disappointed! Let him know - by giving him my address (something you can do without

warn me, by the way: I have complete confidence* in your discretion and in the selection you can make between people who might have the bizarre idea of wanting to write to me).

I'm sorry I didn't see you in April. We won't be seeing each other in May

either, as I won't be going to Paris - I'm giving up the Congrès d'Arcadie, my mind's elsewhere with this book. So I'll see you in June, if you like.

Les fous d'enfance (1) did not delight me. I've done very little work on a subject that would require such enormous and urgent efforts. What a lot of chatter, what a botch. I'm ashamed of it all.

I promised to send you back the two books you lent me: tell me if you're waiting for them, or if I still have a little time.

Friendship

Tony

** in general*

(1) *Fous d'enfance - qui a peur des pédophiles?* No. 37 of *Recherches* magazine, April 1979 (Ed. note)

LETTER TO RENE SCHERER - April 1979

Gilles Sebhan: "To date, we know of five letters written by Duvert to René Schérer, in which we can hear a kind of dialogue but more often a monologue in which Duvert talks about himself, what he is doing, what he should be doing. His plans and his renunciations. In the last one, Duvert unwittingly provides one of the keys to explaining why he did not want to take sides in the Coral affair. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015, page 113. Excerpt.

There's a complicity in corny platitudes, a foolishness and, in short, a cultural primitivism that I can't share. This seems to me to be a trait that did not appear at all in the few paedos I knew in Morocco - and who loved the kind of childhood that was to be found there. But there's a lot more to say about that, thousands of pages of it! In any case, I don't feel any kinship with the (nascent) French paedo culture.

LETTER TO A FRIEND - Late 1979

Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015, page 114.

I'm going to try and make it to the end of the year, but I don't think I'll be back in Tours in '80, or maybe even in France. Three years without a fuck is starting to be a long time.

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE (known as HASTAIRE) - 23 March 1979

Source: Letter sent to Editions Bleues by painter Claude Hilaire.

Tours, Friday.

Dear Claude,

Thank you for taking the trouble to put together this little dossier. But it's a pity that the titles of the paintings don't appear on the photos - and that so many are missing.

On the other hand, Tison didn't have the text of the interview you gave him, and that's a real shame for me. Do you think you could send me a photocopy?

I'll work as quickly as I can. For the length, say 1 eye-size page, for example? These things are easily lengthened by adding illustrations, shortened by printing small, and so on. I'll indicate possible cuts. - But I've never written this type of article-study, and you'll have to correct me!
I look forward to the interview.

Friendship
Tony

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE - 28 March 1979

Letter sent to Editions Bleues by the painter Claude Hislaire.

Wednesda

y Dear Claude,

Thank you for sending me these. I can confirm that I was calling the numbers next to the paintings "titles", which are the only way of identifying them. Otherwise I can't make certain 'individual' comments that I would have liked to. Anyway, too bad!

In the end, it's the exhibition that I'm focusing on (shyness!...) - and I'm, of course, very late. I'll try to send it to you before the end of the week. By the way, I'm calling it 'Hastaire by himself'. Funny, isn't it?

Good luck with this terrible move and all the dirty chores. A big kiss.

Tony

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE - 5 April 1979

Source: Letter sent to Editions Bleues by painter Claude Hislaire.

5.IV.79.

My dear Claude,

So not only do you not slit my throat, you also telegraph me politely! It's not what I deserve.

My excuse: Lindon is making disgusting money off me, I'm exhausted, I can't work - the book isn't selling well, the articles (!) aren't coming in (again!) - I drink, drink, drink.

Another problem is my 'scruples'. Do you remember a pastiche by P. Reboux in which we learned that Flaubert devoured the lives of Saint Lazare for the sole reason that he planned to have one of his characters pass through the station of the same name?... I'm exactly like that. I've never written an article about a painter, I'd first like to read everything that's been written about all painters - and I've got beginner's jitters.

It'll do you a world of good, that's for sure.

I'm trying to post the 2 leaflets "for Le Matin" (1) tomorrow; and the longer (if not better) thing this weekend.*

Another 1 billion apologies

*- and a thousand regards
Tony*

** for the unknown magazine.*

(1) The article never appeared in *Le Matin*.

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE - 11 April 1979

Source: Letter sent to Editions Bleues by painter Claude Hislaire.

Tours, Tuesday.

My dear Claude,

I'm sorry I missed you on Monday. I didn't get up until well after you'd left, it seems. Well, you've seen where I live - not for much longer, anyway, it's really too expensive. I'll try to make it to the end of the year, but I don't think I'll be in Tours again in '80, or maybe in France. Three years without a fuck is starting to seem like a long time (and I've wasted a lot of money living like this...).

The article is attached. It's abominably bad, and you'd be entirely forgiven for finding it unusable, I'm incapable of doing anything less ugly these days; the failure of my book, or at least its slow start, and the obvious hostility of the press are eating away at me, I'm out of my mind.

It's the 'long version' of the article I'm sending you, so for Le Matin you'd have to make a photocopy and trim it to the desired length. It's full of blah, blah, blah, so it should be very easy to do. Ditto if the text was too long for the magazine that wanted it. I didn't put any titles or headings. In short, it's a bit of raw material that I'm giving you, begging you to reshape it exactly as you like - and, of course, to add or subtract any sentence or term as you see fit.

I'm still deeply ashamed of having taken so long to do this work, and of having done it so badly. I'm waiting for a little note from you to tell me that you're not angry with me.

I don't think I'll be going to Paris this month (too broke, too preoccupied), so we probably won't be seeing each other again until sometime in May - unless you drop by again (preferably after 2 or 3pm!...).

Friendship

Tony

I can't send you the documents today because I don't have the right size envelope, but I'll get one soon!



First part, published in *Libération* No. 1532 of 10 April 1979.

HEARTS
Year of childhood

Tony Duvert: no to the doll child (1)

An interview with the author of "Journal d'un innocent" and "Bon sexe illustré".

Tony Duvert, 33, is one of the very few great creators of contemporary French fiction. His latest book, *L'Île atlantique*, has just been published by Editions de Minuit. Modern French literature is decidedly marked by minority love affairs. Throughout Duvert's work, erotic passion for children, like Genet's homosexual passion, plays a founding role in the novel. But with *L'Île atlantique*, the ferocity of a black pessimism seems to replace the green paradise of children's love. Duvert explains why here: for us sentimental readers of his early novels, he speaks harshly of the impossible relationship with the beloved child. In the second part of this interview, he will talk about the obvious change in his writing, and his desire to break out of the literary fringe in which he was confined.

Libé: "L'Île atlantique" is a novel in which there is a very clear divide between the world of adults and the world of children; but there isn't what there was in your other novels, that loving bridge between the two worlds. In this novel, they are totally separated, even at war, very violently, like a "signpost" that has turned bloody.

T.D. : There are no paedophile characters in this book. But there's no one making love either. There's no eroticism at all; there are no successful relationships between people. I've eliminated the paedophile first: everyone I've met so far has seemed to me to be unbearable people, perhaps even worse than their parents, and that's probably because when we talk about perversion, we're talking about identifiable people; just as there are fat people, skinny people, hunchbacks and people who aren't, there are paedophiles. But for me, paedophilia is a culture; there has to be a desire to do something with this relationship with the child. If it's simply a question of saying that he's cute, fresh, pretty, good to lick all over the place, I'm of course of the same opinion, but that's not enough... Admittedly, one

can create wild relationships that are completely personal; but there's no question of settling for wild relationships when you're dealing with children. It is essential that the relationships are cultural; and it is essential that something happens that is neither parental nor pedagogical. A civilisation must be created.

Matriarchy for impubescent girls

When I wrote Jonathan, for example, I was already showing a paedophile

who can't establish a real relationship with a child; Jonathan has a purely passive relationship with the child, he has a kind of place where the child exists, and he can't do more than that. A lot of people would have liked a more romantic, more active paedophile character.

For me, the best thing we could have done with the child was to abstain. And L'Île Atlantique is even more pessimistic.

Libé: There's something striking about Jonathan. It's this mother who seems to me to be the very prototype of the modern mother. As in L'Île atlantique, there's a certain obliteration of fathers; you get the very clear impression that the real springboard for family repression is the mother.

TD: Absolutely. I'm going to say something very unpleasant: it's not even the mother, it's really the woman I'm targeting. The woman as teacher, as the person who has exclusive rights over small children, in nurseries, kindergartens, and in general in all local schools (the vast majority are women teachers, there is hardly a man). You could say that a child up to the age of twelve or thirteen only sees women; they live in women. There's a kind of matriarchy that dominates the impubescent. And from that point of view, this book, L'Île atlantique, is a book against women. Not at all an anti-feminist book, quite the contrary: a book against the social roles of women. Social roles in relation to children, in relation to the family in general.

And I don't want people to call the war against fliqueses and female kapos misogyny, it's got nothing to do with it...

Libé: We don't see many other women in your novels. Apart from sagging breasts and too-tight cotton shirts, the smell of salami...

TD: It's not my fault that mothers are almost always unbearable and unbearable... If there were a Nuremberg tribunal for peace crimes, nine out of ten mothers would have to be put on trial. There's nothing I can do about it.

Libé: You know that there are a lot of paedophiles who 'work it out' with their mothers; I mean that there is traditionally some common ground with the mothers, who are more or less in love with the paedophile, and the paedophile himself more or less pretending to be ambiguous about it.

TD: The paedophile who accepts this kind of thing is obliged to accept everything, he's obliged to betray the child all day long. It's an impossible solution. You always have to show your credentials. You have to prove to the mother that you are a worthy partner for the child, you have to show that your relationship

with the child is as sterile as that of a teacher, for example. And it's only when you show that nothing is going to happen, that you're going to give him back exactly as you took him, that the mother will agree.

But what can be exemplary as a relationship are the relationships I was talking about in *The Diary of an Innocent Man*. And those were, precisely, without parents. At least, without parents in the child's brain. A child who was free for a few hours or a night, or for a few nights, during that time completely left his family behind. He had two cultures: one for the pedo, and another for his parents. And French children don't have that at all.

The war against mothers

Libé: All "paedophilic activity", all love affairs with children take place without the knowledge of the parents, including the parental child himself. But what's surprising is the transformation of traditional paedophile tricks into a kind of official declaration of war, against the mother in particular, and with such violence. Because it doesn't go very far from calling for murder...

TD: I do think we need to wage war against mothers; we need to take an interest in this very particular aspect of contemporary society where children, for the first twelve years of their lives, are brought up in a vacuum with asexual individuals, a kind of worker ants. And there is a war to be waged, not against women in particular, against mothers or grandmothers, but simply a war against cultural rights.

And I'm saying that insofar as I'm interested in life in society, I'd like people who are going to grow up to be in contact with beings who are less crippled than those who have been turned into women. And I'm saying that insofar as I'm interested in life in society, I'd like people who are going to become adults to be in contact with beings who are less crippled than those who have been turned into women.

Libé: What this really boils down to is taking children away from women.

TD: Absolutely. In any case, we must prevent women from having exclusive rights over children, that's for sure. It's not even a question of whether or not there should be sexual relations. I know a child and if the mother is opposed to the relationship I have with him, it's not because of anything to do with his dick, it's above all because I'm taking him away from her. It's about power, yes.

In other words, they get a doll and keep it for themselves.

Libé: There was a very clear evolution in what you wrote in "L'île

atlantique" in particular, but already in "Jonathan" towards the transformation of this fight against mothers as abusive power into a form of generalised misogyny. This time, it's no longer just a question of the power a woman wields over a child, but of the object woman herself insofar as she disgusts you.

TD: I don't agree with that at all, it's completely false. In *L'Île Atlantique*, I removed any kind of paedophile character, even a homosexual. Whereas *Jonathan* showed a love rivalry between a paedo and a mother. Here, I don't show the mothers in relation to the paedophile, I show them in relation to the child. I really let them go head to head. And the reactions I've seen from reading this book show that my atrocious mothers, my disgusting mothers, are extremely believable. They're all the more so because personally, as a schoolboy, as a secondary school student, I've known them by the kilo (by the ton perhaps, I don't know how you say it) and I don't feel at all that I've exaggerated.

A slightly perverse First Communicant

Libé: In "Jonathan", for example, the father was weak and in some ways lagged behind maternal repression. It's an interesting analysis of a contemporary evolution in education...

TD: The child, insofar as it is increasingly in the hands of women, tends to become the sexual object of the woman, and we see this perfectly well in its bodily habits, in everything it is taught. He tends to become a kind of doll, a living doll; but this is precisely because he has no kind of social relationship worthy of the name.

Children keep to themselves. The only children who still have social relationships are those who belong to social classes where everyone works and where you're allowed to be in the street. So they still see a bit of each other, but it's already degraded...

If I've eliminated the paedophile characters from *The Atlantic Island*, I've also eliminated the successful relationships between children. You don't see them. I show that it's a failure, that it can't work because there's no cultural model for successful relationships.

Libé: In your work, from a series of novels that enchanted our youth, such as *Paysage de fantaisie* and *Récidive*, we gradually move towards an increasingly darker climate. It becomes downright misanthropic.

TD: First of all, in *Jonathan*, the adult accepts everything, the best and the worst, because this kid I'm showing is a bit of a pain, not at all a nice child for a

paedophile. One of the things that annoys me about paedophiles is the stereotypical child they like. It's the child in the underwear ads in *Elle* and *Marie-Claire*. A slightly perverse first communion...

Interview by Guy HOCQUENHEIM and Marc VOLINE

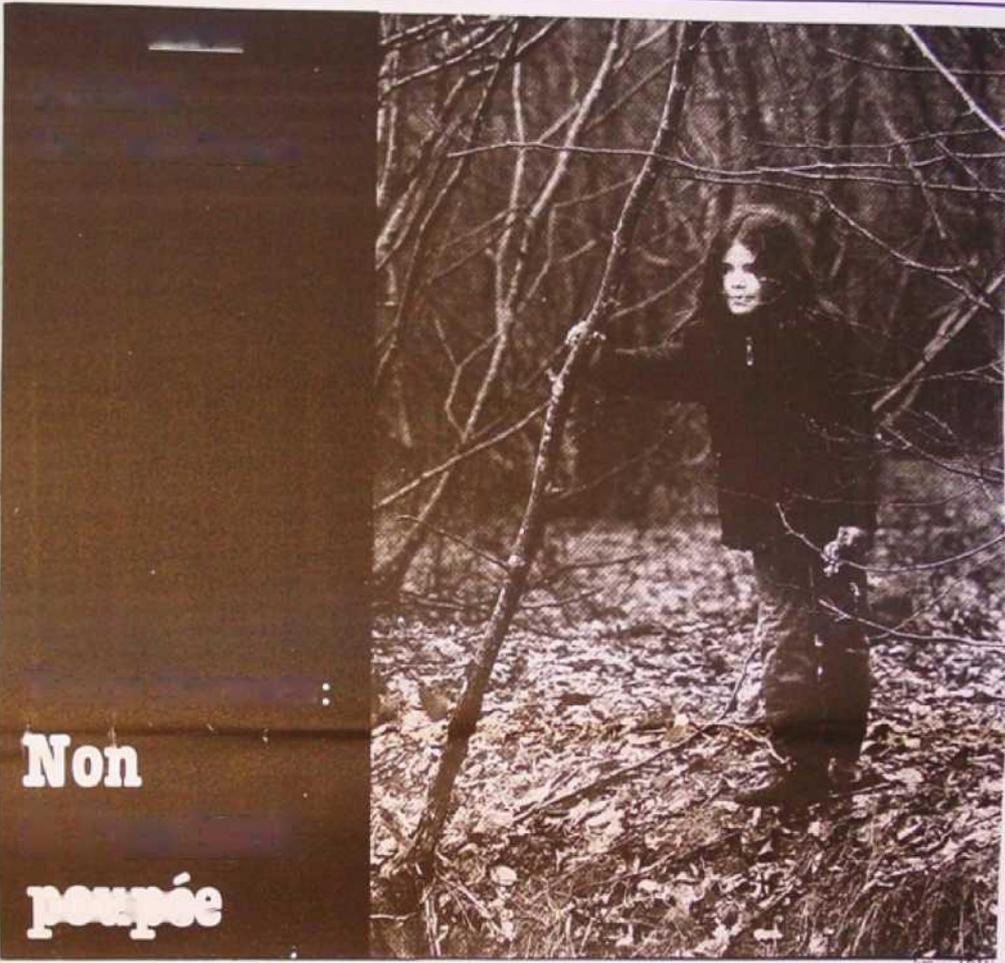
(More tomorrow)

ndant autour des «
 ions syndicales ». Et ont
 sol, une première fois en
 puis en mars dernier, le
 ovement de grève le plus
 portant qu'ait connu le
 re depuis le coup d'Etat
 laire de 1964. Plus de
 0 000 travailleurs ont paré-
 é les principales multina-
 rales installées dans le
 angle de l'ABCD » :
 i grèves décriées « alié-
 vs » par
 eudent obtenu la secon-
 de quarante heures, des
 promotions de salaires
 75 % et la reconnaitis-

« l'usine. Signe de la
 te de ce mouvement qui
 uité et dirigé à la fois le
 one militaire : des sa-
 chées générales ont réu-
 chaque jour de... éin-
 nie à...
 allargies en faveur de
 ouruite de la grève la
 Jone des Campes et à
 opines, les...
 rucel leur mouvement
 re l'avis de leur syndi-
 que « Luis »,
 de file du nouveau
 lianisme brésilien et
 identi du Syndicat des
 de San Ber-
 to, continuant à négocier
 le patronat, bien qu'il
 sé, « c'est » de son
 time par les autorités...

percevant déjà. Son
 le avait vu naître le
 ovement de grève de la
 Lancé par les mêmes
 amille pour protester
 e la diminution de leur
 ur d'achat, ce mouve-
 e soutenu par l'Église,
 est à rassembler un million
 cent mille signatari-
 ainsi qu'une manifest-
 s de 200 000 personnes
 dans centre de São

ur *Notre brésilien* » par
 onne.
 Nour Un contre la



(Photo ADJA)

Non pourpée

ans

res seuls.



1 000 millions.

© 1974 ADJA

***Suite de la P16
parler comme
Guy des Cars

T.D. : Je m'adresse de plus en plus à ce que les choses que j'écris puissent être entendues, je veux dire démarginées. Autrement dit, écrivant des choses qui par elles-mêmes se sentent tout à fait marginalisées par l'idéologie, qu'au moins leur mode d'expression soit tel que ça circule. Le classique en littérature a une efficacité parfaite. Il est nécessaire, il est indispensable pour les choses extrêmement simples, que j'ai toujours à affirmer mais à faire discuter par d'autres que moi.

Libé : A partir du Journal il faut innover, un côté avant-gardiste à dépasser de la manière d'écrire.

T.D. : Il y a eu dans les années où j'ai commencé à écrire une idéologie de l'écriture héritée et psychologique, qui impliquait qu'on invente ses propres moyens d'expression du moment qu'on avait quelque chose à dire et à raconter. C'est une idéologie qui a été utilisée la première fois, qui précède même des choses encore très intéressantes. Quand je lis une écriture comme celle de Guy de Maupassant, qui tend à être de plus en plus fermée sur elle-même, qui tend à dire « je crée entièrement ma langue », je n'y crois plus pour moi-même. Je l'ai fait, oui. Mais son but a changé, il est devenu beaucoup plus politique, recherche d'une action sur autrui. Mais une action en tant que romancier.

Libé : Il y a une chose très nette dans l'écriture de l'Élie Béthouart, c'est stylistiquement très proche d'une écriture naturaliste de la fin du 19ème siècle : le style indirect abondant, la description, l'usage du passé simple et de l'imparfait... Il y a un style pseudo-réaliste...

T.D. : Pseudo, effectivement.

parce qu'il est caricatural, un peu forcé. Je n'ai pas précisément ce qu'on appelle une écriture spontanée ce que je fais est excessivement délibéré. Et si j'ai envie d'écrire l'année prochaine une parodie de la Princesse de Clèves, j'écrirai une parodie de la Princesse de Clèves. Je me fous complètement de ce qu'on pensera d'un point de vue littéraire, parce que pour ce qui est de la littérature je maîtrise mon instrument et j'en fais ce que je veux : exactement comme un pianiste a le droit de jouer aussi bien du Scarlatti que du Beethoven.

Libé : Néanmoins, les écrivains dont tu es parlé, prophétiques dans lesquelles le moyen se remet-tait en cause, peu importe les mots qu'on emploiera, ont toujours été profondément ennuyés. Or les trouve que tu es peut-être le seul, avec Pinget dans l'Inquisiteur, chez qui le style « Nouveau roman » était totalement naturel, et précisément pas du tout avant-gardiste ni prophétique. C'est dommage de perdre ça...

T.D. : Encore une fois, si j'ai besoin de moyens qu'on peut appeler traditionnels, c'est parce que je parle d'autres choses. Ce ne sont plus du tout les mêmes sortes d'individus, les mêmes sortes de personnages, les mêmes sortes de situations. Et à chaque chose ses moyens. Il est impossible de mettre en scène comme je l'ai fait des petites familles bourgeoises, petites bourgeoisies, ouvrières, paysannes etc... tout ça ensemble dans le même paquet, en écrivant comme j'ai écrit l'écrit de jeunesse, par exemple. Ça n'est pas faisable. Mais je les ai pas brûlés, mes bourgeois d'avant. Ils sont là, enfin, pourquoi on faudrait-il en plus ? Il y a des très bons romanciers qui se sont contentés d'écrire deux ou trois livres dans leur vie. Mais c'est mon système bourgeois, je commence à avoir besoin d'une certaine diversité.

Pourquoi faudrait-il que je fasse des dupliques ?

Libé : Tu prépares un livre ?

T.D. : Oui, je prépare un gros livre que j'appelle La route de nuit et qui, lui, réintroduit en force l'homosexualité, la pédophilie. J'essaie de montrer ce que j'ai été moi-même, c'est à dire un homosexuel ayant une vie sexuelle très pénible. Je prends mon bain quand j'ai commencé moi-même à sept-huit ans. Je vais le lire, si j'ai le courage, jusque vers seize ans, le suivre enfin, le traîner, je sais pas comment appeler ça. Et il va sans dire qu'on m'a peut-être été un individu effroyablement malheureux, ce qui me plaît beaucoup d'avance. Et j'essaie de faire ce livre comme un Guy Des Cars, pour un public comme le sien, pour leur donner envie de lire l'histoire d'un enfant pédi.

Libé : Tu es sûr de beaucoup tenir à cette idée de popularisation.

T.D. : C'est indispensable. Quand un type passe en justice pour des affaires des moeurs, on lui parle avec la langue Guy Des Cars, c'est avec cette langue là qu'il faut se battre. C'est dans cette langue là qu'il faut se faire comprendre. Tant qu'on n'arrive pas à traduire dans cette langue là, on n'a rien fait. On s'est exprimé, peut-être, mais on a rien fait. Il y a une idéologie encore trop grande de l'écriture comme écriture littéraire. Moi je parle d'écriture-communication, ce qui suppose par conséquent que pour se faire comprendre largement il faut raconter à beaucoup de choses. Beaucoup de choses dont on a besoin, et quelque chose pour soi-même. Il faut passer par dessus. C'est une écriture-sacrifice, pas une écriture de facilité.

Propos recueillis par
Guy HOCQUENHEM
et Marc VOLINE.



MEDAILLE

«L'affaire Lourdes», FR3-20h3
Le secret de Bernadette

Lourdes est tous les jours le siège d'un véritable miracle. Par un miracle de la foi, un miracle invisible comme une femme qui se dit guérie, est tout c'est bien connu, les femmes sont toujours malades, souffrent. Non, un beau miracle hallucinant : au milieu du ciel, entre les deux pics qui dominent la vallée, s'allume une étoile électrique du plus bel effet. Beaucoup de portugais et de polonais épuisés repartent convaincus d'avoir vu une apparition. Après tout, les lieux où apparaissent les OVNIS sont ceux, un cartographe l'a démontré, où se montrait déjà la Vierge.

Le film de Marcel Bluwal, que vous verrez ce soir, et qui fit découvrir l'impudique Marie-Hélène Brellet dans le rôle de la chaste Bernadette, fut il y a dix ans un grand moment de télé. Un vieux film pour un problème vieillot, pensez-vous. Grave erreur : Lourdes se porte très bien, mieux que jamais. Le nombre de pèlerins n'a cessé d'augmenter depuis la Fondation. Mais un coup de pouce de publicité télévisée lui fait jeter de mal : ainsi, coup sur coup, avons-nous eu droit à trois émissions sur la capitale de la médaille le dimanche 1er avril, le vendredi 6 dans le cadre de « Delta », et au-

jourd'hui. Mais les plus intéressantes questions soulevées par la petite Soubirou, vous ne les trouverez pas là. Lisez plutôt le remarquable « Lourdes » de Zola, un roman fleuve qui se passe en 48 heures de pèlerinage. Ou le récit de Haymann.

Il y a d'abord la façon dont a fini Bernadette, la jeune voyageuse. A peine l'épisode « vision » achevé, elle disparaît de la circulation, reprise par l'Église. On la retrouve au couvent des Filles de la Charité à Nevers, interdite de visites, séquestrée et gardée par une redoutable supérieure qui la hait, l'accuse d'un orgueil démesuré, la persécute. Elle meurt jeune, débarrassant l'Église d'un lourd fardeau, ensevelissant en se sait quel secret qui la prodigeuse béatitude à jamais confié dans les nuages et dans les lettres confidentielles de la hiérarchie. Qui, quel secret, sous la croix en cristal de Nevers ? Et puis, il y a l'impitoyable querelle autour des lieux saints, à qui s'attribuent les fantaisies bénéfiques de la grotte. C'est l'abbé Peyramale, curé de Lourdes, déposé par le cardinal, lui qui le premier avait entendu la bouche de la petite qu'elle était bien l'immaculée conception.

ion en mot de débiles bouche des enfants). Ils se profit des ultra-maudis, des moines ; mais crochus. Et j'avant se cathédrale fente de fonde, pi incroyabilité promise aussi de nos jours disparition du miroir sans des vérifications glorieux plus, sur cir Vatican, depuis un d'années. Lourda s' Lourdes. Mais il y a surtout, à travers La transformation de dans les représentations d'après cette « histoire de pureté » établie le catholicisme siècle, des enfants de te à Bernadette et j c'est une nouvelle my l'enfance qui se met. L'enfant porteur de comme dernière ch monde chrétien, l'en touchable de la modern Bernadette qui l'a le Enlèvement, qui l'a à d'années enfin arrach relation sociale nouveaux de monde Enfance de l'année de comme enfant de la p

Guy HOCQUENHEM

Programme

TFI	19.30 Actualités régionales
12.15 Réponse à tout	19.55 Il était une fois l'homme
13.30 Midi-jeunesse	20.00 Les jeux
13.50 Journal	20.30 Containair de la mort de B. Soubirou : L'affaire Lourdes, réalisé par Bluwal, avec Marc Brellet et Bernadette
14.40 Les visiteurs du mercredi	22.40 Journal
15.45 Black beauty. Feuilleton	
17.20 Mon ami Ben. Feuilleton	
17.55 Sur deux roues	
18.10 TFI	
18.30 Pour la jeunesse	
18.55 C'est arrivé un jour	
19.10 Une minute pour les femmes	
19.20 Actualités régionales	
19.45 Les inconnus	
20.00 Journal	
20.55 La lumière des justes. Feuilleton de Trypt	
21.35 Promenades imaginaires : en Inde avec Malraux	
22.30 Les petites filles modèles. 2. L'appar-tenance au monde	
23.20 Journal	
A2	
18.30 Pour la jeunesse	
19.10 Journal	
12.00 Quoi de neuf ?	
12.15 Série : La station sans	
12.45 Journal	
13.00 Pétite de course. Feuilleton	
14.00 Aujourd'hui madame	
15.00 Les Robinsons suisses. Feuilleton	
16.10 Récré	
18.35 C'est la vie	
18.55 Des chiffres, des lettres	
19.20 Actualités régionales	
19.45 Top-club	
20.00 Journal	
21.55 Mi-fugue, mi-récit : L'adolescente livrée. A la fois de TFI	
22.00 Les jours de notre vie : les cardinaux	
22.50 C'est d'œuvre en pièce : les p	
23.15 Journal	

Second part, published in *Libération* number 1533 of 11 April 1979.

HEARTS
Year of childhood

Tony Duvert: No to the doll child

In the first part of this interview with Tony Duvert, the novelist spoke of the impossible love relationship between adult and child. Here he returns to this child-puppet that the state control of sexuality has created for us, and comments on the change in his own narrative style, from *Paysage de fantaisie* to *L'île Atlantique*.

Libé: You criticise the family child, the child of paedophiles, but what about the child you love?

T.D. : I've managed to build him up, finding him more or less credible. He's the character of Julien in *L'île Atlantique*, a child anarchist who knows only one solution to problems he seems to understand much better than we do, and that solution is desertion. He goes underground.

Libé: He's leaving on his own.

TD: He goes off on his own, yes. He more or less fiddled left and right. He doesn't like it, he's absolutely right and then he leaves on his own. Which isn't possible, of course. *Jonathan's* suicide is unthinkable, unimaginable. There are ten-year-olds who commit suicide, but we don't see any who commit suicide for love.

Libé: You were talking about women treating them like dolls, for example, and you know that's something that's often said about paedophiles.

TD: Of course, as I said earlier, paedophiles have the same children as women. That's what I don't like, and from that point of view I don't support paedophilia as I see it. I remain entirely united in the fight against it. It's obvious that you have to fight against laws, against institutions. But certainly not for paedophilia. The fight to be waged is so that the State and sexuality no longer have the slightest connection. So that there really is no longer a State, there is no longer a society.

institution that has to do with sexuality. And, in my opinion, in this supposed state of freedom, the sexual situations we know become unthinkable. And the people we know as sexual partners or victims, whatever their age and whatever their tastes, also become unthinkable. But I don't want to defend the actual sexuality of a paedophile, or a gay man, or a straight man, or a man or a woman. In my opinion, they're all by-products of the nationalisation of sexuality.

A child is a being a billion times more artificial, serving devices a million times simpler than those of an adult. A paedophile who really loves kids should realise that he's dealing with a puppet. He can't free her. There's no way, or he

risks ten years in jail. And that's a risk that not everyone runs. From that point of view, I'm a novelist. I want to be a novelist rather than an essayist. If I can be unequivocal, that's omniscience, then everything becomes possible. But in terms of a sort of Salvation Army of sexual freedom, it's obvious that what I'm saying is unbearable.

Libé: If you think there's no possibility of a child-adult relationship that leads to something...

TD: I'm not saying that there is no possibility. Basically, the questions you are asking have to do with the fact that you have an ideology of the couple. But I don't. And the obvious solution to what I'm saying would be the group. It's a group of children, with adults, without hierarchical relationships and therefore without love relationships either, in the mythological sense of the word. And if someone tells me that there are successful child-adult couple relationships, that's not interesting.

Libé: We're dealing with two realities of childhood: groups of children among themselves, as you show: these are the gangs, under different names. And secondly, couples. A generalised couple, the mother-child couple, and rare couples, the paedophile-child couple. And the latter couple becomes a positive value in itself, which is absurd. But, on the other hand, in the existence of the child group as you represent it, there is a closure, a segregation, an internal hierarchy...

TD: But I carefully show that these groups are failures. The gangs I show are completely dissociated, they are beings who create a kind of embryonic sociability between themselves, whereas

They have no way of doing it. They're kids who form a gang because they can't be on their own.

Libé: In the end, you prefer them on their own.

TD: I prefer them solitary, yes.

Libé: Michel in "Récidive" is already a loner.

TD: Yes, it's a habit of mine. Of course, in *Paysage de Fantaisie*, there are groups of children, which is already something different, there are groups of children among whom is the narrator, the person speaking... *Paysage de Fantaisie*

is a metaphysical novel. But it's based on this autobiographical thing called *Le Journal d'un innocent*.

Talking like Guy des Cars

TD: I'm increasingly interested in ensuring that the things I write can be heard, by which I mean demarginalised. In other words, when I write things that are themselves completely marginalised by ideology, at least their mode of expression should be such that it circulates. The classic in literature is perfectly effective. It's necessary, it's indispensable for the extremely simple things that I don't have to affirm, but to have discussed by others than myself.

Libé: From "Diary of an Innocent Man" onwards, an avant-garde edge disappeared from your writing.

TD: In the years when I started writing, there was an ideology of heroic and prophetic writing, which implied that you had to invent your own means of expression as long as you had something of your own to tell. It's an ideology that's still very much alive, and even produces some very interesting things. When I read writing like Guyotat's, which tends to be more and more closed in on itself, which tends to say "I create my language entirely", I no longer believe it for myself. I did, yes. But my aim has changed, it's become much more political, a search for action on others. But as a novelist.

Libé: There's something very clear in the writing of "L'Ile atlantique": it's stylistically very close to the naturalist writing of the late

XIX^e century: abundant indirect style, description, use of the past simple and imperfect tenses... There is a pseudo-realist style...

TD: Pseudonym, yes, because it's caricatural, a bit forced... I don't exactly have what you'd call spontaneous writing, what I do is excessively deliberate. And if I feel like writing a parody of The Princess of Cleves next year, I'll write a parody of The Princess of Cleves. I don't give a damn what people think from a literary point of view, because when it comes to literature, I'm the master of my instrument and I can do what I want with it; just as a pianist has the right to play Scarlatti as well as Boulez.

Libé: Nevertheless, the prophetic writing you mentioned, in which the medium called itself into question, no matter what words you used, has always been profoundly boring. But it turns out that you're perhaps the only one, along

with Pinget in "L'Inquisiteur", whose "New Novel" style was totally natural, and not at all avant-garde or prophetic. It's a shame to lose that...

TD: Once again, if I need means that can be called traditional, it's because I'm talking about other things. These are no longer the same kinds of individuals; the same kinds of characters, the same kinds of situations. And each thing has its own means. It's impossible to stage small bourgeois families, petty-bourgeois families, working-class families, peasant families, etc., all together in the same package, writing as I did in *Interdit de séjour*, for example. It's not feasible. But I haven't burnt them, my books from before. They're there, after all, so why do we need any more? There are some very good novelists who have been content to write two or three books in their lives. This is my eleventh book, and I'm starting to need a bit of variety. Why should I have to write duplicates?

Libé: Are you preparing a book?

TD: Yes, I'm working on a big book called *La Ronde de nuit* (1), which reintroduces homosexuality and paedophilia in full force. I'm trying to show what I was myself, a homosexual with a very early sex life. I take my toddler when I started myself, at seven-eight. I'm going to pull him along, if I have the courage, until he's about sixteen, follow him around, drag him along, I don't know what to call it. And it goes without saying that this

mini-pédé is going to be a terribly unhappy individual, which I like a lot in advance. And I want to do this book like Guy des Cars, for an audience like his, to make them want to read about a queer kid.

Libé: You seem to be very keen on this idea of popularisation.

TD: It's essential. When a guy goes to court for an affair of morality, we speak to him in the language of Guy des Cars, and that's the language you have to fight with. That's the language you have to use to make yourself understood. As long as we can't translate into that language, we haven't done anything. We may have expressed ourselves, but we haven't done anything. There's still too much ideology about writing as literary writing. I'm talking about writing as communication, which implies that in order to be widely understood you have to give up a lot of things. A lot of things you need, so to speak, for yourself. You have to get over that. It's sacrificial writing, not easy writing.

Interview by

Guy HOCQUENHEIM

(1) Gilles Sebhan: "In my first essay, I noted Duvert's comments in *Libération* about a project entitled *La Ronde de nuit*. At the time, I saw it as the forerunner of a novel that never came to fruition, which Duvert was to work on for many years, and of which I'll say more later. It is possible that this *Ronde* corresponds more to *Un anneau d'argent*. For the record, Duvert said: *I'm preparing a big book that I'm calling La Ronde de nuit, which will forcefully reintroduce homosexuality and paedophilia. I'm trying to show what I myself was, that is, a child who had a very early sex life, I took my toddler when I started myself, at the age of seven-eight. I'm going to pull him along, if I have the courage, until he's about sixteen, follow him around, drag him along, I don't know what to call it. And it goes without saying that this mini-fag is going to be a terribly unhappy individual, which pleases me in advance. And I want to do this book like Guy des Cars, for an audience like his, to make them want to read about a queer kid.* Source: *Retour à Duvert*, Gilles Sebhan, 2014, page 151.

FESSE, LOVE, LAW - May 1979

Source: *Le Gai Pied* number 2.



Page 8 mai 79

La fessée,

Je ne vous demanderai pas si vous aimez les fessées (cela ne s'avance pas de son côté). Je ne vous demanderai même pas si vous les aimez quand vous êtes petits (ou à fréquemment des souvenirs tendreux). J'interrogerai plutôt la science et la raison — ces complices bien connus de tous les plaisirs de monde. Bref, la fessée peut-elle être agréable ?

Revenons au défilé. On appelle fessée une série de coups sur les fesses, vêtues ou non. Ces coups doivent être donnés avec la main, comme des gifles (sans le mot fessée devant intact, et on dira qu'on a reçu (devant le fouet, le bâton, le martinet, le broussard, le verges, etc. Mais mie et derrière au traitant donc la perfection du geste).

Les coups ainsi portés compriment et ébranlent à un rythme vil les deux grands fessiers, avec tout ce qu'ils recouvrent et tout ce qui leur donne, grâce et poids, cette apparence si propre, ce grain si agréable et si fluide, cette perfection lumineuse qui a toi tous les peintres qui l'ont modifiée.

Cependant, l'usage n'est pas de fesser chaque fesse considérée à part de l'autre. On ne tape pas la première fesse puis la seconde. On joint les deux bouts, on chevauche. Dans l'usage courant, vous prenez un enfant d'un bonjour appropré à vos dessein, vous le placez sur votre genou (si vous êtes debout) ou vous le couchez terre et ventre sur vos cuisses (si vous préférez être assis). A supposé que la fessée soit droite, la main fesseuse ébranlera la fesse gauche de la victime avec la poigne, et la fesse droite avec les doigts tendus.

Ces tapes, claqués ou secousses intrinsèquement principalement la racine, l'entre-fesses. Et, bon gré mal gré, elles se commencent — comme un sésame ou un tremblement de mâchoire — à l'aine du bambin, sésame comparable à un jeu de petite suite, et dont la suite, au point de vue, spécialement souple et labile.

Tout un réseau nerveux sera, chez l'enfant (la victime), excité par ces cuisantes vibrations — et les organes qu'on appelle génitaux (ce n'est qu'une façon de leur indiquer d'être familiaux) seront nettement provoqués — parfois même associés (on en connaît d'autres témoins).

Donc la fessée est, ou devrait être, un plaisir. Elle est proche de la sodomie. Seul, en somme, l'axe des coups diffère : la fessée est tangentielle, la sodomie est rayonnante (je n'ose dire séculaire). Dans les deux cas, c'est une forme de masturbation passive ; quel qu'en l'occure de votre sort. De votre corps. (Noter qu'un argot courant, une correction s'appelle une *baoulé*.)

D'ailleurs, vous connaissez les moeurs des petits enfants. Comme ils aiment rebondir sur les divans, les canapés transformables, les matelas à ressorts, les fauteuils neufs — les selles de vélo quand on prend exprès une rue pavée — les brossettes ou votre papé qui jardine, vous voiture et vous cabote, malgré les cailloux de l'allée et votre terrible énorme poids de bambin de six ans — et les manches à balai qui servent à jouer au cheval, la pointe avant en l'air, la pointe arrière qui frotte le sol et vous transmet à l'entrainement des petits coups nerveux — comme les enfants, oui, aiment que leur corps, au lieu d'être mouillé devant moi derrière, soit et demeure un éternel milieu ?

Tout enfant gas, garçon ou fille, s'adonne ainsi à un plaisir que, par opposition avec la fessée, j'appellerai le *tape-est*. Ignorez si c'est un mot de langage des gosses — mais je suis sûr que ce n'est pas un mot de parents, de gastrologues d'enfants, d'orthographes ou de psychos, psychotes, psychètes.



de garde et psychiatries d'attaque, race Datto ou hitlerien, scolopendres sazi, revenants et pères justes.

Qu'il y ait, chez les enfants pas trop servis de grès par les adultes, une bon-heure-enfance du plaisir fessier, nous aidera à comprendre pourquoi la fessée est, justement, une punition.

Corporellement, en effet, elle exploite une zone de plaisir et elle en abuse : c'est trop fort. Il ne faut pas toucher ça comme ça ! D'angle au poivre, souape à la grimace, masturbation en gants de boxe, balise changé en morsure ; telle est la fessée. Peu douloureuse comparée à d'autres sévices, elle est pire que les autres parce qu'elle vous prend par là.

En second lieu elle est, psychologiquement, abominable. Le père ou la mère qui fessent transgressent deux interdits qu'ils ont eux-mêmes incités à l'enfant : l'interdit anal, l'interdit de l'inceste. Et c'est cette transgression même qui est la punition. On montre à l'enfant que, lorsqu'il déobéit, on a de nouveau un droit de regard sur les parties de son corps qu'on l'obligeait à dissimuler. Ton derrière n'est à toi que si tu es bien sage : sinon on va s'en servir, nous ! Et tu vas voir si ça sert à des choses agréables, les fesses !

Ainsi se prépare, dans le châtiement corporel infantile, le statut humiliant et la marque honteuse des actes « contre nature ». Un homme normal n'a pas de derrière : lui rappeler qu'il en a un, c'est l'offenser, le diminuer — le ramener aux esclavages de l'enfance. Regardez les hitlers que vous essayez de draguer : leur première raison de se croire provoqués et de réagir avec violence, c'est qu'ils ont peur pour leur cul. Vous êtes pour eux ce vieux cauchemar d'enfance : la maman abusive, la mère phallique. Tout hitler mâle, en effet, est un être qui a été *enculé* par sa mère et qui ne s'en est jamais remis. Un obstacle de ses fesses : sachez-le. Un grand blessé.

L'interdit de l'inceste, lui qui transgresse la fessée parentale, n'est en réalité qu'un masque de l'interdiction de sexualité qui frappe tous les enfants.

C'est là un détail qui ne passionne guère les psychanalyses. Le fessent-ils exprès ?

Pourtant, si les parents voudraient seulement empêcher leur progéniture d'ignorer des devoirs endigues, ils devraient simplement dire : — Non, il ne faut pas toucher papa, faut pas toucher maman ! Ça se fait pas ! Va avec ce monsieur-là que tu veux, cette dame-là qui se plat ! Si si ! Je te dis que ce monsieur est bien mieux que moi, cette dame est bien plus jolie !

Et comme les enfants ont une aptitude obnubilée à la circulation, ils ne se le feraient pas dire deux fois.

Au lieu de ça, les parents savent seulement dire :

— Ni moi ni personne Compris ? Ou je te tape. Je te tue ! Je te tue ! C'est tout Oodjo.



Les enfants comprennent très bien. Eux, au moins, savent ce que l'interdit de l'inceste, ce truquage, veut dire en réalité. Je traduis : un enfant n'a même pas le droit de jouer avec les seuls adultes auprès de qui il a le droit d'être : ses parents.

Je prends « jouer » au sens le plus grand du mot, et à tous les petits sens imaginables. Donc, si vous préférez le mot sévère.

Il faut avoir cette situation — « universelle » comme la famille — bien en mémoire pour comprendre l'incroyable provocation que représente, pour l'enfant, cette transgression de l'interdit d'inceste par les parents, et sous forme de punition : la fessée. (Événement majeur moi ces évènements qui passionnent leur femme adulte en la faisant foutre et repasser par leur armoire jusqu'à ce que mort s'ensuive.)

Il paraît qu'avoir comme un pédophile « traitement » à jamais un enfant, l'idée, qui mériterait une longue analyse que je ne peux faire ici, a au moins un côté droit : pensons en effet que nous, je veux dire tout être humain et en société familiale, nous sommes irrémédiablement des victimes de pédophiles. Nous avons passé les douze, quinze, vingt premières années de notre vie entre les mains de ces gens-là. Ce n'était pas une expérience de passage, un « choc » : c'était l'état permanent, obligatoire. Et comme les lois sur la famille vieillissent et vieillissent encore à ce que les enfants soient entre les mains des pédophiles et surtout jamais en d'autres mains ! Aujourd'hui comme hier, la seule raison pour laquelle on vous interdit d'approcher les enfants, c'est l'amour que vous leur portez. Mieux vaut les dompter, les battre, les tuer même : vous n'êtes presque pas en prison. L'ordre familial universel est bel et bien cette pédophilie qui évogue, par sa nature érotique, son cynisme limpide, la bonne conscience des glacées d'il y a trente ou quarante ans.

Tenez, laissez plutôt. Ce que je vais vous citer est d'autant plus significatif — outre le grand pays mis en cause, les USA, et le caractère fédéral de la décision du Sénat — la opinion des châtiments corporels est érotique, lui, du point de vue de l'enseignement public (un étiologique cancer du système familial).

Le Monde, 4 mai 1977. — New York — Les châtiments corporels peuvent être infligés aux écoliers américains. Ainsi en a décidé la Cour suprême par cinq voix contre quatre. Les enseignants qui frappent les écoliers ne violent pas le 8^e amendement de la Constitution qui interdit « les peines cruelles et extraordinaires ». La Cour a dit que dans l'ensemble les châtiments corporels sont infligés, aux Etats-Unis, « de façon raisonnable » et « sans excès ». Le cas des professeurs recevant la fessée ou des tapes sur le bout des doigts ne peut donc être assimilé à celui des condamnés à mort. (...) Les quatre juges en désaccord avec la majorité ont fait valoir en vain que « les châtiments corporels ont un caractère déshonorant et irréparable ». La Cour suprême semble s'être laissé guider dans cette affaire, comme l'est d'habitude par la peine capitale, par la tendance prédominante de l'opinion publique. (...) L'usage de la force physique comme moyen de répression scolaire est, en effet, autorisé dans l'ensemble des Etats, sauf celui de New Jersey et dans la ville de New York. (...)

Je voudrais citer tout l'article de Louis Wenzler : mais la place me



manque. Je passerai donc de la libre Amérique à cette malheureuse Suède où on se suicide tant. Cette fois-ci, l'information est toute fraîche, comme vous allez voir.

Le Monde, 19 mars 1979 — Stockholm (AFP) — Les parents suédois n'auront plus le droit de fesser leurs enfants à partir du 1^{er} juillet prochain ; le Parlement a adopté vendredi 16 mars (1979), sans le modifier, par 2-0 voix contre 6, un projet de loi interdisant les punitions corporelles sur les enfants. Selon ce texte, toute punition causant une souffrance physique ou morale, même légère ou temporaire, est un délit. La loi s'applique aux parents ainsi bien qu'à toute personne qui a la charge d'enfants.

« Un parlementaire libéral a déclaré qu'il espérait que la nouvelle loi entraînerait un changement d'attitude des adultes envers les enfants. Un député oppositaire a répondu, en effet, que cette nouvelle loi serait « inutile et inutile », tandis qu'un autre conservateur a pour sa part trouvé « honteux » que le Parlement ait à s'occuper de savoir s'il valait mieux donner des coups aux enfants ou au contraire leur parler. »

Je crois que tous les parlementaires, chez nous, trouveraient non pas « honteux », mais désirable, d'aborder ce problème au Palais-Bourbon. D'ailleurs, la majorité et l'opposition ont mieux à faire que de se rendre impopulaires en se militant de la vie privée des masses françaises.

Car c'est bien ce que signifie cette nouvelle loi suédoise : on a vu, au nom des parents, un droit des enfants. On a créé une forme inouïe d'égalité — une sorte de loi antiraciste. Vous ne comprenez pas ? La loi suédoise veut dire que les parents de la-bas s'interdisent d'être plus forts que leurs mouches.

Mais alors, que vont-ils être ? Retenez cette dépêche : la nouvelle loi autorise seulement les punitions qui ne causeront aucune souffrance physique, aucune souffrance morale, même légère ou temporaire. Est-ce que ce n'est pas rigolo ?

Le propre d'une punition, en effet, c'est bel et bien de faire souffrir — et d'être infligé par des forts à des faibles. (Au fait, les récompenses aussi ne donnent d'en haut.)



l' amour, le droit

A René Schérer



Interdire les punitions qui, même légèrement, même momentanément, font souffrir, c'est interdire non seulement les punitions mais toute relation de douceur entre enfants et parents. On a raconté dans les journaux l'histoire d'un bambin de cinq ans qui, après le vote de cette loi fautive soumise en 1946 de la TV a parlé de tout ça à l'école ou les enfants pouvaient entendre. Il est entré dans un commissariat pour se plaindre que son père l'avait giflé. Encore drôle ? Si vous le crovez, je vais vous imaginer une autre situation hilarante. Un petit Suédois va voir la police et dit : « J'ai neuf ans. Je connais un monastère de trois ans. On fait l'amour ensemble. Il me donne aussi des lésions parce que moi j'aime ça. Ça me fait des histoires là-dedans ! Alors mon père et ma mère ils l'ont tué et ils ont déposé le monastère à la police. Alors moi ils m'ont puni à cause de ça. J'ai une souffrance physique et morale pas légère du tout, et qui m'a pas l'air d'être temporaire. Alors voilà, je dépense une plainte contre mes parents »

« non à nous ») Car nos commissariats n'ont vraiment rien du tout de socialistes. Vous les imaginez, enregistrer une plainte d'enfant contre son père ? Notre police (son syndicat lui-même s'en plaint parfois) n'a pour mission que de défendre les forts contre les faibles — maintenant l'ordre, certes, mais l'ordre de qui, justement, sans police ou ordre, ne règnerait pas.

Bref, quelles que soient les lois qu'un Parlement progressiste voterait, les familles françaises seraient très tranquilles : ça ne suivra pas. La police y veillera : elle sait bien, elle, si « les menottes » sont prêtes à un progrès ou s'y sont pas. Car les flics sont, dans la rue, ce qu'est la télévision à la maison. Ils ne sont pas qu'un peu socialistes, sous ces favoris du régime. Ils savent vraiment ce qu'il nous faut. Ne sont-ils pas la France ?

Alors, cette Suède ? Je suis si pessimiste que j'ai tendance à croire que lorsque une loi de liberté est adoptée quelque part, c'est parce que la classe dominante est sûre que ça ne changera rien. Ce n'est pas un hasard si les nations les plus libres du monde sont ces petits pays scandinaves pétrifiés, bêtes et mornes, consciencieux, puritains, où chacun se boucle chez lui — climat oblige. Qui donc ira déranger l'autre ? Qui ira, au nom de la loi, représenter l'enfant ? L'enfant du vote (parce qu'un vrai enfant battu ne sait même pas que ses parents n'ont pas le droit, et de toute façon, il en a trop peur : il subit ou il fait), c'est l'enfant abstrait, c'est-à-dire la boîte aux lettres, le paillason, la poule au sein : on ne va pas y toucher comme ça, non ? Avant de dire à mes voisins « Votre paillason par la merde, vous exagérez ! », je vais bien attendre un an ou deux, et ma femme, mon mari me dissuaderont sûrement de me plaindre.

« Alors, on a assez d'enfants comme ça on en est déjà assez dans la merde, allez, allez, laissez pourrir, pas la peine de chercher des ennemis en plus ! Et le loyer ! »

Que donc va courir des risques pour les enfants du voisin, et parler — devant les flics — contre ceux (ses familles tortionnaires) qui dénonceront aussitôt ses propres irrégularités ? Les parents bretons ont toujours le droit de l'être et une raison noble pour ça. Avez-vous entendu jamais parler d'un père qui fesse tous les soirs son fils parce que celui-ci refuse d'être sodomisé ? Livres et enquêtes ont largement prouvé qu'on ne bat les enfants que pour les plus pures raisons — et qu'on ne les tue (9 à 10 000 par an en France) que par amour d'eux. Je veux dire par amour de ce qu'ils seraient devenus si ces méthodes d'éducation n'avaient pas eu (comme certains médicaments indispensables mais trop formels) un effet regrettable. La « punition » honore toujours celui qui l'administre. Et les enfants seront toujours coupables d'avoir été punis par des gens qui, puisqu'ils avaient la science et le droit de punir, étaient évidemment innocents.

Voilà tout ce que je me fait penser que :

C'est pour ça que, si on vous demande : « Si vous aviez des enfants, comment vous les éduqueriez ? », vous répondrez que vous fermez tout pour qu'ils deviennent des héros en règle avec toutes les orthodoxies du monde. Car vous êtes comme ces putains qui mentent leur fillette dans un pensionnat de bonnes sœurs. Education si coûteuse qu'il faut lever, on m'aurait l'envoyer dix millions de plus par jour pour payer ça. La vertu, ça n'a pas de prix.

Comprenez donc que le grand délinquant dont je parlais, cet enfant pour



celle nouvelle loi suédoise n'aura aucun effet. Elle ressemble trop à cette majorité civile fixée à 18 ans que Gustav d'Estling, en cadeau d'avènement, avait accordée aux jeunes Français. Je me rappelle que, juste à ce moment-là, je connaissais un solide brave gosse, infantile et gentil, qui était orphelin élevé de la ferme, près de Metzray, ou était depuis quatre ans. D'autres se perdent : ou s'évadent si vite qu'on les reprend. Lui avait patiemment l'avait, en approchant ses 18 ans, qu'une anglaise, garçon sauvage, il vivait, bien sûr, de petits vols (plutôt dans les monoprix que chez les pads, car il aimait abuser, je l'ai vu, les garçons) et il craignait seulement le nez des mineurs. Les peines et les mortuaires sont si différentes, quand on passe du « mineur » au « majeur », que la loi gardienne, cette « liberté » nouvelle (mais pour qui ?) l'avait comblé. Il espérait encore trois ans de punitions mineures (s'il était pris) — voilà que la nouvelle majorité le transformait en délinquant d'ave. C'est-à-dire que risquer trop pour le peu qu'il fait fil faisait à manger !

Imaginez cet enfant sans fin, jamais aimé, jamais vu, plus sauvage et plus doux qu'aucun sauvage et qu'aucun civilisé, qui s'est transformé en délinquant pour, simplement, échapper aux bienfaits que l'Etat répand sur les gens sans famille. Non, vous ne pouvez pas comprendre. Vous, les parents, vous avez peur des anonymes.

C'est pour ça que, si on vous demande : « Si vous aviez des enfants, comment vous les éduqueriez ? », vous répondrez que vous fermez tout pour qu'ils deviennent des héros en règle avec toutes les orthodoxies du monde. Car vous êtes comme ces putains qui mentent leur fillette dans un pensionnat de bonnes sœurs. Education si coûteuse qu'il faut lever, on m'aurait l'envoyer dix millions de plus par jour pour payer ça. La vertu, ça n'a pas de prix.

Comprenez donc que le grand délinquant dont je parlais, cet enfant pour

braguette blanche : et que, puisque j'étais en 1979, regarder, c'est que je montre. Je n'ai pourtant pas l'air « fin ». Mais le plus petit des enfants est le plus vaillant des dragueurs, sans, aujourd'hui, qu'une regard c'est une suite. On se fout, on somme, que je suis petit ou pas : on fait simplement que je ne l'appréhende pas par derrière — je veux dire, pas petite annonce. (Disons-mais, on peut les hants de mariage avant de savoir qui on « épousera ») Mon vice, ma transgression, c'est évidemment de vouloir adresser la parole à ce jeune homme sans qualités (mais dont quelque chose me plaît) qui, l'œil sombre et le pas rapide, sort dans son poing l'annonce qu'il étire à l'ère ou à l'ère : et qui renferme, envers et contre tous et toutes, son cri d'amour. Mon malheur, c'est de vouloir bavarder avec ce gamin qui tout en l'air comme un cerge (enveloppe bicolor d'orthographe, qu'il va pointer pour l'ère. Peut-être Journal de Mère) — je ne suis que une tante à qui on n'écrit pas.

Tant de considérations sur les lois, et tant de confidences, pour dire sans mensonges ma raison de ne pas croire aux meilleures lois. J'ai réellement la certitude que la Cour suprême américaine et le Parlement suédois, en ce point de leurs discussions respectives, ont un point commun dur comme fer : maintenir ce qui est. Pour les juges américains, la Famille ne peut survivre que si on bat les enfants. L'Historien suédois, même en disant : Pour les députés suédois, la Famille ne peut survivre que si on ne bat plus les enfants. L'Historien suédois même en disant : Dans les deux cas, on s'est obligé à un crime : la mort des parents, la fin des Familles, le commencement de l'Humanité. Je me rendrais cette gravure, dans l'Atomisme populaire, de Camille Flammarion, ou l'un voit le monde de la Terre : c'est, sur une bande tout notre planète, toute de Soleil, aura géni, un père, une mère, un petit dans les bras de maman, tous trois réduits à l'état de squelette à stéréo-



18 à 21 ans, en cette année de transition) se sera réjoui d'un cadeau si spectaculaire ? Pas la peine d'y réfléchir. Les mineurs, les opinions, les résultats d'enquêtes, les attitudes moyennes et majoritaires au lycée, au collège, à l'université, les convictions face à l'Eglise, au mariage, à la famille, au travail, à l'argent, à l'enfance, aux pauvres, n'ont pas bougé d'un poil. Certes, dans quelques journaux, les petites annonces sont de plus en plus rares — mais c'est seulement parce que nos ruses sont de plus en plus vides et flugues. J'ai toujours aimé regarder soigneusement les visages et les yeux. Une sociologie pour moi tout seul. J'ai l'impression que mes yeux couverts sont comme une



Tier. Drôle d'histoire, non. Elle illustre pourtant le « changement d'attitude » qu'une telle loi va exiger des parents face à leurs gosses. Imaginez que notre Chambre des députés, quand nous étions, nous, enfants, ait voté une telle loi — sous Aarol, Coty, de Gaulle, Pompidou ou Qui-vous-savez. Nous sommes en France : une décision aussi risible aurait provoqué la révolution que Mai 68 a faite. Car c'était la révolution des collégiés, des familles, pas touchée à nos droits ! Si on peut plus courir de gosse, augmentez les allocations ! (Monstaches de beauf en bataille) (Et toute la « gauche » d'accord.)

Certes, en France, même si on adoptait cette loi « anti-casseurs d'enfants », elle ne produirait pas de bouleversements très sensibles. On ne ce que je viens de supposer : une révolution post-jadiste sur le thème « nos enfants



Tony Duvert

To René Schérer

I won't ask you if you like spankings (you don't like to admit it). I won't even ask you if you liked them when you were little (we often have biased memories). Instead, I'll ask science and reason - those well-known accomplices of all the pleasures of the world. In short, can spanking be enjoyable?

Let's go back to the flood. A spanking is a shower of blows on the buttocks, with or without clothes. These blows must be given with the hand, like slaps: otherwise the word spanking becomes inaccurate, and we say that we have received (given) the whip, the stick, the martinet, the hairbrush, the rod, etc.. Bare hands and bare behinds are therefore the perfection of the genre.

The blows thus delivered compress and shake the two large buttocks in a lively rhythm, with all that they cover and all that gives them, fat and skin, this appearance that is so prosperous, this grain that is so flaky and fluid, this luminous perfection that has killed all the painters who have meditated on it.

However, it is not customary to spank each buttock separately from the other. You don't slap the first buttock and then the second. You join the two ends, you straddle. In common usage, you take a child of

the appropriate length for your purposes: you bend him over your knee (if you're standing) or lay him with his torso and stomach on your thighs (if you prefer to sit). Assuming the offender is right-handed, the offending hand will shake the victim's left buttock with the palm, and the right buttock with the stiffened fingers.

These taps, slaps or jolts will mainly affect the crack, the crotch. And, willy-nilly, they will be transmitted - like an earthquake or a jaw tremor - to the toddler's anus, a ring comparable to the tyre of a small car, whose suspension is, at this age, especially flexible and labile.

A whole network of nerves in the child (the victim) will be aroused by these intense vibrations, and the so-called genital organs (which is just one way of telling them to be family organs) will be clearly provoked - sometimes even sated (we know some illustrious witnesses).

So spanking is, or should be, a pleasure. It is similar to sodomy. In short, it's only the axis of the blows that differs: spanking is tangential, sodomy is radiating (I dare not say secant). In both cases, it's a form of passive masturbation: someone is taking care of you. (Note that in everyday slang, a correction is called a *hand-job*).

You know how little children are. How they love to bounce on sofas, convertible sofas, spring mattresses, new armchairs - bicycle saddles when you take a cobbled street on *purpose* - wheelbarrows where your grandfather, who's gardening, drives and bumps you, despite the pebbles in the driveway and your terrible enormous six-year-old weight - and broomsticks used for playing horse, the front point in the air, the back point scraping the ground and sending little nervous jolts down your crotch - children love it when their bodies, instead of being half in front and half behind, are and remain in an eternal middle!

All gay children, boys and girls alike, indulge in a form of pleasure which, as opposed to spanking, I'll call *smacking*. I don't know if it's a kids' word: but I'm sure it's not a word used by parents, child healers, schoolteachers or psycons, psyconnes, psychiens de garde and psychiennes d'attaque, race Dolto or bâtardes, Nazi ectoplasms, revenantes and just fathers.

The fact that children who are not hugged too closely by adults have a good-natured enjoyment of their bottom will help us to understand why spanking is, in fact, a punishment.

Corporeally, she's exploiting a pleasure zone and she's abusing it: it's too strong. You can't touch it like that! Pepper spanking, face soup, masturbation in boxing gloves,

kissing turned into biting: that's spanking. Hardly painful compared to other forms of abuse, it's worse than the others because it's right in front of you.

Secondly, it is psychologically abominable. The father or mother who spansks transgress two prohibitions that they themselves have instilled in the child: the prohibition of anal intercourse and the prohibition of incest. And it is this very transgression that is the punishment. Children are shown that when they disobey, they once again have the right to look at the parts of their body that they were forced to conceal. Your bottom is yours only if you behave: otherwise we'll use it! And you'll see if your bottom is good for anything!

Childhood corporal punishment thus prepares the way for the humiliating status and shameful mark of "unnatural" acts. A normal man has no bottom: to remind him that he has one is to offend him, to diminish him - the take us back to the slavery of childhood. Look at the straight men you try to pick up: the first reason they think they're being provoked and react violently is that they're afraid for their arses. They see *you as* that old childhood nightmare: the abusive mother, the phallic mother. Every hetero male is someone who has been *fucked by his mother* and never got over it. He's obsessed with his bum. A wounded man.

The prohibition of incest, as transgressed by parental spanking, is in reality no more than a mask for *the prohibition of sexuality* that applies to all children. This is a detail that psychoanalysts are not very keen on. Do they do it on purpose?

However, if parents only wanted to prevent their offspring from experiencing Oedipal desires, they would simply have to say: "No, you mustn't touch Daddy, you mustn't touch Mummy! You can't do that! Go with that gentleman you want, that lady you like! Yes, yes, yes! I'm telling you, this gentleman is much better than me, this lady is much prettier!

And, as children have an inordinate aptitude for traffic, they wouldn't be told twice.

Instead, parents only know how to say:

- *Not me, not anyone.* Do you understand me? Or I'll hit you. I'll kill you! *I'll kill you!*

They're Oedipus.

Children understand very well. They, at least, know what the prohibition of incest, this trickery, actually means. I'll translate: *a child doesn't even have the right to come with the only adults with whom he has the right to be: his parents.*

I use 'enjoy' in the broadest sense of the word, and in every little sense imaginable. So, if you prefer the word *live*...

You have to remember this situation - as 'universal' as the family

- to understand the incredible provocation represented for the child by this transgression of the ban on incest by the parents, and *in the form of punishment*: spanking. (I'm reluctantly reminded of those tyrants who punished their adulterous wives by having them fucked over and over by their armies until they died).

It is said that knowing a paedophile 'traumatizes' a child forever. The idea, which would deserve a lengthy analysis that I can't go into here, at least has a funny side: let's think that we, by which I mean every human being born into a family-oriented society, are irremediably the victims of *paedophiles*. We have spent the first twelve, fifteen, twenty years of our lives in the hands of paedophiles.

of these people. It wasn't a passing experience, a 'shock': it was the permanent, obligatory state. And because family laws ensured, and still ensure, that children were in the hands of *paedophiles* and never in any other hands! Today, as in the past, the only reason you are not allowed near children is because you love them. It's better to tame them, beat them, even kill them: you'll hardly go to prison. The universal family order is indeed this *paedophobia* which, in its naive cruelty and limpid cynicism, evokes the good conscience of the genocides of thirty or forty years ago.

Here, read on. What I'm about

to quote is all the more significant because - apart from the large country involved, the USA, and the federal nature of the Senate's decision - the question of corporal punishment is considered here from the point of view of public education (that elephantine cancer of the family system).

Le Monde, 4 May 1977. "New York. - Corporal punishment may be inflicted on American schoolchildren. So ruled the Supreme Court by five votes to four. Teachers who hit schoolchildren are not violating the 8^{ème} amendment to the Constitution, which prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment". extraordinary". The Court said that, on the whole, corporal punishment is inflicted in the United States "reasonably" and "without excess". The four judges who dissented from the majority argued in vain that "corporal punishment is final and irreparable". The Supreme Court seems to have allowed itself to be guided in this case, as it was last summer in the case of capital punishment, by the predominant trend of public opinion. (...) The use of physical force as a means of school punishment is in fact authorised in all the States except New Jersey and New York City (...)"

I would like to quote Louis Wiznitzer's entire article, but there is not enough room. So I'll move on

from free America to that unfortunate Sweden where so many people commit suicide. This time the information is fresh, as you will see.

Le Monde, 19 March 1979. "Stockholm (AFP). Swedish parents will no longer be allowed to spank their children from 1^{er} July this year: on Friday 16 March (1979), Parliament passed a bill banning the spanking of children by 259 votes to 6, without amendment.

corporal punishment of children. According to this text, any punishment that causes physical or moral suffering, however light or temporary, is an offence. The law will apply to parents as well as to anyone with responsibility for children.

"One Liberal MP said he hoped the new law would lead to a change in adults' attitudes towards children. One Conservative MP said the new law would be "harmful and unnecessary", while another said it was "disgraceful" that Parliament should be concerned with whether children should be slapped or talked to."

I believe that all the members of parliament in France would find it ridiculous, not 'shameful', to raise this issue in the Palais-Bourbon. Besides, the majority and the opposition have better things to do than make themselves unpopular by

meddling in the private lives of the French masses.

Because that's what this new Swedish law is all about: a children's right has been voted in on behalf of parents. They have created an unusual form of equality - a kind of anti-racist law. Don't you get it? The Swedish law means that parents over there are forbidden to be stronger than their kids.

But then, what will they be? Reread this dispatch: the new law only authorises *punishments* that will not cause any *physical* suffering or *emotional* distress, however *slight* or *temporary*. Isn't that funny?

The very nature of punishment is to cause suffering - and to be inflicted by the strong on the weak. (By the way, rewards are also given from on high...)

Banning punishments that, however *slightly*, however *morally*, cause pain, means banning not only punishments but any relationship of pain between children and parents. There was a story in the papers about a five-year-old toddler who, after this law was passed (we're in Sweden: the TV talked about all this at a time when children could hear...), went into a police station to complain that his father had slapped him. Is that funny? If you think so, I'll tell you another hilarious situation. A little Swedish boy goes to the police and says: "I'm nine years old. I know a man of thirty. We make love together. He also spansks me because

I like it. It's all a bit of a fuss! My father and mother found out about it and reported him to the police. So they punished me

because of this. I'm *suffering physical* and *moral pain that's not light* at all, and doesn't seem to be *temporary*. So I'm lodging a complaint against my parents.

There you go. Funny story, isn't it? But it illustrates the "change of attitude" that such a law will require of parents in relation to their children. Imagine if our Chamber of Deputies, when we were children, had passed such a law - under Auriol, Coty, de Gaulle, Pompidou or who-knows-what. This is France: such a laughable decision would have provoked the revolution that May 68 missed. Because it would have been a revolution of bastards, of families: hands off our rights! If we can't break any more kids, increase our benefits! (And the whole 'left' would have agreed.)

Admittedly, in France, even if we were to adopt this "anti-child-killing" law, it would not produce any very significant upheavals. (Apart from what I've just surmised: a Poujadist revolution on the theme of "our children are ours"). Because there's really nothing Swedish about our police stations. Can you imagine them registering a child's complaint against his father? Our police force (the union itself sometimes complains about this) has no mission other than to defend the strong

against the weak - to maintain order, of course:

but the order of which, without the police, would not reign.

In short, whatever laws a progressive Parliament passes, French families can rest easy: it won't follow. The police will see to that: they know very well whether "mentalities" are ready for progress or not. Cops are to the street what television is to the home. They're not just in the know, all those favourites of the regime. They really know what we need. Aren't they France?

So how is Sweden? I'm such a pessimist that I tend to believe that when a freedom law is passed somewhere, it's because the ruling class is sure it won't change anything. It's no coincidence that the freest nations in the world are these little: petrified Scandinavian countries, dumb and dreary, conscientious, puritanical, where everyone keeps to themselves - the climate obliges. Who is going to disturb the other? In the name of the law, who will represent the child? The neighbour's *child* (because a *real* child who has been beaten doesn't even know that his parents don't have the right: and, in any case, he's too scared of it; he either suffers or runs away) is the *neighbour's* child, i.e. the *neighbour's* letterbox, doormat, dustbin: we're not going to touch them just like that, are we? Before telling my neighbour: "Your doormat stinks of shit, you're

exaggerating!

and my wife and husband will surely dissuade me from complaining: "Come on, we've got enough trouble as it is, we're already in enough trouble, come on, come on, let it rot, there's no point in looking for more trouble! And the rent!"

So who is going to take risks *for* the neighbour's children, and speak out - in front of the cops - against those (these torturing families) who will immediately denounce their own irregularities? Brutal parents always have the right to be brutal and a noble reason for it. Have you ever heard of a father who spans his son every night because he refuses to be sodomised? Books and surveys have amply demonstrated that children are only beaten for the *purest of* reasons - and that they are only killed (9 to 10,000 a year in France) out of love for them. I mean out of love for what they should have become if these methods of upbringing had not (like certain essential but too strong medicines) had a regrettable effect. Punishment' always honours the person who administers it. And children will always be guilty of having been punished by people who, since they had the science and the right to punish, were obviously innocent.

That's all that makes me think that this new Swedish law will have no effect. It is too much like this majority

18, which Giscard d'Estaing had given to young French people as a coming-of-age present. I remember that, just at that time, I knew a solidly brave kid, childlike and kind, who was an orphan. He'd escaped from the farm near Mettray where the state had put him and where he'd been tortured for four years. Others hang themselves or escape so quickly that they are caught again. He had been patient. As he approached his 18th birthday, he had only one fear: he was a wild boy who, of course, made a living out of petty theft (more from supermarkets than from fags, because, as I've seen, he was absurdly fond of boys) and he only feared the juvenile court judge. Penalties and morals are so different when you go from being a 'minor' to being an 'adult' that the Giscardian law, this new 'freedom' (but for whom?) had appalled him. He was still hoping for three years of minor punishments (if he was caught): here was the new majority turning him into a *hardened* delinquent. In other words, one who risks too much for the little he does (he used to steal food).

Imagine this endless child, never loved, never seen, wilder and gentler than any savage or civilised person, who had become a delinquent simply to escape the benefits that the State lavishes on kids without families. No, you can't understand. You fags are afraid of abnormals.

That's why, if someone asks you: "If you had children, how would you bring them up?", you answer that you would do everything to ensure that they became heterosexuals in accordance with all the orthodoxies of the world. Because you're like those whores who send their little girl to a nuns' boarding school. It's such an expensive education that these mums have to send themselves an extra ten loafers a day to pay for it. You can't put a price on virtue.

You have to understand that the serious delinquent I was talking about, this child forever, did not believe for a moment that coming of age at 18 was a gift. He was hoping that, by the time he had a chance to save his skin, he'd be in the *minority* for another three years. Damned. Damned by this tiny detail, this one of those things that fall from who knows what other world: a presidential election. And long live freedom. But what minor (aged 18 to 21, in this year of transition) will be happy about such a suspicious gift? No need to think about it. Mores, opinions, survey results, average and majority attitudes at lycée, college and university, beliefs about the Church, marriage, the family, work, money, childhood and the poor, have not moved a muscle. Admittedly, in some newspapers, the classified ads are increasingly
But that's only because our streets are getting emptier and more

policed. I've always enjoyed looking calmly into faces and eyes. A sociability all to myself. I have the impression that my open eyes are like a gaping fly; and that, in 1979, to *look is to show*. And yet I don't look 'crazy'. But the smallest of children and the most tolerant of pick-up artists now know that *to be looked at* is to *be raped*. In short, they don't care if I'm gay or not: they just hate it that I don't express it in writing - I mean in a classified ad. (Nowadays, wedding banns are published before you know who you're 'marrying'). My vice, my transgression, is obviously to want to talk to this young man with no qualities (but something I like) who, dark-eyed and with a quick step, twists in his fist the advert he sends to *Libé* or *L'Obs* and which contains, against all odds, his cry of love. My misfortune is to want to chat with this kid who holds aloft like a candle the envelope stuffed with spelling that he's going to post to *Unc Paul* of the *Journal de Mickey* - I'm just an *aunt who doesn't get* written to.

So many considerations on the laws, and so many confidences, to say without lies my reason for not believing in the best laws. I am truly certain that the Court

Despite their conflicting rulings, the American Supreme Court and the Swedish Parliament have one thing in common: they *are* as solid as iron. For American judges, the Family can only survive if children are beaten. Heterosexuality itself depends on it. For Swedish MPs, the Family can only survive if children are no longer beaten. Heterosexuality itself depends on it. In both cases, these fears were the only ones obeyed: the death of parents, the end of Families, the beginning of Humanity. I'm reminded of this engraving in Camille Flammarion's *Astronomie populaire*, which shows the death of the Earth: on an ice floe (because our planet will have frozen over for lack of sunlight), a father, a mother, a child (in mother's arms), all three reduced to stalactite skeletons. The end of the world as seen by Findus (or another frozen food brand). Nineteenth-century illustrators had no doubts! My dream is that the laws will enable children - tomorrow's adults - to escape from today's adults. Will one law be enough to turn us into men?

LETTER TO RENE SCHERER - May 1979

Source: *Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.*

Monday

evening Dear René,

I'm really pleased that you liked the article on spanking. It's always a bit risky to dedicate something without warning!

- Yes, of course, it was you yourself who gave me the subject: by pointing out (with dismay!) the new Swedish law, and also by showing me (with significant pleasure) some very pretty drawings - they would have illustrated this article much better than anything by C. de Ségur. I hope to see them again!

- No, a letter from you can't bother me when I'm working: it's answering quickly (or at length) that causes me problems in this case. As for the unfortunate book (1), I won't be rid of it before November or December: and even then, if I work non-stop (or almost). Nothing like slavery, though. I complain all the time, but I love this job. It's a silly thing to say: to be madly in love with your job. And yet I am. I'd better shut up!

*I'll try to give myself a few short breaks, not necessarily in Paris, incidentally. * In any case, Paris during June, unless I can't make it; and, as agreed, I'll phone you.*

Thank you again for such a kind letter!

Best regards

Tony D.

(1) I've stopped drinking and I'm losing my tummy: I'm craving a bike ride or a climb in the South of France. (Such are my morals, I'm ashamed!)

LETTER TO RENE SCHERER - May 1979

Source: *Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.*

Tours,

Monday. Dear René,

Forgive me for answering you on the typewriter, I spend all my time on it and I'm afraid I'll scribble too much if I pick up a pen again!

Alas, nothing new to say. Still haven't been to Paris: impossible to let go

* The masculine child (NdE)

of this job, which is at its worst. Will it get better in July?

I'm sorry I didn't thank you sooner for L'Emprise, which I read straight away. I used to shy away from the letter-writing thing: every day I fill in so much paper that then the duties of friendship, and of correspondence, find me exhausted, unable to string three words together. What a tiring job (I'm not surprised that it makes you stupid).

In any case, I liked everything about your book - apart from the little bitch's diary (you'd have to be a real misogynist to think of publishing that!). Most of the interviews are pretty hard to swallow, and I admired the monument of patience and resignation - and neutrality, too! - into which you must have changed yourself to take in so many horrors.

Reading your essays is less oppressive; I'm especially amazed by what you have to say about today's couple, on the one hand, and old age, on the other. It's a pity it's all so sketchy. Anyway, I'm mulling all this over slowly and, if you don't mind, I'll tell you more about it soon. The unease that all these kids leave me also deserves to be explored in greater depth. On a broader level, I'm jealous of the serenity and moderation with which you're approaching all this; feelings that intrigue me a little.

But enough of this nonsense. My head's not doing too well these days. - And I forgot to thank you for your dedication, the kindness of which is perfectly extravagant.

Your other questions:

1 - G. Roussel. No, alas, I couldn't do anything to get anything published about him or his dossier either. I'm very, very at odds with Minuit, and perpetually at war with my publisher: I have no power over anything, and I don't associate with anyone else either. (A fine record of a 12-year 'career'!) In any case, it would be better to steer the Roussel dossier towards journalistic circles, where people know how to make books that publishers will accept with their eyes closed. A 'subject' like this is not something that can be pushed down the throats of the trade by a few intellectuals... And, to be frank, I'm afraid that if Roussel doesn't have the courage to deal with it himself, he won't be able to...

end up in the hole. And (I'm going to be a bit harsh) I don't really like seeing him play the crucified martyr. I tell myself that the difference between him and almost all the paedophiles in France is that he lived a few wonderful years, and they didn't; and that his unjust prison is rather better, more 'objective', clearly institutional and denounceable, than the atrocious voluntary prison where all the others live. In short, I'm not moved by his fate, I'd even say he's privileged. - But there's a lot more to say about this man, his deeds and his prose...

2 - No, I haven't finished the Dukhaz. My only dictionary is a single-entry

one (French/German), so I lent the other one and it's gone to hell! So the reading isn't going very fast, as my German is very rusty. But I'm having fun, and I'm thinking that the book should exist in French.

By the way, tell me if you want me to give it back to you (or the other one, *Histoire de la p.*, which is really boring), please; I'll return it to you straight away, even if I have to borrow it again later.

3 - B. Faucon. Yes, I received his letter, and I'm afraid I responded very unpleasantly. His idea of little fantasy scenarios horrifies me - a kind of ethical indignation, no less! I don't eat that kind of paedophilia and I find it a bit silly. It's a shame, because I agree with you that he's a very good photographer. I hope he understands my reasons and doesn't hold it against me too much. There's a complicity among the 'childhood fools' (?...) that's based on corny platitudes, a foolishness and, in short, a cultural primitivism that I can't share. This seems to me to be a trait that did not appear at all in the few paedos I knew in Morocco - and who loved the kind of childhood to be found there. But there's a lot more to say about that, thousands of pages of it! In any case, I don't feel any kinship with the (nascent) French paedo culture.

You tell me that you'll be away a lot in July. If I'm in Paris, I'll still try to reach you, if you don't mind. And please don't pay any attention to the slightly irritated, and certainly irritating, aspects of this letter; it doesn't express any real mood about anyone, it just trains itself, with the help of verbal fatigue.

Thank you again for 'Emprise, and its (discreet) cruelty towards 'childhood'.

*My friendship
Tony*

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - July 1979

Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, friend and editor of Masques magazine. The first letter was published in October 2012 on the website: [http://www.revuemasques.fr/Masques - t%C3%A9moignages.html](http://www.revuemasques.fr/Masques_t%C3%A9moignages.html). Four other letters were published in issue no. 5 of the Quintes-Feuilles monthly newsletter, May 2013. [http://www.quintes - feuilles.com/Mai%202013.pdf](http://www.quintes-feuilles.com/Mai%202013.pdf). The other letters were kindly provided by Jean-Claude F%C3%A9ray of Quintes-Feuilles and Alain Sanzio, a former contributor to Masques.

Tours, Tuesday.

Dear Jean-Pierre,

Thank you for sending me this first issue of Masques (1); I was delighted.

Its diversity and internationalism make it exciting and fresh. What a great formula, and how I hope it works!

(A small, ridiculous detail in passing: I was so outraged by Baudry's interview that, contrary to what I had promised, I decided not to take part in the Arcadie congress...) (2)

Yes, I'm sorry I couldn't work fast enough to send you the promised text in time. Perhaps it's just as well, though, with that long review of the Island in the summary; it would have looked a bit fishy, wouldn't it? (Thanks for this article, by the way, it's really nice - although it does make my unfortunate book a bit bigger!)

Can you tell me when the real deadline is for me to send you something for the next issue? I'm completely immersed in the composition of my new novel, and I miss the leisure time!

My compliments again; I may be in Paris later this month (depending on money matters, which are pending at the moment) and, of course, I'll let you know. I'd love to meet the magazine team, if they ever get together.

Best regards

Tony Duvert

(1) May 1979.

(2) Interview with André Baudry, founder of the Arcadie association, for its 25th anniversary, in *Masques* no. 1. In it, he states that "The majority of French people are convinced that homosexuals love children and teenagers, rape them and sleep with them under any conditions. So why exhibit certain aspects of homosexuality that a certain number of people are incapable of understanding? (NdE)

79

Tours, Tuesday.

Dear Joan-Picirro,

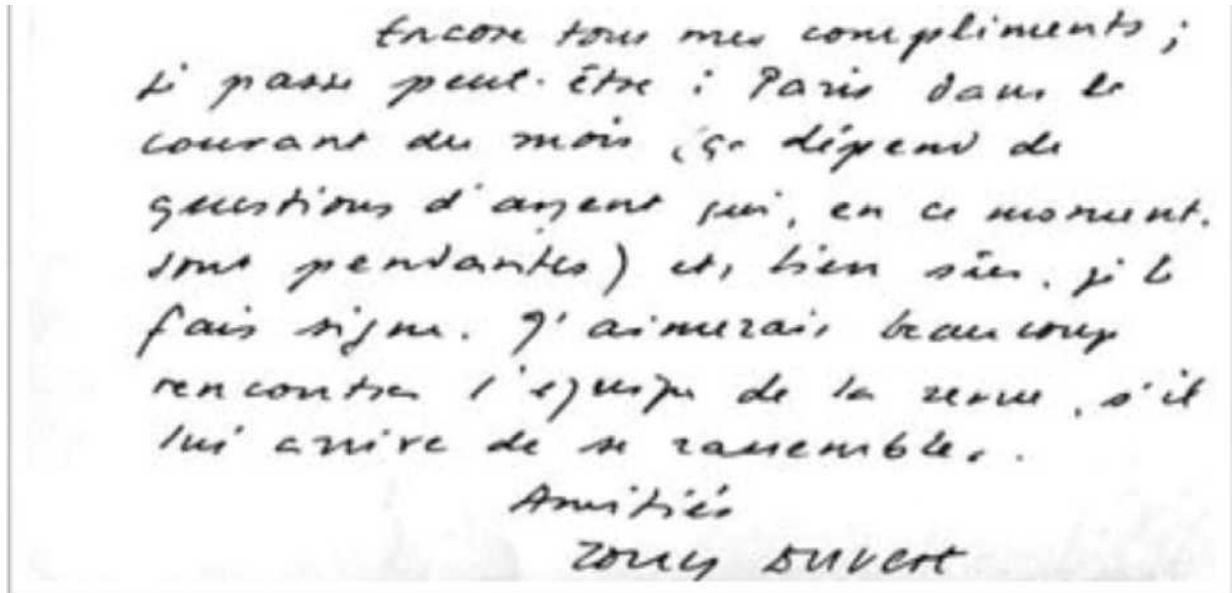
Thank you for sending me this first issue of Masques j 11. Its diversity and non-internationalism make it exciting and fresh. What a great formula, and how I hope it works!

(A little ridiculous detail, nu passade: I was so outraged by the llaudry interview that, contrary to what I had promised, I decided not to take part in the Arcadie congress...)

Yes, I'm sorry I couldn't work fast enough to send you the promised text in time. Perhaps it's not such a bad thing after all, with that long report on the island in the summary, it would have looked a bit fishy,

wouldn't it? (Thanks for this article, by the way, it's really nice - although it does make my unfortunate book a bit bigger!)

Can you tell me when the real deadline is for me to send you something for k*next issue? I'm completely immersed in the composition of my new novel, and I miss leisure time!



Encore tous mes compliments ;
le passé peut être : Paris dans le
courant du mois (ce dépend de
questions d'argent sur, en ce moment,
sont pendantes) et, bien sûr, j'y
fais signe. J'aimerais beaucoup
rencontrer l'équipe de la revue, s'il
lui arrive de se rassembler.
Amitiés
Tony DUVERT

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 20 July 1979

Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, friend and editor-in-chief of Masques magazine. The dates were added in pencil on the originals by Alain Sanzio, who kept the Masques archives and organised their deposit at the BNF. (NdE) Source: Les Editions Bleues.

Tours, 20th

Dear Jean-Pierre,

Thanks for the good news about the next issue of Masques. (By the way, I'm ashamed not to be a subscriber yet, I think: but I've had a few financial problems lately. It'll pass!)

I'm doing my best to send you something by mid-August - that's the deadline you gave me. I'm swamped with work, there's no chance of me getting off my typewriter until next year. But never mind, I like it.

If you meet the people who are organising this summer university in Marseille, tell them a thousand kind words for me. I won't be able to come and I haven't even taken the time to apologise. I'm in jail! I haven't even been to Paris since March.

Thanks again. Best regards

Tony

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - July 1979

Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, friend and editor-in-chief of Masques magazine. Source: Les Editions Bleues.

Tours,

Wednesday. Dear Jean-Pierre,

I'm sorry to be sending you this so late, but I'm really swamped with work. What a summer! The text isn't a short story (I didn't really have anything ready in that genre), but a sort of article like I used to write for Minuit. If it fits, so much the better: if not, the manuscript is called *reviens* (I don't have a copy)!

I hope it won't be too late for issue 2 of *Masques*: in any case, this time or any other issue, I'm only serious about two things: no cuts, and no typos. Ahem!

Maybe I'll be in Paris in mid-September, and I'll be happy to let you know. And good luck with this issue 2.

Friendship
Tony

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 23 October 1979

Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, friend and editor-in-chief of Masques magazine. Source: Les Editions Bleues.

Tours,

Tuesday. Dear Jean-Pierre,

Thank you for putting up with my text! But - forgive me for saying this so late - I have a very pressing request: I'd like to touch it up. I don't have a copy. Can you send me one? I'll send the corrected version back within 48 hours.

Why this repentance? It's because, overloaded, I wrote it too quickly, and I have a bad memory of it. If it's not too late, can we agree on this: if I send back the corrected version in time, that's the one *Masques will* print. Otherwise, you publish the text you have. Yes ?

Finally, my warmest compliments on issue no. 2. Still an extravagant number of typos - unforgivable, frankly, in a quarterly! - but so much good stuff! I was, of course, appalled and revolted by the opinions of Nelly etc., who equate motherhood with a kind of masturbation that is very gratifying for the woman and her dildo (the kid). I was also shocked by an excess of autobio confidences from uptight faggots (your collaborators?!) which reminded me of the worst

years of Arcadia. It seems to me that these things do nothing for anyone. As a pederast (1), I've always known, and for good reason, precocious and bold pederasts, with an ease and kindness that seems to me the best of our morals*. But since, it seems, *Masques* is in the hands of boys who 'came to terms with it' very late and with great difficulty... that's always good to know.

In short, what I like most is the internationalism (a real transfusion of fresh blood for the sad, long-faced French militantism), and above all the presence of gay women. It's a huge step forward, an essential agreement, a fabulously rich confrontation - especially as they have far fewer sexual clichés than we do. So much the worse if the "child" teases them in the corner... It'll pass.

Can you quickly send me the duplicate I want? Many thanks in advance.

Friendship

Tony

P.S. I absolutely hope you'll have a good text on John Paul II's statement ("homosexual behaviour is dishonesty")! If not, I can do it. But what's the deadline???

* Is it a problem of social class? *Masques* seems to me to be too much a reflection of a petty-bourgeois homosexuality that's very poorly received. When you 'do' under-16s, you discover something completely different. Find and interview 'poor' people!... Fags from the 'working class' (dixit le P.C.) are free... until they're 16...

(1) Correction in the margin: (paedophile!) (NdE)

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 29 October 1979

Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, friend and editor-in-chief of Masques magazine. Source: Les Editions Bleues.

Tours 29.10.

Dear Jean-Pierre,

Thanks for replying in time, I'll see if I can make the article clearer. There are some knots!

As far as the Pope is concerned, thank you for giving me this lovely morsel. Yummy! I'll send you 3 or 4 pages like the Narcissus (in length) in time

(i.e. within a few days). On the other hand, I can't do Khomeini. Islam is better than that old turd. I know too little, it bothers me. So, for Masques, free rein. I'll settle for the albino crow (1). Shoot the bearded crow (2)!

Thank you again for this prompt and useful photocopy.

Friendship

Tony

(2) Drawing of a cross in the margin.

(3) Drawing of a crescent in the margin.

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 8 December 1979

Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, friend and editor-in-chief of Masques magazine. Source: Les Editions Bleues.

Tours, 8

Dear Jean-Pierre,

In the end, there's nothing essential to retouch in this Narcissus. A few cuts; I'm sending you the corresponding pages; you'd be very kind to transfer this to the manuscript or the proofs.

As for the Pope, mea culpa! I couldn't, and it's not even my fault. A friend had promised to send me the exact text of JP.II's statements, cuttings from "Le Monde" etc., a text that was obviously essential for what I wanted to do. Alas, I haven't received anything yet. (Thank God, the latest Gai Pied does a pretty good job of getting the Polish priest: that's always a bonus).

A thousand apologies and a thousand thanks.

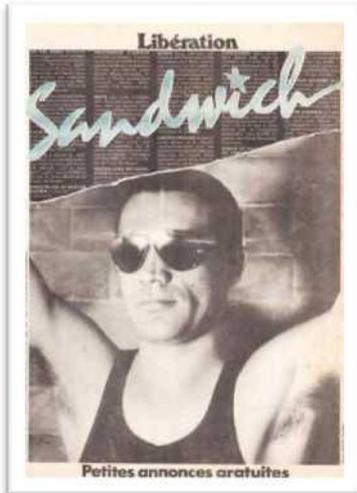
Regards

Tony

SAM LE HERO - December 1979

Source: News published in *Libération Sandwich* number 4, December 1979, then published in 2015 by Gilles Sebhan in his book, *Retour à Duvert*, pages 261-276.

In *Libération* on 4 March 2013, Gérard Lefort looks back at the Sandwich years and what they meant to the people of the time...



Free classified ads have been a feature of the newspaper since its inception. Created in the early days of *Libération*, the free classified ads were first and foremost a mine for more or less marginal shit. Like: "Swap a tired 4L for a Norman wardrobe in perfect working order". But as the 70s progressed, two feverish spurts were to raise their temperature. On the one hand, there were the "convict" announcements, which enabled prisoners to communicate with the outside world. Secondly, and more importantly

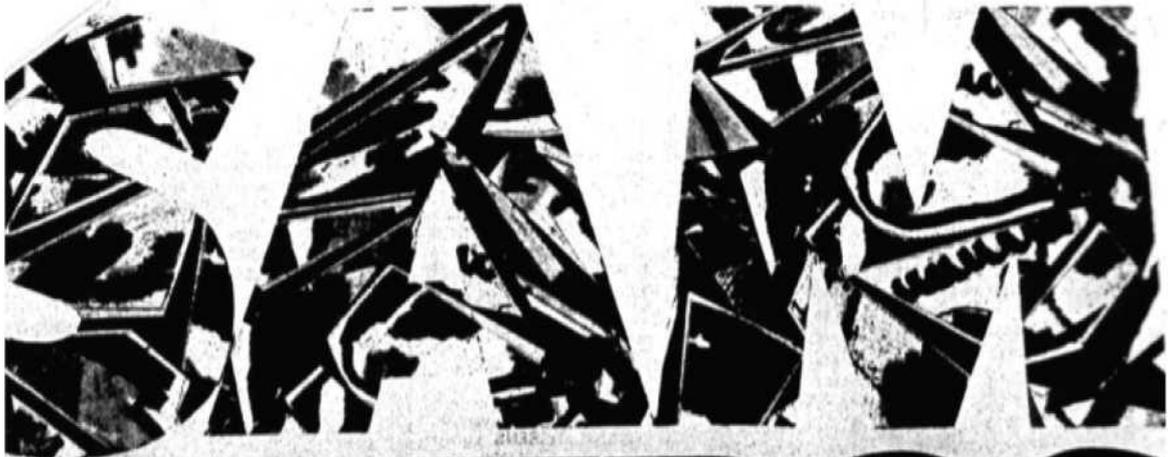
sex ads. The success was immediate and as phenomenal as the wording was crude: "Your

drooling pussy, I want it", "your big cock, I need it in my arse"

are routine. Some were even more explicit, bordering on paedophilia or even zoophilia. This earned *Libération* several lawsuits, most of which were lost. Classified sex ads are also a respectable singularity for faggots who, rather than peeling their asses at night in squares and other meeting places where the cops are on the prowl, have found a welcoming refuge in the columns of *Libération*.

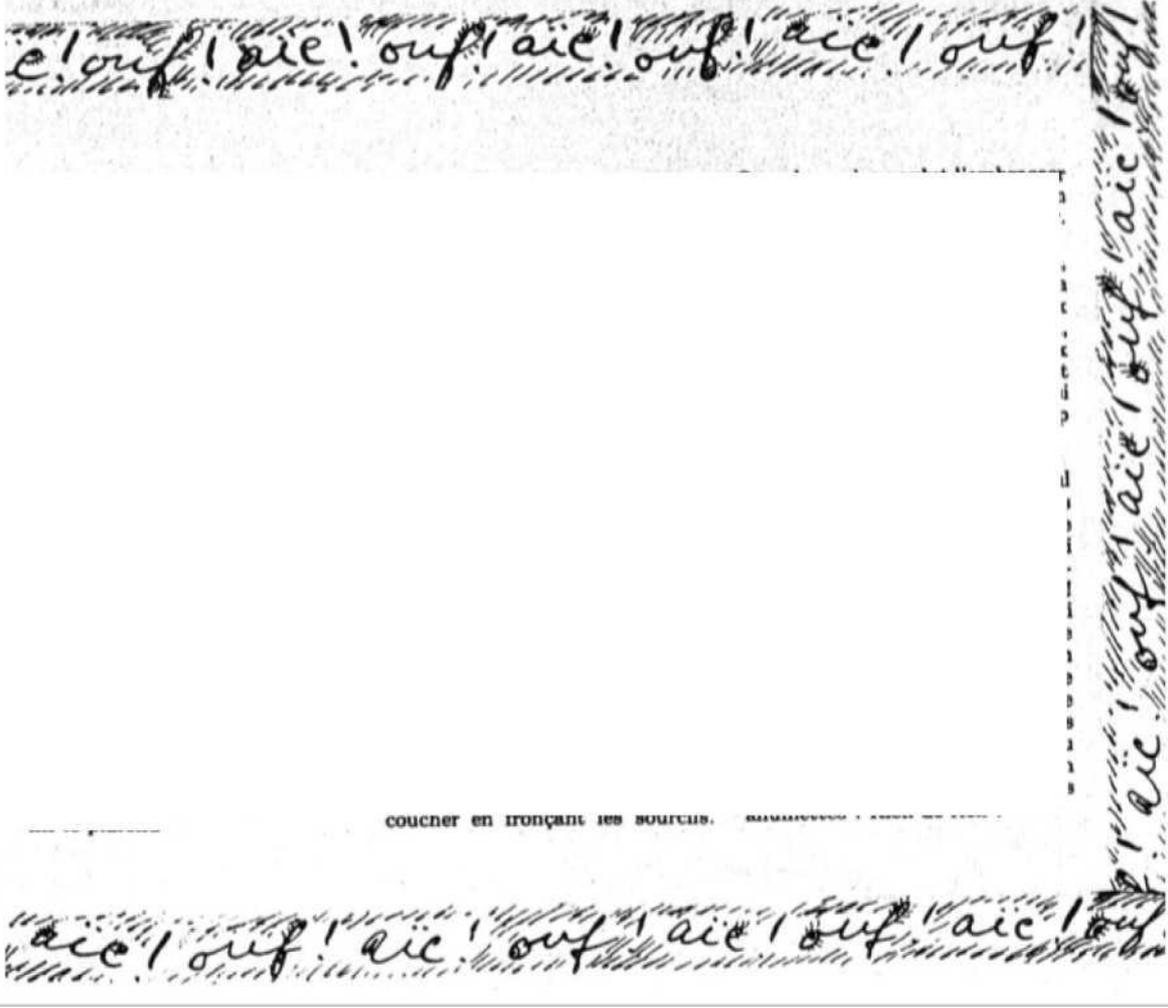
Abundance. At the end of the 70s, sex classifieds were given their own space and a special heading: "Chéri(e)s, je t'aime" ("Darlings, I love you"). But they were so abundant that they were grouped together in a weekend supplement: the weekly *Sandwich*, edited by Jean-Luc Hennig. The first issue of *Sandwich* was inserted in the *Libé* of Saturday 1 December 1979. In an editorial, Hennig explained how it worked: "When we talk about classified ads, we always tend to be miserabilistic: ah! The lonely, down-and-out people who are desperately looking for a contact, and so on. It's true, they do exist. But I always had the intuition that life in the classifieds was much richer than a miserable fable. That there was always a host of lively, colourful, imaginative adventures. *Sandwich* will be a bit of adventure in that world. This world of everyday exchanges and under-age life, the kind you never read about in the papers, these uneventful news items, these snatches of street conversation, these stories you tell each other over a drink."

For a price. The success redoubled, causing *Libération*'s weekend sales to soar, and Roland Barthes praised *Sandwich*'s "mythology" in an interview with Michel Cressole, in which he spoke of free, popular eroticism, marginal literature and contraband: "When you look through the classified ads in *Libé*, you get the impression that you're really reading a kind of split novel. It's like a star novel. As soon as there was talk of charging for the Chéri(e)s classified ads, the *Sandwich* experiment got bogged down and did not survive the closure of *Libération* before it was relaunched in May 1981.



LE HEROS

Un conte de Tony Duvert



coucher en tronçant les sourcils.

When seven-year-old Sam was asked what he wanted as a Christmas present, he said î

- I want to be very big f
His mother looked surprised:
- Very big, Sam 7 Very, very big 7

What for?
- I'm fed up with being small!
exclaimed Sam. It's annoying 1 I

want to grow up like that! Then I can relax!

And 11 raised his arm in the air and stood on tiptoe to show what he meant by being tall. Maie U realised that it wasn't high enough. So he said:

- No, not like my hand I No 1 Like this, high AI I

And he pointed to the living room ceiling. He would have liked to show the chimney of the house, outside, on the roof 1

- Like ceiling 1," says his mother. Well then! Like the ceiling 1 Sam, come on, darling, no one is ever as big as the ceiling 1

- Me, nor I," said Sam, who didn't like to change his mind about anything. His mother sighed:

- You really don't want anything else?... Something nicer 7

Like the ceiling 1 And on purpose 1 His mother thought he was in a bad mood, so she didn't insist. She turned on the television.

Christmas Eve. Sam found a huge number of packages on the lit Christmas tree, round, square, rectangular, big, polished, soft, hard, heavy, light, long and short, all closed with shiny ribbons. But it was just the toys you choose to please seven-year-olds, and Us chocolates, and candied fruit: nothing but a load of rubbish! Sam wasn't happy at all. 11 didn't dare growl, but he went to his room and told them that he'd had a good time.

When his mum wanted to kiss him before turning out the light, Sam

turned his face against the pillow No, U wasn't cold I No, he had enough blankets I No, he wasn't thirsty I And heck t His mum kissed his hair anyway and left, shameless. Like hair

ate 7

When Sam found himself in the dark, his first thought was of his new toys. Not even a rifle 1 Not even an aeroplane that throws lots of atom bombs everywhere at high speed! Not even chewing gum, the kind that bubbles 1 Not even a guillotine with a button that you press to cut off everyone's head I Not even a cowboy revolver with a barrel that kills other kids and a pink roll of fuses that blow and smell better than matches 1 No way!

SAM THE HERO

A tale by Tony Duvert

When seven-year-old Sam was asked what he wanted for Christmas, he said:

- I want to be really big!

His mother looked surprised:

- Very big, Sam? Very, very big? What's it for?

- I'm fed up with being small!" exclaimed Sam. It's annoying! I want to grow up like that! Then I'll be in peace!

And he raised his arm in the air, and stretched out on tiptoe, to show what he called being tall. But he realised it wasn't high enough. So he said:

- No, not like my hand! No! Like that, up there!

And he pointed to the living room ceiling. He would have liked to show the chimney of the house, outside, on the roof!

- Like the ceiling!" said her mother. Well, it is! Just like the ceiling! Sam, come on, darling, no one is ever as tall as the ceiling!

- I do!" said Sam, who didn't like to change his mind about anything.

Her mother sighed:

- You really don't want anything else?... Something nicer?

- No, I want something wicked! I want to be big! Like the ceiling! And I mean it!

His mother thought he was in a bad mood and didn't insist. She turned on the television.

On Christmas Eve, under the lit Christmas tree, Sam found a huge number of packages, round, square, rectangular, big, small, soft, hard, heavy, light, long and short, all tied with shiny ribbons. But they were just the toys you choose to please seven-year-olds, and chocolates, and candied fruit: nothing but a load of rubbish! Sam wasn't happy at all. He didn't dare growl, but went to bed frowning. When his mother wanted to kiss him before turning out the light, Sam turned his face against the pillow. No, he wasn't cold! No, he had enough blankets! No, he wasn't thirsty! Oh dear! His mum kissed his hair anyway and left, embarrassed. Sam's hair was so soft and smelled so good! But why was he so sullen? Had he eaten too much?

When Sam found himself alone in the dark, his first thought was of his new toys. Not even a rifle! Not even a plane that shoots atom bombs everywhere at high speed! Not even bubble gum! Not even a guillotine with a button you press to cut off everyone's head! Not even a cowboy revolver with a

barrel to kill other children with a pink roll of fuses that fart and smell better than matches! Nothing at all!

Nothing. Sam fell fast asleep (he'd had two sips of champagne) imagining the tree burning down and setting the house on fire. This idea made him laugh into his pillow.

During the night, he saw an old man descending on a cloud. The cloud looked like a peeled hard-boiled egg. The old man was dressed in a black robe full of planets, comets, stars and crescent moons. His beard was so long that it stretched between his feet and behind him like the white tail of a fox. A clever fox! He was holding the globe in one hand, and with the other hand he was turning the very small, very bright stars. And Sam thought: "I could make suns with my yo-yo too!

And the old man came and said:

- Sam! Sam! Sam! Sam! What are you doing in this bed? Aren't you ashamed of sleeping? At this time of night! At last! At last! Are you a man or a baby?

- No," Sam said casually. He straightened up against his pillow, rubbed his eyes, scratched his hair and crossed his arms over his stomach to look at the strange man.

- Ah, you're quite right to say no!" exclaimed the old man in a forceful voice. Now listen to me! I've heard your vow and...

- The what?" asked Sam. What have I done now? First of all, I haven't done anything at all! (Sam thought it very dishonest to be accused of something he didn't even know the name of).

- Come on, Sam!" said the old man gently, pushing the stars down a little so that the little boy could see his head better. You haven't done anything wrong! A wish is just something you want. And I know what you want, and I came here to give it to you. But stop shouting like that!

- Me?" says Sam, grunting not too loudly. What do I want, anyway? You don't know anything!

- Come, come, Sam," repeated the old man, "didn't you say you wanted to grow up?

- Maybe, I said, yeah," Sam said reluctantly. He didn't want to have to explain it to some star-stirring gentleman with a beard between his legs. Otherwise we'd tell everyone everything!

- Well, I'm going to make your wish come true. Listen carefully: whenever you want to become big, as big as a grown-up (but no bigger!) all you have to do is say *ouch!* and you'll immediately become as big as a grown-up (but no bigger!) And when you want to become small again, all you have to do is say *ouf!* and you'll be back to the way you are. Got that?

- Ayouf!" said Sam, summing up the magic words. OK! Ayouf! That's good! Really good! It's just what I wanted! Now, right away, can I give it a try?

But the old man in the black robe with the stars had disappeared: and at the same time, or just after, Sam went back to sleep.

He slept really well! And a lot! And for a very long time! And then he woke up. He yawned loudly, pulling his left arm to the left and his right arm to the right, and wiggling his toes without even paying attention. He got hungry, and immediately thought of the old man in his dream, the stars, all those stories.

- You bet!" said Sam loudly. So all I have to do is say *ouch* and I'll grow up? You bet! You bet!

But the moment Sam said *ouch*, the bed became very small. Sam's feet were trapped under the sheets, his head was stretched high above his pillow, and his hands on either side were hanging down. And when he saw that and said, "*Darn!*" he heard a voice like his father's.

- What's the other word?" he says to himself in a panic, in the big voice of a man with big feet beyond the bed. Ah yes, ayouf! It's ouf! ouf! Can't you hear it? Ouf ouf!

And he immediately regained the size of a seven-year-old boy.

He realised that his dream was true. The magician of the night had made his wish come true: all Sam had to do now was enjoy it. He got up. As he got dressed, he wondered if his clothes were growing with him. He put on his long johns, and was in such a hurry that he put on his big red jumper inside out. He said *ouch!* Immediately he grew taller: not only were his clothes still his size, but the jumper was now right side up! (However, it seemed much less red than before).

Since he was hungry and a grown-up, he decided to go out and buy some croissants. He'd even go to a café and order a big cup of chocolate, and he'd drink it while making a lot of noise, like the grown-ups, and nobody would say anything to him!

It had snowed during the night. There were hardly any footprints on the pavements. The bakery was lit. Sam went in (the door was so small, you could hardly get through it!) and asked for twelve croissants, the buttered kind. And the baker said to him:

- Fourteen francs and forty cents, sir! It's so nice to have snow at Christmas! But it's not warm either!

Sam blushed all the way to his ears (his big, grown-up ears):

- But I haven't got any money," he says. It's my mum!

The baker, intrigued, looked at the gentleman. He was a young man of

about twenty-five, well-built, pleasant, clean-shaven, whom she had never seen in her clientele. And what a strange look on his face. What strange eyes too. This gentleman must have been... how do you say... a bit strange. That was for sure.

- Ah, if you don't pay me for them, I can't give them to you," she explained cautiously, bringing the bag of croissants towards her.

- I left the money at home, that's why! says Sam, I'll be right back! I'll be back!

- Of course," says the baker, "I'll put them aside for you.

Sam wasn't used to stealing. As he made his way home, his cheeks burning with shame, he wondered if he'd dare take anything from his mum's wallet.

- That idiot could have stuffed dough in my pockets if he wanted me to grow up! he growled, thinking of the magician. And, mechanically, he searched both his pockets. They were stuffed with packets of paper.

- What are these things?" exclaimed Sam.

He pulled out the two bundles just as a fat, balding, badly-dressed drunk staggered past on his way home to bed.

- That, my lad," said the drunkard in a hollow voice, "is called fafiots! And not just a little! And if you don't know what to do with them, just give them to me! I know how to use them!

Sam, obeying his usual little boy reflex, immediately handed one of the bundles to the drunkard (there were about a hundred good five hundred franc notes there). The man took the money, pulled out a note and looked at it in amazement.

- No, mate! They're too new! You gotta be kidding me, man ! It's not mardi gras ! Today is Christmas ! Christmas ! Christmas ! Christmas !...

And, shouting Christmas, the drunkard began to tear up the notes and throw the pieces into the air.

- But what was written on it?" asked Sam in despair (he was still mixing up the numbers a bit, beyond ten).

- Sainte Farce, my friend, it's on your tickets! Sainte Farce!" shouted the drunkard as he walked away.

"Five what?" thought poor Sam. He looked at the bundle he had left. He did recognise a five - but then, how many zeros were there?

He decided to go back to the baker's to find out for sure. He held out the packet of notes:

- My mother gave me this! Can I have the croissants with it?

The baker glanced terrified at the five hundred franc notes, and suddenly

screamed with a broken face:

- Sir, get out! Get out of my sight! Or I'll call my husband ! Fernand! Fernand! Come quickly! Come quickly ! There's a madman in the shop ! A madman ! Mon Dieu ! Go away! Here are your croissants! (She threw the packet at him.) Go away! Fernand! Mon Dieu!

Sam, very disconcerted but not frightened (he was used to hearing ladies shout), took the croissants and put a note on the counter; then he went out. It didn't matter if the notes were bad! All she had to do was look! But they're all like her mother! They shout instead of thinking! It's all their fault!

- Phew," sighed Sam when he was outside on the pavement.

He was happy to have that big pile of croissants. But the moment he said "phew", he was a seven-year-old boy again - with a very red jumper, but undeniably inside out. And the baker appeared at the door, big, hairy and floured, brandishing a huge cylinder of light-coloured wood. Sam recognised him and said hello.

- Hello, little Sam," said the baker angrily, paying no attention to the bag of croissants the boy was carrying. Where has that madman gone? To the madman! Madman! Where has he gone? Tell me, Sam, did you see a gentleman coming out of the shop?

- No," says Sam truthfully.

The baker scratched his head with his rolling pin, then resigned himself to going inside: the cold was stinging. There was a commotion and shouting behind the shop window. Sam decided to stay small until the corner.

When he was out of sight, he said "*ouch*" and resumed his tall stature. He was already getting used to it. Because it was nice, like... like on top of the camel in the Jardin des Plantes! (But it didn't swing as well.) He began to eat his croissants. He didn't find them as good as usual. Perhaps it was the chocolate that was missing?

Sam didn't dare go into any more cafés. Now he was suspicious of his money. Then he thought he'd just take his mother's wallet and leave the big wad instead. That wouldn't be stealing! And he was sure that everyone wanted his mother's money.

So he went home. His parents were still asleep. He started looking for the wallet. He was lost among the small pieces of furniture in these small rooms, he didn't recognise anything. What a strange house! You'd never have thought you'd be living here! He wanted to go and have a look at the toys he had left under the tree the evening before. The tree was now nothing more than a wretched piece of wood, barely as tall as Sam, skinny and sad; it looked like a poor old dog dying. Sam looked away. As for the toys, Sam saw some

multicoloured wooden and iron things piled up on the floor, silly, big and shapeless, and he fled to the living room.

With tears in his eyes, he finally found the wallet, slipped it into his pocket (look? there were two bundles again) and hurried back to the street. People were starting to come out and the snow was getting dirty: but a good sun was shining.

Sam wasn't in the mood for chocolate any more. In fact, he'd left the croissants at home and wasn't even hungry any more. His sadness vanished, however, when he started walking outside again on his long, adult camel legs. He went as far as the square where every day he had an appointment with Marianne - eight and a half years old, but a great friend nonetheless!

He remembered that she and he had promised to meet this morning to tell each other what they had had for Christmas. And they would kiss a lot, as they always did, and, as they always did, Sam would put his fingers where they weren't supposed to, and Marianne would do the same to him! And then they'd bang each other.

He pushed open the door to the square and gazed, delighted, at the huge footprints in the virgin snow. Sure enough, they were real feet that didn't slide all the time! And the velvety snow crunched loudly under his soles.

He bumped into the caretaker (a very nice old man, according to Sam) and said cheerfully:

- Hi Pierrot!

The keeper accepted this kind of familiarity from children. But Monsieur Pierre obviously didn't recognise Sam and didn't reply. Who was this guy coming into the square at such an hour and treating him, the caretaker, like a nightclub doorman? Did they look after the pigs or the children together? The caretaker decided to keep an eye on this strange visitor.

Sam followed his favourite path, and was delighted to see his friend Marianne ahead of him at the crossroads, crouching beside their meeting place, busy shaping and piling up an alarming supply of snowballs.

Sam ran over:

- Marianne!" he shouted. (In truth, her name might have been Marie-Anne).

The little girl looked up and was terrified to see this unknown man rushing towards her. So she started to take refuge behind the back of the bench. Sam picked up a handful of snow, kneaded it not too hard and threw it at her. Then he kicked the kid's supply of snowballs, giggling, and sat down on the bench to grab Marianne by the hair. He'd never found her so pretty. They were going to kiss! And first of all, right now! And since Sam was holding her

head so tightly, he gave Marianne a big, hard kiss right on the lips.

The little girl screamed as if her throat were being slit, and Monsieur Pierre, who had been watching, threw himself at Sam and punched him in the face.

- Bastard! Sadist! I saw the whole thing! Scumbag!" shouted the guard.

The rescued little girl was crying her eyes out and the young man in the not-so-red jumper (but right side up) was still getting beaten up, bleeding from the nose and shouting *ouch, ouch, ouch* (which didn't help his case).

Marianne's family lived just up the road: the little girl galloped there at full speed to tell them all about it. And the guard, twisting one of Sam's arms and kicking his bottom, pulled and pushed him to the police station, which was on the other side.

- Bastard! Scumbag! Sadist! Disgusting!" repeated Monsieur Pierre in the middle of the street as he led the bloodied Sam away, unable to understand what was happening to him and unable to utter the little *gasp* that would have pulled him through.

- He attacked a little girl in the square!" shouted Monsieur Pierre to the police. I saw it! He grabbed her wildly by her poor little hair, he bent her lasciviously against him, and he tore with fury her little pink and candid linen, and he licked with an expert tongue the poor little pure lips, and he searched with his lustful claws the adorable, the delicious, the delectable, the virginal little c...

- Yes, that's fine, we understand! cut off the sergeant.

- But I didn't attack Marianne!" protested Sam, who was coming to his senses. She's the stupid one! I was only joking!

- Oh yes, as a joke? said the Brigadier - a man as broad and solid as a butcher, who felt an inexplicable hatred for anyone who entered his establishment.

- Well, that's just for fun too, little fella!" he said to Sam, calmly slapping him across the face and kneeing him in the stomach.

Then Sam finally remembered the magic word, and shouted at the top of his lungs:

- Phew! Phew! Ouf! Quickly, quickly! Ouf!

- What do you mean, phew?" said the sergeant (who had never heard his clientele express themselves like that when he was indulging in what reasonable adult newspapers call blunders). Ouf?... he says ouf?!

But all that was left on the floor of the police station was seven-year-old Sam, crying his eyes out and his nose peeing all the way to his chin.

- What? What? What's that? What?" shouted the bewildered sergeant.

- Well, that's me! Sam!" said Sam, making himself very visible to Mr

Pierre, who had known him all his life.

- Yes, it's him! It's Sam! except he's got his jumper on backwards! exclaimed the caretaker.

- What? What do you mean? What's that? How? repeated the sergeant, who slapped Sam across the face to clear his conscience (or so that the old culprit and the new one at least had that in common).

But since Sam had regained his small size, he was no longer in the mood to be beaten: he kicked the policeman ferociously in the shin, said "you stupid bastard" and escaped from the police station, which only had to ask Mr Pierre for Sam's parents' address, for an investigation and a caution.

When Sam thought he was far enough away (but he'd been running for far too long!) he stopped and blew. He washed his face with snow, as the dried blood was pinching his skin. And, as he was very hot, he took the opportunity to put his jumper back on the right way round.

He was in a street he had never seen before. To make himself feel more at ease, he said *ouch!* Immediately a passer-by he came across - who perhaps imagined he had stepped on his foot - replied mechanically that *he was sorry*.

But what to do, big or small? What to do all day? Sam was beginning to realise that no matter how big he was, there was nothing to expect from this place and these people. He had wanted to be big because he couldn't stand being small. Now he told himself that everything was equal. What he needed was to be neither. But that doesn't exist.

Sam decided to make the most of the gift the magician had given him. He thought to himself that he had never before seen how a great person was, naked (and that intrigued him a lot). Now that, with Mum's wallet, he had normal money, he could go into a café, go to the surgery and look at it all!

And so he did. Amazed (on the toilet) at what he saw first, he undressed completely and studied the rest. The hair on his bottom made him giggle. As for the big thing in the front, he got used to it as if he'd always had it, and used it to his heart's content. No, it was much less surprising than having camel legs! Much less!

Suddenly he had the idea of phoning his parents. He knew the number. The phone booth was right next to the toilets, and he had the right change. Of course, he'd never phoned them before. Now that would be fun! He'd tried so often at home, to call his own house by playing with the receiver: but nobody answered.

He did the right thing and listened to the call. There were five rings, then a click, and a strange, harsh voice that Sam had never heard before said:

- Hello?

- Hello, it's me!" exclaimed Sam.
- Sorry, what number are you asking for?" said the male voice.
- Daddy? It's you, Dad, it's Sam!" said Sam, laughing.
- What do you mean, Sam? Which Sam? Who are you asking for, sir?" said the irritated voice (Sam's parents must have discovered his disappearance: they were going through a great drama).

- Me, Sam!" repeated Sam. Oh no, yes, wait! You can't understand! Just you wait! I say *wow!* and that's it! So now you recognise me? said Sam (who had just regained his seven-year-old voice).

- Sam!" said her father in shock. Sam! Is that you? But where are you, my boy?

- It's because I'm grown up now, and I can call whenever I want to! So I'll phone you at home! That's good, isn't it?

- Sam! Sam! Sam! Sam! I'm begging you, please! Where are you, Sam? Who's there with you? Who's the man who was talking when I picked up the phone? Did someone... did someone take you, Sam?

- No, it's me! says Sam, flabbergasted. Do you understand? There was a gentleman there last night when I was in my room, telling me all the tricks of the trade! Hey, have you seen the money on the sideboard? In the kitchen? I put it there! Because all I have to do is say "*ouch*", so I grow up and it comes out in my pocket! (But Sam obviously pronounced this last sentence in his adult voice).

- Sir," said Sam's dad, "my wife and I did indeed discover the fifty thousand francs, or thereabouts, at the replacement you just mentioned. But I don't understand! We don't understand! If you took Sam, take back your money and give us back our son! Please explain!

- Is it real money, then?" asked Sam, surprised.

- But that's not the point!" moaned Sam's father in dismay. You kidnap my son and pay him like a commodity and then ask me if it's counterfeit money? But I don't care! My son isn't for sale!

Sam was beginning to find his father's reaction really curious. What about Mum's wallet?

- Listen, Dad!" says Sam. You're really stupid! I'm coming back home and I'm going to show you! Since you don't believe me!

And Sam hung up. He left the café, and was very embarrassed: he didn't know how to get home. He was never taken that way. And what was the name of his street? Oh yes. He was going to ask someone.

At last they told him the way, and he arrived at his house. He entered as he was, that is, a grown man, and pushed open the door. His father burst

through the door.

- Well, Dad!" said Sam. Now you can see. Can't you?

- It's you! It's you! It's you, it's you! I recognise your voice!" shouted Sam's father as he rushed towards the young man. You've taken my son away from me! You bastard! And you dare... you dare...

And he had grabbed Sam and was punching him in the face, mad with rage,

- Dad!" shouted Sam. Daddy! Stop it! It's me, it's me! It's me! It's me! It's me! Sam!

And just like earlier at the police station, Sam finally remembered to shout "*whew!*" And he became the person his parents could identify again, a little child with a face full of blows. The one they loved. Sam's father, stunned, stepped back a good metre.

- Sam! Sam!" he cried. I'm going mad! Sam!

And he called his wife, who was not far away, who also said Sam

- Well, *ouch, ouch and ouch!*... *you* bastard!" shouted Sam, furious and covered in tears: and he became tall again immediately. And now, you bastard! he shouted.

- Listen... or, I mean, listen, Sam or whoever you are," said Sam's father, completely lost, "do you want to... er... go back to being a little boy and explain this to us calmly? I... I can agree to believe you, Sam, we'll do what we can, I... but first of all, please, go back to being what you were before! Be our son again! Then I'll believe you... I'll accept anything!

And Sam's mother was crying as if her child had died, there, suddenly, in front of her eyes. These cries were tearing Sam apart, and he said "*phew!*" Immediately his

mother threw herself on top of him, embracing him and showering him with kisses. And his father, his face dark and his eyes low, sat down on the little straw chair that adorned the entrance.

So Sam explained as best he could. He told of the old wizard of the night, the stars, the wish, the croissants, and the money, and Marianne, and the beating! And he was so indignant that he cried and gritted his teeth and punched the wall, and yet he kept himself under control and didn't say *ouch*, even though the wall hurt his hand badly.

His parents listened in prostrate silence. They obviously didn't believe in miracles or magic. They had never even taken Sam to a psychotherapist, despite his strong character and independent spirit. In short, it took Sam becoming ten times bigger and smaller before their very eyes for them to resign themselves to this misfortune.

- I'll never be able to! I'll never be able to!" Sam's mum would repeat

painfully every time he turned into a handsome twenty-five year old (or thereabouts). And she kissed him as if he'd come back from the dead every time he turned small again.

But Sam's parents had to get used to it. The magician in the dream had not said whether the terrible gift he had given Sam would be temporary or permanent. In any case, and at worst, it would end when Sam (Sam-the-little, as he was now called to differentiate him from 'the other') had grown up and joined his double.

Sam couldn't understand why his parents preferred him small. Of course, it was cheaper at the table and, as he also slept small, there was no hurry to get him a longer bed! However, Sam was made to promise that he would never, ever show his 'big' face in the street, at school or in the square. At least let's keep it in the family. And that he wouldn't change his size because a teacher was mean, or a pretentious little girl, or a bullying boyfriend! Sam only promised between his teeth. Day by day, his adult body suited him better - and as the miracle of the wads of money seemed to last as long as the rest, Sam came to live, after school and in his adult guise, a second life that no one ever knew about.

The years went by, and so did the Christmases. Then we had to face facts: the gift Sam had received was not what we thought it was. As time went by, Big Sam was ageing normally (judging by the way he looked): by now he must have been about thirty. Little Sam, on the other hand, was not growing at all: he was seven years old for ever. And when his bed had to be changed, because it was too worn out, a new one of the same size was made. And they

had, of course, given up on sending Sam-le-petit to school. Resigned to his fate, he studied by correspondence. On the day he had to sit an exam, a major exam, he would have to choose between appearing as a very precocious boy or as a retarded adult.

But before any possible examination could be carried out, Sam disappeared. Tired of being seven at home and thirty everywhere else, he had chosen to keep his childhood to himself. And - by saying *ouch* - to look like an adult in front of anyone who wasn't a child of seven (or thereabouts).

That Christmas, Sam's parents felt so tested, so robbed, so lonely, so useless, that they decided to sire a new child who might not escape them.

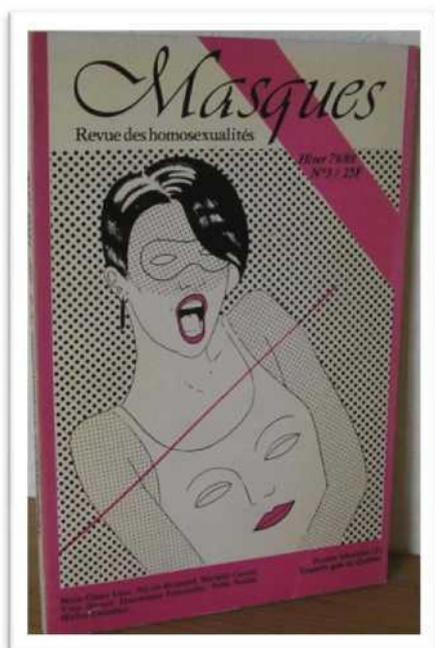
That same evening, Sam rented a luxury suite in a grand hotel. He'd bought a Christmas tree, toys, sweets and chocolates, and because he was a

double, he didn't forget the champagne either. Then, when night fell, he locked his door and said *phew!* And he was Sam-the-little again.

That was the first night he loved Christmas.

IDEA ABOUT NARCISSE - Winter 1979-80

Source: *Revue trimestrielle des homosexualités Masques*, winter 79/80, number 3. Director of publication: Jean-Pierre Joecker. Following the reaction of a group of readers, Duvert had a right of reply published in summer 80 (*Masques* issue 5) (see below).



Tony Duvert wrote *Récidive* (1967), *Portrait d'homme couteau* (1969), *Interdit de séjour* (1969), *Le Voyageur* (1970) and *Paysage de fantaisie* (1973), for which he won the Prix Médicis. In all these works, his research into writing is used to describe a subverted world in which sexuality, violence and childhood explode. With *Bon sexe illustré* (1974), a vitriolic essay on sex education, *Journal d'un innocent* (1976) and *Quand mourut Jonathan* (1976), Duvert returned to a rich but more classical style of writing, singing about children and pederasty. His last novel, *L'île Atlantique* (1978), was featured in *Masques* No. 1.

IDEA ABOUT NARCISSUS

There is no obvious link between the myth of Narcissus and what we now call narcissism.

Painters and legends show us Narcissus bending over his reflection in the water, vainly in love with himself. He dies: and, according to the myth, it's from languor, not drowning. Narcissus is consumed by an impossible love. He doesn't love by halves! And that's not the least peculiarity of the myth. It would be more "Greek" to think of a young man living an unrequited love, letting out a few final howls, then cheerfully changing his tune and devoting himself to accessible pleasures.

It's true that Narcissus is a Boeotian from Boeotia, which, since ancient times, has meant a fool and an oaf. His misfortune is not tragic, and I imagine that the Athenians had a good laugh about it. Narcissus would be a better subject for your Fountain than for Sophocles, and his story is a good one to compare with **The Eagle and the Owl**.

This lovely fable, however, is more about modern-day narcissi. In it, La

Fontaine tells us that the Owl and the Eagle, king of birds, decide to make peace. They will no longer eat each other's young. But they still have to recognise each other, and the Owl is afraid that the Eagle won't be able to find his way around so many chicks. No matter. Papa Owl describes his offspring:

"(...) My little ones are cute,
Beautiful, well-made, and pretty on all their companions:
You'll easily recognise them by this mark.

One day, while hunting like a good king, hungry for his subjects (and even insatiable for them), our Eagle spotted

Hideous little monsters, with a
sad look and the voice of a shrew.

And he crunches these critters, obviously too ugly to be the Owl's "cute" children. Alas, it was them!

The Owl discovers the remains of his young and complains to the four winds. In vain; to console him for this massacre, in fact, the fabulist says some green words:

"(...) Don't blame anyone but yourself,
Or rather the common law
Who wants you to find your fellow man
Beautiful, well-made and, above all, friendly.
You painted this portrait of your children with an eagle:
Did they have the slightest hint of it?"

Personally, judging by the photos, I find the eaglets much uglier than the little owls, bubbling balls of naivety, amazement and surprise. Papa Hibou wasn't all that wrong.

In any case, the moral is very clear: the like blindly loves the like, and that's the misfortune of the world. A one-eyed homophilia (at least) is thus denounced: a narcissism of the family, the class, the clan.

And this is what separates our narcissism from that of Narcissus. What is the real adventure of the little Boetian?

We're told he was handsome - but did he know? He probably didn't have much idea what he looked like. He wasn't thinking of being in love, with himself

or anyone else.

Only a few rich people had metal mirrors. All the others could only look at themselves in the water. And that's not much: you can't see a thing. (I'd have done better to avoid that pun.) Almost all humans must have been virtually unaware of their own faces and bodies. At least, they could only know each other by hearsay. A long time later, Virgil would show us this clumsy Corydon crouching down on a stream to study his face: because he is stunned that Alexis, the blond boy of nothing at all, disdains his love. Could Corydon be that repulsive? No, of course not: Corydon looks like everyone else - every goat herder under every olive tree, under every laburnum. He wasn't afraid when he saw it. A head like any other head. He didn't even think about the fact that it was "his" head. He still reproaches himself for being black: but that's the common order. If the blond Alexis only wants to sleep with blonds, so much the worse for that idiot. In short, Corydon only looked at his own face to check that it had no special defects. That's where his curiosity ends.

In the same way, Narcissus must have seen himself often and badly, at the fountains from which he drew his drink. And, with a glance at the wrinkles in the water between sips, he no doubt checked that he was "decent" - not one-eyed, bald, toothless, without a harelip or goitre.

Today, we find it hard to imagine what a self-image was for people who were unaware of mirrors, photography and cinema. In Hellenistic times, a wealthy elite could afford portraits and busts. But this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and the images were sublimated, bearing little relation to Roman-style realism - which is so close to our photographic art.

Which, moreover, is not uniform. P. Bourdieu (in **Un art moyen: la photographie**) analysed the photos of poor French families that were his sociological material with the mentality of a wealthy man. Stiffness, conformism, onion rows, Sunday best, serious, impassive and inexpressive faces, and so on. No doubt the owners of Leica and sound cameras have the privilege of recording made-to-measure 'naturalness': but the peasants and workers whose albums Bourdieu peels through were photographed three or four times in their lives. So the image had to give

an impression of permanence - to be posed in such a way that you could recognise yourself twenty years later. A fragile phantom of self-identity that had been imposed on you from on high, like a form of training, a 'humanisation' inflicted on you by the ruling class. The only truth is that men, one by one, did

not represent themselves. Forced to do so, they did not want to be 'natural', but definitive. In Morocco, I saw children who were more lively and laughing than anyone else, freeze into an icy stand-off as soon as the camera was taken out. A photo is forever: so it's something other than oneself. That's the feeling of people who nobody usually looks at, and for whom an identity card weighs as much as the photomatted face you have to put on it.

Another remark, on the subject of bourgeois identity - and, in this case, sculpture. When Houdon shows us an undressed Voltaire, the statue is not called "Vieille peau en camisole", no: it's called **Voltaire**. When Pigalle shows us a naked Voltaire, the statue is not called "Old featherless careerist", it is called **Voltaire**. But when Rodin sculpted the fine face and ideal body of the young postman in his neighbourhood, the statue was not called "Jean Dupont" or even "le Préposé": it was called **l'Age d'airain**. Can you imagine Rodin exhibiting this sculpture under its only honest title: "My postman"?

No: among the poor, you only exist if you're good-looking enough to represent something other than yourself. The privileged buy your beauty and spit out the rest. So they've got symbols to make! Get naked and I'll forget all about you.

And a chubby, heady, laughing kitchen boy, a sweet and scoundrelish leapfrog, with his silly, spiky face as good as bread, this anonymous little Neapolitan will have pulled down his knickers and ripped off his shirt to reveal to Caravaggio the flesh of his conquering Love, thighs spread over the hole like a Danish porno. But the painting (destroyed during the last war, it was in Berlin) is obviously not called **Portrait of Jean Dupont and his crotch by a sodomite**. And yet that is what we are seeing, rather than an innocent feathered love. In his posture, the same child (but without wings), if he were in the flesh in front of us, would seem to be happily preparing for something that the 'buggers' know well...

Without these ideas in mind, we wouldn't be able to fully understand the innocence of Narcissus, unconscious of himself like every man everywhere and always - except here and now.

Similarly, we can marvel at the fact that Mozart, who scorned his portrait by Joseph Lange (his brother-in-law), which shows a "sublime", expressive and beautiful profile (according to the feeling of beauty that music lovers have when it comes to pure and simple art), preferred to be portrayed in a wax medallion by Leonardo Posch, which shows us, He has the profile of a small, swollen man,

with a bulky nose and two humps, a nascent double chin and the good-natured cheeks of a grandmother who holds her own (modest, but she has it), a toad's eye, a short, dry mouth with a hint of laughter and voluptuousness. It wasn't flattering, but he recognised it so well that he demanded replicas, which he distributed around him: he was thirty-two. It's like seeing a cameo of Roman decadence. And I suppose it wasn't the realism of the profile that excited Mozart, but that shady eternity.

So let's finish the story of Narcissus, the unconscious, naïve man who doesn't know he's desirable. Nymphs desire him (the word nymphs today refers to the labia minora of the vulva), especially the nymph Echo. Narcissus remains indifferent to this hail of love, and the myth doesn't say why. We can assume that Narcissus is a kindly village idiot who has no idea what to do with what he has, whether boy or girl. A big ninny, he spends his days playing jacks with little kids who are smarter than him, cheat and swear like cartwrights. These rascals talk to him about cock, but he doesn't even know the word: in a little while, with the kids out of the way, he'll go for a walk in the countryside and fall asleep in the shade, without even masturbating before his nap. Really, this big boy isn't very awake.

Unfortunately, it was he who was chosen as her lover by those divine rascals: the nymphs.

And the Greek gods are all the same: stupid, shaggy and nasty - worse than men, but more powerful than them (and remember that these angry, dirty despots are the best gods in the history of the world).

So, when the vexed nymphs, low-grade goddesses but goddesses nonetheless, complain, Nemesis appears, a fearsome slut, daughter of Night, goddess of vengeance. The story goes that she fell in love with Zeus and turned herself into a goose to escape him. The wrong (or subtle?) tactic: Zeus immediately changed into a swan and laid an egg for her. A later version of the Nemesis myth, which we may believe to be a bit of a mishmash, states that the egg in question, entrusted to Leda (another victim of the same swan), hatched the Trojan War's Helen.

It doesn't matter what the "truth" is: in Greek legend, the myths of filiation overlap and contradict each other with the same candour as the two incompatible Genesises that inaugurate the Bible, and which follow each other as if nothing had happened.

In connection with the metamorphosis of Zeus into a swan and Nemesis into a goose, it is said that the Greeks knew the anatomy of fowl. In fact, geese, ducks and swans are the only birds with a penis. It only comes out and gets hard when it's time to use it, but they have it. Contemporary naturalists even point out that it's crooked (left, right?). In short, you have to waddle a bit to get it in there.

Nemesis is going to avenge the nymphs that Narcissus scorns. And the torture to which the poor boy is condemned is even more vicious and paradoxical than those of Prometheus, Sisyphus, Tantalus or the fifty daughters of Danaos. Since Narcissus is incapable of love, his destiny will be to discover love at last (and not a moment too soon) - but by loving himself.

And a particularly ridiculous kind of love: through the eyes. Tantalus at least, I suppose, could masturbate to satisfy his hunger. It's even hungrier, of course, but it makes you think of something else. Narcissus, on the other hand, thinks nothing of touching himself, wrapping himself in his own arms, caressing himself from side to side - loving himself like a happy lover who, as a unique privilege, always has his object of love close at hand: an object which, contrary to the custom of the time, is not going to turn into a goose or a heifer at the first opportunity. Narcissus' torment should be a joy: but he is too stupid to enjoy it.

Leaning over the fountain where he sees himself, he is like a monkey that wants to kiss itself in a mirror, or a little dog that wags its tail and licks the screen when it sees doggies on television. For Narcissus - and this was his curse - his image is not him. His image is the other. And it's an unattainable **other**. So his punishment is not to love himself: it's not to recognise himself. He will die of longing, contemplating the One we never embrace.

It may seem odd that this myth should so closely combine narcissism and homosexuality. No one is saying that Narcissus, in the fountain, thought he was a woman. The image he falls in love with appeals to him not because it's him, not because it's a boy, but because it's another human being, the first he's seen.

Narcissus is not "homosexual", and it is the unapproachable human race that he discovers through himself.

Even his death by languor proves it. As I said at the beginning, when faced with impossible loves, the most romantic of men ends up looking elsewhere. When Narcissus discovers, for the first time, someone to love - he who had no idea of other people and no feelings - he remains captured by this image

because he believes it is the only one. Ordinary humans are not accustomed to appearing in the shadows of fountains: we see them standing on the ground, they move, they smell, they speak. A small difference. Narcissus had to be an innocent cursed by Nemesis for him not to realise it. So if the myth symbolises a human vice, that vice is not self-love, but self-unawareness and blindness to others.

Given that we're dealing with a big boy, and that if the nymphs, those bawdy girls, were interested in him, it's because his beauty, from bottom to top, was not puny, I believe that the myth of Narcissus, far from condemning self-love and the hateful ego, is rather matriarchal and anti-malthusian.

The matriarchal aspect is obvious, and is also consistent with the hypotheses we have made about the distant past of civilisations. In this system, women choose whoremongers for themselves, in exactly the same way as, in today's patriarchy, the phallocrat marries the female sexual object, or as faggot men choose a handsome gig for themselves. Our great Boeotian nincompoop, when he innocently refuses to be the sexual valet of these ladies, commits a crime of *lèse-majesté*. The nymphs don't reproach him for not being sentimental, but for not thinking about getting laid. Greek love, despite the fumes and sad mists that cover the pile of stones that is the real Olympus (2,917 m), has nothing clammy or ethereal about it. In fact, this is why Narcissus was punished for his physical frigidity by inflicting cerebral love on him (otherwise, Narcissus could have been condemned to wank endlessly, like Sisyphus eternally pulling up his boulder with both arms).

This is a very archaic symbol of the sexual domination of women over men. The nymphs choose the best "breeder" from among a hundred village hicks, just as the Nazis would select the pure Aryans - blond peasant women and blue-eyed SS men - who would give birth to the progeny of the Second Reich. We are told that the "Amazons" and certain matriarchal tribes of Black Africa did not act any differently. It's the abduction of the Sabine women, but in reverse.

The anti-Malthusian theme is also clear - since the matriarchal idea, whether goddess or mere mortal, is that of reproduction. The eminent representative and leader of the species is the female; the male, a useless parasite (who would like nothing better than to remain so), serves only to provide the tiny cell that can prolong a humanity from which he is virtually excluded. And this strongly 'biological' aspect of matriarchy would tend to prove, or at least suggest, that the first human societies (I'm not saying family

groups, because the family is an invention of fathers) were societies of women, plus a little cage for cocks.

Could the anti-Malthusian theme be compared with the myth of Narcissus and the legend of Onan?

The two, at least, have one thing in common: it's that we've pulled these old stories towards us to adapt them to values they don't represent. Narcissus is no more narcissistic than Onan is onanistic or Oedipus is Oedipal.

Let's recap Onan's story. He has a married brother. This brother dies without issue: and, according to the law of levirate, imposed by Moses, Onan must marry his sister-in-law, the widow, to give her the children that the deceased did not commit. This is patriarchy at its worst, the worst that any civilisation or religion has ever invented. And patriarchy is no longer about pregnancy as such, it's about money, inheritance and property. You'd think that, since the dawn of time, males have countered the female art of biting in order to be fucked with with the virile talent of punching in order to keep their bones (all very seductive). Matriarchy would then be the genius of production, and patriarchy the genius of hoarding. Since both are totalitarian, it's one slut and a half. So Onan fucks his sister-in-law. But he's a "fraud" - he drops his cum on the floor. We can conclude from this that these biblical characters didn't have a bed, and that Onan didn't want to make a kid who would have been his brother's posthumous son, his own son and his nephew. An heir of the left hand, in any case.

You can guess the dirty money story, very worthy of this biblical god who, with more maniacal precision than a Manufrance customer, describes to Moses the tent that must be built to worship him, and to the nearest pin. (But the desert makes the men it can, and we'll see more of them...).

What's strange is that in this matter of big money, our era has only remembered Onan's "gesture" - which the Christian church called *coitus interruptus* and which was, until recently, the only contraceptive method in use. And it remains universally used. Sexologists tell us that it's very traumatic for the male (thanks for the other): whether it's more 'traumatic' than having one kid too many or giving up sex remains to be seen: doctors are vigorously reluctant to have an opinion on the matter. One wonders why. Is 'science' suddenly more timid than religion? Finally, being 'traumatised' is bad - that's what priests and psycons have in common, the marks of 'sin' and 'trauma' having been neatly covered up in modern parlance. And no one talks more

about 'trauma' than Christian psychologists and the mothers who wore their first white dress to swallow the white stuff that a gentleman shoved in their mouths when they were about twelve. Solemn communion! The second white dress will be a different story; the second white stuff will be less dry; the idea of 'trauma' will be all the more ingrained in the skulls of these eternal virgins. A wedding night (given what the 'stepchildren' to be married are like) teaches you forever what sexuality means: that's what can explain the snarling, yelping revolt of mothers when they discover that their kids like it, and don't see the devil in it any more than they see the good Lord. Ungrateful offspring! Was my vagina tortured so that you could give up your kisses and your buttocks to whomever you please?

Today, the word *onanism* refers to solitary pleasure. The deviation in meaning, if we think of the legend I have just recalled, is unexpected. Onan did not masturbate at all, he fucked his sister-in-law copiously and simply refused to beget children.

Are we to conclude from this that the people who invented the notion and the (Christian) crime of onanism considered that, when someone jerks off, he deprives the Nation, the Family, of the babies they have a right to expect? And that we have slipped from the biblical egoism of Onan, a simple matter of inheritance, to the sensual egoism of the masturbator who does not produce "cannon fodder"?

In the logomachy of today's psycho/sexologists, let's remember the narcissism-masturbation-homosexuality equivalence. And it's about the dark sky that can fall on boys' heads - a significant detail.

Our society encourages narcissism in girls. As long as you've got a twat, you've got to love yourself. Look at yourself, adorn yourself, embellish yourself, become a creature of spectacle. But why? Simply because narcissism makes you stupid, stuffy, futile, vulnerable and absurd. The real Narcissus was a good cretin from naive times, whom Nemesis turned into a self-lover in order to lose him. Today, to lose women and make them morons, we change them into narcissi; everything else will follow. The only difference is that Narcissus was lucky enough to be cursed - whereas our female narcissi are merely domesticated. Today, Nemesis is a god with a beard who is only interested in the marital destiny of his victims. Turning *men* into women is his triumph.

It's a triumph that goes far beyond the 'predestined' sex, since even boys see femininity as the best way to fulfil their potential. The only difference is that

they choose it instead of being subjected to it. Effeminate and transsexuals remain non-conforming: they cannot beget children. They are a third state between the fattening womb of the old matriarchy and the bludgeoning phallus of our world. The femininity of the effeminate is like a child's gratuity: it is outside the game, and that's why it plays. The "serious" game, on the other hand, is a confrontation of bladders and lanterns, a battle of the andouille. The effeminate one discreetly separates the combatants and sets an example for them. If there are two sexes in one, it's because man isn't as simple as the shrews and moustaches think.

Modern 'narcissism' will therefore be based on a love of self (like that of La Fontaine's Owl for its young) that starts with the feeling that *you have to be something*. When I was talking about photographs, I was referring to the obligation to *have an identity*, to recognise oneself, to name oneself. (We wept over Anne Franck because she was someone - even if her diary, as is likely, was fabricated by propagandists after the fact: good causes have these discrepancies...). But who would cry over any of those packets of black, yellow or dark meat that die in their millions every year, not because of the evil Nazis, but for the happiness of the very good Western democrats? On a global scale, men no longer have any identity, sex or age: in short, they are themselves, and therefore useless to our beautiful thoughts on Man, Woman, Child, etc.).

Whereas the myth of Narcissus depicts a man who loves himself because he believes he sees another, we love others only to the extent that we believe we recognise ourselves.

The same is true of the prosaic side of marriage. The statistics in this area are merciless. It has been established that over 85% of heterosexual couples who marry each year are "homophiles". The guy and the girl are from the same region, the same age, the same social background, the same income level: they have the same habits, the same tastes, the same quirks, the same prejudices, the same future intentions. At best, the male accepts - according to a good old hierarchy that holds up to amaze people who believe that with May 68, "young people" have changed - that the female is a little "inferior" to him - less cultured, less wealthy, less intelligent, etc. But in this case, it will be necessary, of course, for the male to be able to adapt to the female. But then, of course, she'd have to be prettier. On the other hand, you're always handsome enough to be the man in those marriages.

Yes: homophilia. So much so that the word *homosexuals*, applied to queers, is a real paradox: queers love each other and mix across all systems of

wealth, culture, race, age and money. They are - heretically - authentic *heterophiles*. At the very least, they're only interested in being *different*.

How, then, are we to understand the link that psycons (all of whom are more mummies, daddies, wives and husbands than nature itself) make between narcissism and homosexuality? How can we understand that these owls, who only love owls and their owls, label as self-loving those who fall in love with the opposite of them? I think it's the old story of the beam and the mote. There can be no heterosexuality without a blind passion for what you are and what you want to remain: the straight male is all hung up on an 'idea of self' that the slightest sexual or gestural deviation jeopardises; the straight female is obsessed with identifying with the object of desire that, via her mother, the males have taught her to be if she wants to survive. These people are stuck on each other. They have been petrified in advance into a beast with two backs. Segregation, discrimination, persecution, inequality, brutality and racism are the least they need to love each other. And they know they are guilty of this unbridled love of self that is only fulfilled in the enslavement or destruction of others.

They are narcissists in reverse; they eliminate others first, and then they love themselves.

On the other hand, could we say that a homosexual is an anti-narcissist? The game is about a problem of identity. A heterosexual seeks out the 'other' to define himself as 'different', to create an identity that is restrictive but conforms to a prior stereotype that he is in love with: he wants to resemble a model instilled in him as a child, a model that is uptight, constipated, closed, easy - you could say that he loves himself through a statue of Easter Island. Confronted with identical statues, but of the opposite sign (the 'other' sex), this statue of stupidity feels confirmed: It exists. It was true! So many sacrifices, misfortunes and mutilations will not have been in vain: there is a response. Other men-trunks called "women" who are quite happy (?) to bang their wooden head against your pickaxe head.

And, what's more (!), it will produce little owls that can be trained and worked on at will, modelling clay that you can sculpt in your own image, according to the principle that the more idiots you are, the prouder you are, so the future is bright. Marriage is worth it. On this point, Mum and Dad are in complete agreement: if we didn't have the right to make children like we are, we wouldn't know why we ever had them in the first place, or why we're together. The heterosexual couple always deviates towards this ultimate

compensation for its failure, or this supreme assuagement of its narcissism: to produce human beings and reduce them to what you are.

Which reminds me of those police officers who caused a scandal a few years ago because, having arrested a guilty man who was innocent, they fabricated evidence of his crime rather than stand trial. In the same way, parents reshape a child in their own image to give the impression that a human being is just that, and that a failure is beautiful when it is perpetuated. I'll prove that I'm 'good' by educating my children in such a way that they're no better than I am.

It is the very principle - affirmed by the International Declaration of Human Rights - that parents can bring up their children according to their "convictions" (to the parents). However, "savages" are no longer forced to resemble their colonisers.

It was essential to make this allusion to the sinister products of the heterosexual couple - sinister for the reasons for being and the destiny that this couple gives them - and sinister for the need, in this couple, to compensate for its own narcissistic failure by aborting its offspring: otherwise, the *heterophilia* and the harmlessness, the social purity, of 'homosexuals' would have taken too long to explain.

define. And their - our - way of experiencing the very particular narcissism that contemporary society has made, at least in our countries, a fundamental condition of human existence. Narcissism that I have explained is simply a consequence of the blocked, limited system of the hetero patriarchal family, petrified into blocks of roles. A system to which 'future' gay men have been trained like everyone else: and which they reproduce in their own way in various aspects of their morals. Here too, we do what we can: and it's not much.

In any case, homosexuals, or whoever we call them, seem to look for true others among others. They do not use their partner to define their own identity, and they have no desire to create beings in their own image, either by jerking off or by force. Homosexual desire, whether male or female, is rather a passion to assimilate with a desirable other. It is an incorporation, almost an anthropophagy. But it is symbolic and harmless. For a homosexual, to desire or love someone is to believe that the other is absolutely other: but the homosexual is like Saint Thomas, he only believes what he touches. He is so afraid of resemblance that he always chooses something as far from himself as possible. This man loves to augment himself with other bodies, other ages,

other races: and to seek, through this, the immense integrity that men have lost. Even gay flirtation, its delirium of devouring love partners by the hundreds, is this passion to incorporate - the exact opposite of Donjuanism and its catalogue of spit.

In short, our society and its diktats render man so crippled that we are never gay enough to reconstruct ourselves with the skin of others. And that's not asking too much of them.

In the end, I wonder if the 'narcissism' that 'makes' a homosexual (!) is not the feeling, in a child or an adolescent, that man is less short, less rigid and less hollow than the handicapped, one-armed, legless, deaf, evil, stupid and blind person that each of us is supposed to become in order to be judged normal. Homosexuality, like all sexuality and all passion, can be used for anything: and every era has used it as it saw fit. But I feel that today it serves the essential purpose of reconstituting man and woman.

Is this a far cry from narcissism? Perhaps not. But not far from Narcissus himself, who suffered and died for having loved the absolute other. No man will ever be as different and as inapproachable to another as was the image of Narcissus.

Narcissus to himself. The poor fool thought he wasn't him, and in an incomprehensible reflection, he began to love the whole universe. Let's be guilty of that love, and decide, morons or not, that it's ours.

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 29 January 1980

Letter referring to the article Narcisse published in the magazine Masques number 3, winter 1979-1980. "My poor novel" (second paragraph) probably refers to La Ronde de Nuit, a novel by Tony Duvert currently being written (1). Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.

Tour" on Monday.

Dear Jean-Pierre,

I'm dismayed that it took me so long to thank you for the care with which Masques published my text (which struck me as quite fanciful for the serious tone of the magazine). Narcissus aside, Masques continues to improve, and I marvel at the work you do. Obviously, the round table lacked... angles - but I suppose that's the way it's meant to be!

I'd hoped to send you a - hyper-literary - text about travellers, whom I was very fond of between the ages of 17 and 20 (they were my age, at most, it's true). This very intimate ex-perience of the crazy girls and girls between 15 and 20 leaves me with the most laughing memories of my former life as a fag. Alas, I don't have a minute to write this properly. My poor novel keeps getting delayed (I don't think it'll be published until the autumn) (the money situation is becoming critical, and for good reason), so I've been banned from recreation and voluntary work.

Of course, if I happen to have a ready-made text that's not too shameful, I'll be happy to suggest it to Masques. Do you want to keep me informed about the themes of your next issues?

*Encom tous mes remerciements
et mes bonnes amitiés.*

Long,

(1) According to Gilles Sebhan, it is possible that this *Ronde* corresponds rather to *Un anneau d'argent*. Source: *Retour à Duvert*, page 151.

CLAUDE HASTAIRE - SCENES D'INTERIEUR - January-February 1980

Source: *Cimaise magazine*, issue 145 (January-February 1980)



There are works of art of which the spectator must become worthy. These works, on first contact, demonstrate a level of demand to which we are no longer accustomed, either towards ourselves or towards the aesthetic pleasures we wish to enjoy.

Claude Hataire's paintings - and particularly his large-scale *Interior Scenes* - are a great source of inspiration.

are precisely those works of exacerbated exigency. Not that they are 'difficult' or roguishly accessible. Hataire has long since completed the path that leads from solitary experience to expression for others: he won't invite you into his work to scold you or spit in your face. Seductive, sensitive and sensual, his canvases draw us in, seduce us (to use a favourite word of Roland Barthes): but it's only to introduce us to the most disciplined, austere and profoundly alien mental universe we could possibly know.

A world where, to tell the truth, we enter with the virginity of an apprentice. A dubious virginity, therefore, and one that many different hands have already visited and polluted. How many fashions, how many barking theories, how many jargon-filled analyses, how many historical impostures, how many decisive encyclopaedisms, how many contradictory lessons, how many ultra-freedom battles, how many rambling catechisms, how many drunken popes and chapels more funereal than ardent, have dirtied our eyes and made our brains sluggish! And we go from exhibition to museum with the dull eyelids and dull pupils of boys whom priests love too much.

No, Hataire has not extended over his work the protection of an instruction manual, a terrorism, a profession of faith or an axiomatic. He is a real painter, and so it is his work itself, silently, as beautiful and pure as an imaginary law, that expresses the demands it will make on us. It urges us to look at it as fully as the painter does - this is its only, but essential, provocation.

His approach has the intransigence of a moral treatise, the harshness of a mortal adventure, the force of those exhortations that mark, and sometimes reorientate, each century of art. We sense this intense form of *preaching* in Hataire's work.

A lesson in asceticism, then, a sermon, a *rule*? It's not that simple.

We have to agree wholeheartedly with Debussy's assertion that art "must humbly seek to give pleasure". Yes, but whose pleasure? Too many contemporary works insult us, by the mediocrity they presuppose and seek to flatter in us. In contrast, Hastaire does not want to make fools happy. And the pleasure that these vast *interior scenes* give us is not one that makes you stupid. However moved or gripped we may be by these stormy, impassive splendours, we experience, as if under the effect of a dramaturgical catharsis or a profound self-analysis, the ferocious purity of a new self-knowledge.

Hastaire inaugurated this entry into oneself (entering oneself as one enters religion - except that, here, it is not a question of masochistic narcissism, but of love of the world), these mirages of an interior that expresses itself in the construction of steep chasms open to our gaze, with the drawings of *Immediate Memory*.

This large book marked the beginnings of a quest for the self that evoked the Proustian Recherche and the bewitching hazards of anamnesis. In each drawing, we discovered insistent, restrained, insistent, fragile traces of an erased passage, of an abolished exterior: original characters, nostalgic climates, deserted spaces that resonated with serious distress and a silent, schizoid, torn solitude.

Hastaire has now overcome this silence and this shyness that is too much in love. His gaze has become acclimatised to infinite obscurity. He deciphers them - he receives their light, muted and immense.

For it is light that these *Interior Scenes* magnify, and that has conquered the artist - just as the alchemist, working in *the dark*, was fascinated by the glow of the embers under the crucible. Light perhaps satanic, incandescence of shadow: but certainty, *revelation*.

These words are not just a metaphor. They really describe the substance, the very images of *Interior Scenes*. The magnificent architecture of these captivating, large-format canvases is composed of immense, modulated blacks never before seen in painting, a real challenge for a virtuoso colourist. We thought that black "wasn't" a colour: we had misunderstood. Here are blacks that we indulge in as if in extreme heat; here is the violence of black. Hastaire offers us translucent, smooth variations on darkness, like a perfect poem. This is not the overpowering asphalt of the academics; it is not the acid black of inks; it is a vibrant and multiple film, iridescent, distant, a complex place of a thousand sparkles.

The matter of these blacks is also singular. Hastaire has chosen a very dry style of writing: and if his blacks have a grain, it is that of the canvas and not that of a paste. The weaving, the knots, the irregularities of the work surface, the painter has used them all, giving rhythm, damage and pain to the great flatness of his structures, the black perspectives of this interior world built so

that you fall into it.

In contrast to these dry, gnarled surfaces, like veined, parchment-like skin, we see flows, drips, projections, a whole process of soiling, very discreet but as important and as calculated as the number of a poem, the rhythm of a decasyllable, the *order of music* - that composed of betrayed regularity, distorted laws or, if we prefer, controlled exceptions.

In the large diptych that undoubtedly dominates the *Interior Scenes* as a whole, we even catch a glimpse of yellowish drips on a tarry surface - the almost sickening violence of a material (sweet, sticky urine comes to mind) produced and shown without any material at all. And it's a moment of absolute shadow: because you suddenly feel reduced to yourself, with no cultural recourse to continue not seeing yourself. The immense, violent, sublime soiled canvas inflicts on us, like a death sentence, our entire night.

However, far from being deserted, the *Interior Scenes* contain a whole eccentric play of colours. Blue, violet, pinkish, glaucous (we don't know what milky grey lies beneath the charcoal of certain shots) mingle, crystallise, incarnate themselves in several places on the canvas, making the blacks vibrate like births. Exquisite births, with refined geometries; vivid pieces caught in these nocturnal wefts, beautiful shards, beautiful beauties - the births of mysterious *disappearances*.

The night painted by Hataire is not only populated by violet atoms, mauve, cloudy, galactic intensities. There are also implacable vertical bars of white, cutting across the canvas like the passage of a comet - references and supports for the eye, as if the painter, to help us lose ourselves in his purplish dawns and boundless blacks, were offering us, almost every time, the security of this white mark, a point of departure and return.

Present for its own sake, as a strip or a thread, white also serves to underline the marginal, spectral appearances/disappearances that are, as I said, the event of the paintings - often on the side, in the background of the image, these are volumes and waves of all the purples, bluish tones, killed or emerging reds.

What is the meaning of these strange, superimposed, chalk-like transparencies, these tenuous glows, these enigmatic solids with their dreamy shapes?

abyssal universe? Everything lets us imagine the representations, the places, the climates we want: nothing is privileged.

And then, sometimes, there are images that evoke, with radiant gentleness and artistry, universes of pure tenderness, from which is excluded the anguish that marks the high research of the black canvases. These fleeting glimpses are all the more moving and surprising: they help us to read the great work more clearly.

And they shed light on the Proustian aspect, which I suggested earlier, of this art that is so eroticised and so mental at the same time. The eroticism of an obvious passion for everything that disturbs Eros: shapes, shimmers, colours, ambiguous evocations, unspeakable depths, eternities of the fleeting, a return to an *Urzeit* which, in Hataire, is perhaps even below childhood: a first, tortured look, the moment of a birth. Then the intellectuality of a recovery from this pain and cold shock, and its fulfilment as a work of art.

So the experience communicated here can exist both as witness and as accomplished art - if not because the spiritual witness, in Hataire, knows how to overcome the weakness of the "need to say" and, despite the violence and urgency of this "saying", manages to dream, master, recreate and offer us only art itself.

Les Mots croisés

de Tony Duvert

Tours, lundi je vous offre, ci-joint, pour mon seul plaisir, un premier problème. Sans les solutions, bien sûr, donc à paraître dans le numéro d'après. Que celui qui pourra le résoudre en moins de trois heures m'écrive d'urgence!

Chers tous,
 Depuis que je lis le Gai Pied, je souffre de ne pas y trouver de mots croisés. Tous les autres journaux en ont, du Figaro à Libé, etc. et c'est sûrement utile : ça aide à sucer le numéro jusqu'au bout et à attendre le suivant. C'est ce qu'on fait quand on n'a plus rien à lire ! A part ça, tous les bons écrivains adorent faire des mots croisés, je veux dire en inventer. Les miens sont plus durs que ceux de Perec

Amitiés.
 Tony Duvert

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

I												
II												
III												
IV												
V												
VI												
VII												
VIII												
IX												
X												
XI												
XII												

VERTICALEMENT

1. Mais non, ce n'est pas une réunion de membres ! 2. Quand un mignon n'est pas gentil. Pas les autres, pas vous. 3. A débuté entre deux cuisses. Embellissent en un clin d'œil. 4. Eminences roses. Pas mal d'eau. 5. Fait tomber la peau. Dressé, ou le sera vite. 6. Aimait mieux l'endroit que l'envers. A plus souvent mauvais goût que bon goût. 7. Les soldats ont raidi de la voir. Il est vilaine ?... 8. Chaque lettre de toi. La censure les cuit. Goethe le descend de l'arbre et lui fait remonter un fruit vert. 9. Sage mais chinois, et tout retourné d'être ici. Monte en l'air. 10. Traités de haut... 11. Borda les draps, mais ne tint pas la chandelle. Ne flotte qu'un moment. 12. La chère vieille tante du XIX^e. Sel saupoudré.

HORIZONTALEMENT

I. Quand on l'aime, on lui fait la petite bouche. II. Entre hommes, il lui faut le haut et le bas. Pas pur. III. Demi-femme, mais pas demi-jules. Chargera de ses désirs. IV. Bien suspendue, ou assez avachie. On les a dans la lune. V. Ni là, ni ici. Un rien viril. Reçus à la cour. VI. Très chair. Brillant, quoique fluet. VII. Caches. Comblé, voire accablé, mais de quoi ? VIII - Louée peu, et vraiment peu louée. On les veut raides et gonflés. Enlève au petit bonheur. IX. Se faisait baiser le cul, et vous emportait l'âme. Le petit se laisse bien téter. X. On est de bois quand on vous en taille une. XI. Nul, et déplacé. Salaces et donc poivrées ! XII. Si on remue un rien la fesse. Ni à voile ni à vapeur.

Tours,

Monday Dear everyone,

Ever since I started reading Gai Pied, I've been suffering from the lack of crosswords. All the other newspapers have them, from Figaro to Libé, etc., and it's certainly useful: it helps you suck the issue dry and wait for the next one. That's what you do when you've got nothing left to read!

Apart from that, all good writers love doing crosswords, by which I mean inventing them. Mine are harder than Perec's, so I'm enclosing, for my own pleasure, a first problem. Without the solutions, of course,

to be published in the next issue. Anyone who can solve it in less than three

hours should write to me urgently!

I wouldn't have offered you my little games if you hadn't published recipes for cooking (when will we start knitting?) and if the games in question weren't to literature what chess is to the illiterate. A pleasure. All the best.

Tony Duvert

VERTICALLY

1. But no, this isn't a members' meeting!
2. When a cutie isn't nice. Not the others, not you.
3. Started between two thighs. Beautify in the blink of an eye.
4. Pink eminences. Quite a lot of water.
5. Drops the skin. Upright, or soon will be.
6. Loved right side up more than upside down. More often has bad taste than good taste.
7. The soldiers stiffened at the sight of her. Is he naughty?.
8. Every letter from you. The censor cooks them. Goethe takes him down from the tree and brings up a green fruit.
9. Wise but Chinese, and all upset to be here. Get in the air.
10. High-level treaties...
11. Bordered the sheets, but didn't hold the candle. Only floats for a moment.
12. The dear old aunt from the 19th century. Salt sprinkled.

HORIZONTALLY

- I. When you love her, you give her the silent treatment.
- II. Between men, he needs highs and lows. Not pure.
- III. Half-wife, but not half-jules. In charge of her desires.
- IV. Well hung, or rather slouchy. They're over the moon.
- V. Neither here nor there. Nothing manly. Received at court.
- VI. Very fleshy. Brilliant, though slender.
- VII. Caches. Overwhelmed, even overwhelmed, but by what?
- VIII. Rented little, and really little. We want them stiff and puffy. Take them off haphazardly.
- IX. She'd get her ass fucked and take your soul away. The little one lets himself be suckled.
- X. We're wooden when we cut one for you.
- XI. Lame and inappropriate. Dirty and therefore peppery!
- XII. If you wiggle your bottom just a little. Neither sail nor steam.

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 24 March 1980

Letters from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, the director of Masques magazine. Source: Quintes-feuilles monthly bulletin, issue 5, May 2013. The

archives of the magazine Masques, saved by Alain Sanzio after the death of Jean- Pierre Joecker, were deposited last year at the BNF. These archives contain sixteen letters from Tony Duvert to J-P Joecker. We reproduce four of them below, which we feel shed interesting light on Tony Duvert and his dispute with Jean-Luc Pinard-Legry and Leïla Sebbar. Pinard-Legry is the author, with Benoît Lapouge, of a book entitled L'enfant et le pédéraste (Le Seuil, 1980) which began with an account of a rape he suffered as a child; Leïla Sebbar wrote Le pédophile et la maman (Stock, 1980).

Monday. [Added in pencil by Alain Sanzio: 24/3/80]

Dear Jean-Pierre,

Thank you for your two letters. I had a good laugh when I found out that Pinard no longer wanted this debate because of my letter. What is he afraid of? A couple of slaps?! It seems that some people underestimate the risks they take when they write malicious rubbish...

Anyway, you guessed right: I wouldn't have the freedom to go to Paris for that. Not only is my novel never-ending, but I'm interrupting it to write a little pamphlet called L'Enfance au masculin, which is - indirectly, because I've got better things to do than refute bullshit - a response to Pinard and Sebbar (oh, that one!). As you know, I'm reluctant to do any 'theoretical' work on pederasty: I honestly don't think that the socio-cultural conditions that would allow us to have non-oriented material for thought are present: the queer is not free, the child is not free either, we don't know anything about anything, we only have experiences that are subservient to the other side's order. But never mind, I'll get on with it.

I don't plan to take any further part in the debate in question; there's no time, and no point in repeating the same thing in several forms. Especially as the book will be very well supported, I believe, by the publisher, who, puritan though he may be, has been fairly disgusted by the imbecility of the Pinard-Sebbars. So the book will be finished and published very soon.

Apart from that, I've been asked to write a few lines about this crap for Libé; I've written a mini-article in a bad mood, aimed at a non-specialist audience. I'm not sure it'll go down well, but we'll see.

That's where I'm at. I suppose that *Masques*, by targeting paedophile groups, could have the debate you want; I don't know if they'll say intelligent things, but in any case, it'll make printed paper.

I'm sorry I can't accept the other proposals either, because of the urgency of the situation. It's a bad time. It will pass.

By the way, I hope you're really going to do those articles on our violated

thinkers (1). You express yourself with such moderation that maybe it's just what's needed - until we get better!

Best regards

Tony

(1) Lapouge and Pinard-Legry's book begins with an account of the rape that one of them allegedly suffered as a child. Duvert denounces this story as a deception in *L'enfant au masculin*.

Les mots croisés de Tony Duvert

Problème n°2 Solution du problème n°1

HORIZONTALEMENT

I. Un petit qui remue la queue si un grand remue la sienne. II. Pouvait faire une pipe. Oeufs qui pondent dès qu'ils sont éclos. III. L'impossible façon d'être les seuls. Pointée sur l'Amérique. Lime sans voix. IV. Un pas perdu. Le pense-bête des sages... V. Protectors qu'on recherche quand on fait le trottoir. Pas mec, pas sec non plus. Pête dans une botte. VI. Petit bout d'un petit bout qui en a de raides. File à toutes jambes. Peut vraiment se brosser. VII. Ce ne sont pas ceux qui font des passes qui le disent. Ira exactement. Manche, passé la Méditerranée. VIII. Pas bandante quand elle est courte. On l'a mise à deux, mais en a-t-elle joui ? IX. Prend une culotte, par exemple. Donc bien foutues au trou. X. Antiphysique, quoique très morale. Drôles d'accrocheuses !

VERTICALEMENT

1. Se faisait à toute vapeur e d'une seule main, aux hommes comme aux femmes. Ce qu'un môme a au milieu ! 2. On ne l'apprécie vraiment que si on en a plein le cul. 3. Grignote une côte. Réservé aux âmes choisies. 4. Une foutue chaleur ! Nib de nib. 5. Tentera peut-être le diable. 6. U à qui il en manque une. Pas vraiment sûr. Un peu d'elle. 7. Pendants et peu redressés ! Marque la fleur de l'âge. 8. Sont très coton. Sont un rien coton. 9. Les enfants l'attrapent avec les doigts, les adultes le prennent avec un filet. A débauché des chouettes petits bleus. 10. Pas encore fol. Liquides ou infectes. 11. Ont à jamais une vue imprenable. 12. Casse, ou luxe. Se prennent dans la fesse... 13... et elles donc ! Petit marin qu'on préfère par derrière.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
P	I	N	E	D	E	C	O	U	C	O	U
I	N	E	G	A	L	I	T	E	U	R	
N	A	E	R	O	T	I	S	E	R	A	
A	M	O	R	T	I	E	T	L	N		
C	I	I	R	E	C	O	P	A	I		
O	C	R	E	E	S	R	A	I	S		
T	A	I	S	A	D	U	L	E	T		
H	L	M	E	P	I	S	T	O	E		
E	M	A	L	I	N	V	I	N			
Q	U	E	U	E	D	A	R	O	N	D	E
U	N	L	V	E	R	O	L	E	E	S	
E	S	S	F	E		D	I	E	S	E	L

HORIZONTALEMENT

I. Les meilleurs auteurs de grilles piègent désormais les joueurs en se servant de mots composés. Mais le comble est d'en fabriquer d'impossibles : par exemple, R. Scipion, du *Nouvel Observateur*, n'a pas hésité à flanquer, dans l'une de ses grilles, le « mot » très épieuses. Comprenne qui voudra : mais on dirait que la gauche-caviar, en dépit des efforts qu'elle fait pour salir et écabouiller les pédos, a encore du temps à perdre. Chacun ses vices. II. Ur vient de pur. III. Na est la moitié de nana. VIII. Toe est ôte en désordre. XI. Unl est nul en désordre. XII. Essfe, c'est fesse avec le f mal placé.

VERTICALEMENT

8. Oti, c'est toi en désordre. 9. Ulestoa, c'est Lao Tseu, vieux con bien connu des mots-croisistes. 12. Est, c'est-à-dire set.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
I												
II												
III												
IV												
V												
VI												
VII												
VIII												
IX												
X												

Problem No. 2

HORIZONTALLY

- I. A little one wagging his tail if a big one wags his.
- II. Could give a blow job. Eggs that lay as soon as they hatch.
- III. The impossible way to be the only ones. Pointed at America. Lime without a voice.
- IV. A lost step. The brainwave of the wise...
- V. Protectors that you look for when you're on the pavement. Not manly, not dry either. Fart in a boot.
- VI. A little piece of a little piece that's got some stiff ones. Runs like hell. Can really brush himself.
- VII. It's not the passers who say so. Go exactly. Channel, past the

Mediterranean.

VIII. It's not sexy when it's short. We put it on two, but did she enjoy it?

IX. Take panties, for example. So they're well and truly in the hole.

X. Antiphysical, yet very moral. Funny hooks

VERTICALLY

1. It was done with full steam and one hand, for both men and women. What a kid has in the middle!

2. You only really appreciate it if you're fed up with it.

3. Nibble on a rib. Reserved for chosen souls.

4. Bloody heat! Nib de nib.

5. Perhaps tempt the devil.

6. Who's missing one. Not really sure. A bit of her.

7. Hanging and not very straight! Marks the prime of life.

8. Are very cottony. Are a bit cottony.

9. Children catch it with their fingers, adults with a net. Has poached some nice little blues.

10. Not yet mad. Liquid or foul.

11. Have an uninterrupted view.

12. Breakage or luxury. Take it in the butt...

13. . and them! The little sailor we like best from behind.

Solution to Problem 1

HORIZONTALLY

1. The best grid authors now trap players by using compound words. For example, R. Scipion, of the *Nouvel Observateur*, did not hesitate to include the word '*épieuses*' in one of his grids. Understand who will: but it seems that the Left-Caviar, despite its efforts to smear and squash paedos, still has time to waste. To each his own vices. II. Ur comes from *pure*. III. Na is half of *nana*. VIII. Toe is *removed* in disorder. XI. Uni is *null* in disorder. XII. Essfe is *fesse* with the *f* in the wrong place.

VERTICALLY

8. Oti, that's *you* in disorder. 9. Uestoal, that's *Lao Tzu*, an old fart well known to word-crossers. 12. Esl, meaning *salt*.

WHEN THE CHILD APPEARS - 28-29-30 March 1980

Source: *Libération* no. 1901 of 28 March 1980 and no. 1902 of 29-30 March 1980.

When the child appears (1) The mother and the paedophile

It's always annoying to give bad books publicity. Lapouge and Pinard-Legry's L'enfant et le pédéraste (Seuil) and Leïla Sebbar's Le pédophile et la maman (Stock), especially the former, are little more than a critical collation of the positions of 'intellectual pederasts', more or less faked using trick interviews (Leïla Sebbar) or simply dishonestly cutting out quotes from their books (Lapouge and Pinard-Legry). Second-hand" books, without any information or direct access to the subject, the child and his passions. Nevertheless, there is a sociological phenomenon here: two major publishers feel the need to publish two books criticising positions that are almost unknown to the general public, those of the "pro-pedophiles". Finally, the fact that the authors are a feminist and two 'right-thinking' homosexuals is indicative of the new moral divides. Tony Duvert, novelist and essayist, winner of the Prix Médicis, is examining Leïla Sebbar's book today, and will be unleashing his verve against Lapouge and Pinard-Legry tomorrow. Please note that these articles in no way open the door to advertising polemics, and contain every possible response.

Guy Hocquenghem

Kids commit suicide, run away, kill when they need to; schools are in crisis; the family, between its freezer, its slaps and its TV, no longer knows what to do to keep the child in its *home sweet home*; juvenile delinquents are entitled, in France, to the most ferocious justice in Europe; the children of divorcees are sold like parcels of linen; in short, everything is fine. Order reigns and childhood prospers. In this paradise, childhood suffers from only one shadow: paedophiles. This is the source of all the misfortune that children experience. We had to denounce the criminals who, with their fly open and sweets in hand, are destroying the paradise of the school and ruining the family Eden. The pederasts! Because that's who they were (in the words of Ponson du Terrail)! If these monsters didn't exist, little boys and girls would be doing the rounds in chorus, singing lovely songs about their virile dads, their feminine mums, their pedagogical teachers, their understanding psychochoses, their television, and all the happiness that Man has created, tender, attentive and serious, for his precious offspring.

Casser du pédé: that's the ingenious project that has inspired a number of recent books in France. Since Dolto preferred the good Lord, the great masters of "child protection" have been Leïla Sebbar, Lapouge and Pinard-Legry.

Leïla Sebbar has written a book entitled *Le pédophile et la maman*. The book is not dishonest, just stupid and snobbish. Stupid, because it seems that

Ms Sebbar has taken as her motto the powerful words of General Bigeard during the recent parliamentary debate on the Weil Law: "Nothing replaces a mother", said this great warrior. The link between this conviction and abortion is not obvious, but the idea is powerful: *a child equals a mother*. Leila Sebbar believes that a child has a necessary link with the woman who laid it: the idea that the flesh of her flesh could seduce a paedophile, or be seduced by him, makes her sick. And that's the whole point of her book: to reveal the love rivalry that exists between the paedophile - this stranger from the outside who pleases the child all too easily - and the mother - this woman who sacrifices herself, body and soul, to her child, and who, as such, has her emotional needs met by him, *whether she likes it or not*. Madame Sebbar denounces an adulterer: what, the child would cheat on his 'mother' with a pederast? Ugh. The child should know that a pederast is not a mother. He loves kids in general, not his own. He's loved by the child when the child - a child - wants him, not because he, this adult, has a right over any child whatsoever. What a bastard!

However, Madame Sebbar, who seems to be discreetly campaigning in favour of incest, is right. She has understood that there is this love rivalry between the mother and the paedophile: the mother loves her child because he's hers (mothers don't much like the neighbour's kids...); the paedo loves a child, desires him, risks everything for him, because he's HIM. Because the paedo believes that this child is someone. Just like everyone else. Someone: a man. Paedos take children for adults. *This crime is punishable by ten years' imprisonment*. If I say that Sebbar is right, it's because, in her futile Parisian style, she gets to the heart of the matter: is a child the property of his 'mother', or of society, or of a paedophile?

Can it exist on its own, be autonomous? Is it even capable of not *belonging to anyone*?

And, by the way, what adult would dare claim to be able to do without others? But if Madame Sebbar's thinking is stupid, it's because she dares to compare the free and dangerous love of the paedophile and the child with the confined, compulsory love of the child and the 'mother', showered with child benefit. It's as if she were contrasting the pickpocket, who risks prison, with the patent merchant, who only steals with the help of the law. Our jurisdiction condemns illegal theft and love that is not commercialised. Why does Madame Sebbar worry about love that the law prevents from existing? She reminds me of those people who campaign for the death penalty, even though it has not been abolished. Madame Sebbar, before you smash paedophiles, have the charity to wait until they can live.

Tomorrow: "Quand l'enfant parait", 2

This article prompted a letter from a certain "writer" Xavière Gauthier, to which Tony replied in L'enfant au masculin.

When the child appears (2) Puritan homosexuals

As for Benoit Lapouge and Pinard-Legry, their indictment of paedophiles is very different, because these prosecutors did not have children: they are homosexuals. They even admit to you, in passing, that they had a lot of trouble 'coming to terms' with their homosexuality. But now they're thirty, they've decided to get rid of their guilty conscience by going after pederasts.

An old method, which these gentlemen have refreshed in their own way. Their book is sad, reminiscent of a laborious Master of Arts dissertation, bad French and spelling mistakes included. This illiterate cuistrerie is nothing new: but it is still painful when it attacks the most painful and least understood themes of our time.

But why did these anti-homos (who seem to disapprove of sodomy, perhaps even orgasm, even erection, even desire, even the absolute immorality of any personal experience) take an interest in pederasty, about which they know nothing? Stupid question. Long-faced inverters who give you black ideas full of puffs of morgue and mould as soon as you listen to their pretty morals, they had only one concern, a very original one: to protect the child. According to them, the pederast/pedophile, far from being a liberator of Childhood, is a tyrant for whom the kid is just an object. The child, they say, must be free: sheltered from all adult influence. The child will create himself.

Ah, but. As soon as a child and an adult cross paths, there's contamination: the adult (and especially the paedo) is a pollution, a nuisance that will destroy the sublime virtualities of the "Child". A fascinating conviction. It makes me think of the silly story of the couple who adopt a Chinese baby, and who

starts to learn the Chinese language: why? To understand what this Chinese baby will say when it starts to speak. This way of listening to the 'Child' as if he held the ideal Man within him - a Man who will manifest himself and reign as soon as the men before him give up imposing their sinister humanity on him - seems to me to be quite candid. Especially if I think that it is, in fact, nothing more than an alibi for an *aseptic* education and pedagogy, where everything that can 'touch' the child is bad, but where, in order to be 'neutral', the average values of uptight petit-bourgeoisism are practised. Our Pinard-Lapouge educational ideal is the morgue drawer. And the enemy, the microbe, is (what a

discovery!) the pederast. He will seduce the child. He will influence him. He will (unhappily) direct his sexuality. *He* - but what won't he do?...

When you read these 'denunciations', you get the impression that Pinard-Lapouge think that all families, all teachers, all cops, all psychos and psychomachines are pederasts: so much so that you can read their book with profit as long as you systematically replace the word fag with the word parents or teachers or cops. In short, our two anti-gay homos reproach pederasts for being no better than ordinary heteros, mothers or fathers. This would only be ridiculous if it were just a question of comparing two possible fates for children. Since a child is a human being, a particular being, for whom imagining an ideal and general protocol of existence, growth, formation, sexuality and thought is nothing more than a fascist breeding system. Here, take my virtue in your mouth, it's for your own good! And bing!

But our two gay authors go further. For them, as for Madame Sebbar, the child's enemy, the tyrant, the torturer, the man with his dick between his teeth, is the pederast. No more dominant power to fight. At the moment, what's alienating childhood is paedophiles. Their haughty droit de cuissage is rife wherever there's a whiff of pee or milk. They rule over national education, the judiciary, the interior, parents' associations and political parties; they write school textbooks, teach football, music and maths; they sell chewing gum; they take temperatures, give vaccinations and make children eat soup. Like aliens descending on our beautiful planet to conquer it, they invade everything and decide everything. The proof: in France, the Lapouge-Legry ladies have managed to find half a dozen illustrious authors, with millions of copies sold, who devote their work to their love of children, because the Lapine-Pougris gentlemen have only deigned to 'study' pederasty *in a few books* on the subject, written by novelists, autobiographers, academics and philosophers whose only work is on the subject of children.

The only thing we have in common is that we have the same colour of skin, but what does that matter? Each of us pays blood money - a heartbreaking sacrifice of privacy - for the right to *speak*; and we have this right for the talent we are credited with, not for the ideas we defend. So, as survivors of a censorship that strangles all paedophile speech, here we are, according to Pinouge-Lagrise, 'material' from which all we have to do is draw sentences to demonstrate that paedophilia is wrong.

Pederasty as we, each in our own way, have recounted it, thought about it, put it into symbols and images, even dreams, in a world where neither these loves *nor children* have any place, is the sociological and statistical material that our constipated people use to say: "Flaubert wants wives to be adulterers and commit suicide. All censorship aside, is this a universalisable principle?"

No, of course not, Lapine-Pougard. What we each say, which is as

different as we are, is the work of thinkers, poets and novelists; and our books are no more pedagogical treatises than *Romeo and Juliet* or *Tristan and Isolde* are sex education manuals. The reality - contemporary and French - of pederasty is not in our books: it's in the prisons. Instead of tampering with our books like a tired student slogging through a dissertation, go and visit the prisons. The truth about child lovers is a martyrology. But that doesn't interest you. You are "beyond the law". You're lucky: as a pederast, I don't have the candid freedom to be 'beyond' courts and police stations. And the strange lessons in aseptic morality that you propose will only cease to be indecent, imbecilic, puerile and vulgar the day you can shout them at the free men of life that we are not today. For the moment, the cops are enough for us.

Conclusion: why are virtuous mothers and homos (chase the frogs out of the clamshells, they'll come back through the piss-holes) attacking paedo/pederasty? Aren't our laws, our police and our families enough for them? We're dying to be what we are, and they preach to us that we're better than them? Give us an example of respect for children, and you'll admire us for it.

- IX. He preferred to kill his mother, but did not marry his father. Followed by custard. X. You pull on it or you fear it. Used to treat someone from under the leg.
- XI. A slice of life. Covers animals, including males. Make you hold one.
- XII. Committed to be engaging.

VERTICALLY

1. Contracts when rubbing shoulders with men!
2. The product of sterile love.
3. Old stamp but not old pill. Magpies steal a letter.
4. Let's run for tail. Embrace the evening.
5. She's gay through her mouth. Smells strong.
6. Squirts when you fiddle with a button. Took a little.
7. Dark with bodies. Made you smoke if there was tobacco.
8. Are cross, but above that. Has the most famous thighs in the world.
9. Planted in the ground. Does not attach to large vegetables. The shepherd's crook.
10. When Jesus becomes man.
11. Front sail without front. The best way to limit births.
12. Do your business.

SOLUTION FOR N°2



HORIZONTAL EXPLANATIONS

- III. LM, consonants of the word *file*.
- V. SE: Vicious, that! It was a single letter from a *guy*, and two *dry* ones.
- VI. TI, from *titi*, of course.
- VII. IRA: the definition, frankly unfair, was *ira*. Worse than vicious!

VERTICALLY

1. OM, the *kid*.
4. IB, de *nib*.
6. AC was the *pimp* missing one. SR, from *sure*, EL, from *her*.
8. OT, *wadding* or *cotton*.
10. OL, or headless *madness*!
12. ESE, and 13. ES, extracts from *buttocks*: I like that better than saying 'cardinal points' (east, south).

Tony Duvert's
crosswords

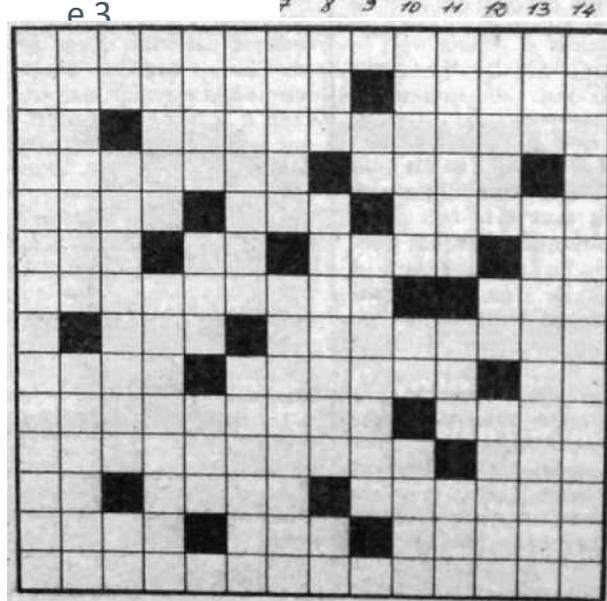
HORIZONTALLY the beautiful shops. Grabbed the gorge,
1. Its dawn rises over the moon. II. leg or tail. 7. good at sticking to the toes
of grown-ups. Banquet in the hole. Expressed at When in crisis. III. flows,
especially in a hole. 8. Embrace a hard. Protect the Expresses when it goes
out. Indispen- ladres. IV. Adam had none. sand to flow. Little aorta. 9.
Agreement of fathers. V. It decreases Not bad blood. Do not hold or it
weighs down. Bit of tit. standing. 10. It's like that when Makes a mackerel
stalk. VI. we take logs. Two for Covered with bloody impressions, do the fig.
Very well put. 11. Boa who had to eat the end. Will bring oranges. A donkey
without Expressed or expired painfully, tail nor head. His name was Albert
Une fac sans une lettre. VII. Trans-de Mun. 12. Catch at full range because
they have good teeth. It's not very willingly. mounted? Brilliant, but
changing. 13. tail, and the men! VIII. Rubbed to death. We used to make
them see red. A male may spit his juice. 14. A moss creature. IX. Will raise
putanism, but not that of the res- certainly of mosses. Must be pectuous.



before going up. Circumcised Zob.
X. Not afraid of being finished.
Couple opposites. XLSmall
benefactor members. Not really cool.
XII. Mua, except the head. Very
pushy. Unable to be original. XIII.
This is Eire itself. Doesn't manage
everyone. Makes vinegar. XIV.
Throws off a lot of juice.

VERTICALLY.

I. If you feel like that, better a fireman
than a pipe! 2. More the beast than the
angel of the bizarre... Emits a little
trickle (from bottom to top). 3. A little
weak. Supports the trousers better than
the skullcap. A bottom of the range. 4.
Practises bimetallism. Suitable for
small chests of drawers, mirror
cabinets and
I to the joys of the day... 5. Mare Ichal
des cruciverbistes. Army of I
cruciverbalists. On Test quand on
[perce et qu'on crache. 6. Courus



MOTS CROISES, issue no. 4 - May 1980 Source: *Gai Pied* issue 14.

HORIZONTALLY

- I. Dawn rises over the moon.
- II. Sticking to the toes of grown-ups. When the crisis is in crisis.
- III. Embrace a tough guy. Protect the wicked.
- IV. Adam had none. Agreement of fathers.
- V. It diminishes or weighs down. Booby tip. Makes a mackerel stalk.
- VI. Covered in bloody impressions. Boa who had to eat the tip. Expressed or expired with difficulty. A college without a letter.
- VII. Transported because they were well put together? Pull the devil by the tail, and the men too!
- VIII. Makes you see red. May raise a few mosses.
- IX. Will certainly raise some moss. You have to go through it before going up.

Solution to n'3

Circumcised willy.

X. Don't be afraid of being finished. Pairing opposites.

XI. Small benefactor members. Not really cool.

XII. Mua, except for the head. Very pushy. Unable to be original.

XIII. That's Eire itself. Doesn't manage everyone. Makes vinegar.

XIV. It throws off quite a lot of juice.

VERTICALLY.

1. If you feel like that, better a fireman than a pipe!

2. More the beast than the angel of the bizarre... Emits a little trickle (from bottom to top).

3. A little weak. Supports the trousers better than the skullcap. Bottom of the range.

4. Practises bimetallism. He's into small chests of drawers, ice-cream cabinets and everyday pleasures...

5. Marshal of the cruciverbists. Army of cruciverbalists. You're a cruciverbalist when you drill and spit.

6. Ran to the nicest shops. Took the throat, the leg or the tail.

7. Good to throw in the hole. Express themselves freely, especially in a hole.

8. Expresses itself when it comes out. Essential for flow. Little aorta.

9. Quite a lot of blood. Can't stand up.

10. That's what happens when you take logs. Two to make the fig. Very well put.

11. Bring oranges. Donkey with no head or tail. His name was Albert de Mun.

12. Grab it with all your might. Not willingly. Brilliant, but changeable.

13. Rubbed to death. We used to make them so that a male would spit out his juice.

14. A putanism, but not that of the respectful.

Tony Duvert's crosswords

HORIZONTALLY

I. Kit to be carried. 11. To slice through the parties. Born crippled. This little one unloads. III. A pu par derrière. Fed up with playing the egg. IV. More appreciated from 20 to 27 kg than if it weighed tons. Put in the hole. V. Put to the height. Three islands or a valley. VI. To have the mucous membranes stirred up. Is found or remains buried. VII. End of penis. End of penis. Taken by the mouth. VIII. Covered with ice. IX. Orna under the leg. Is put on the chest or attached to the neck. Becomes very small when doubled. X. In rambling. Attribute of Doctor Faustus. XI. Bite to laugh, or laugh to bite. Founded by Saint Malo. XII. Morbid

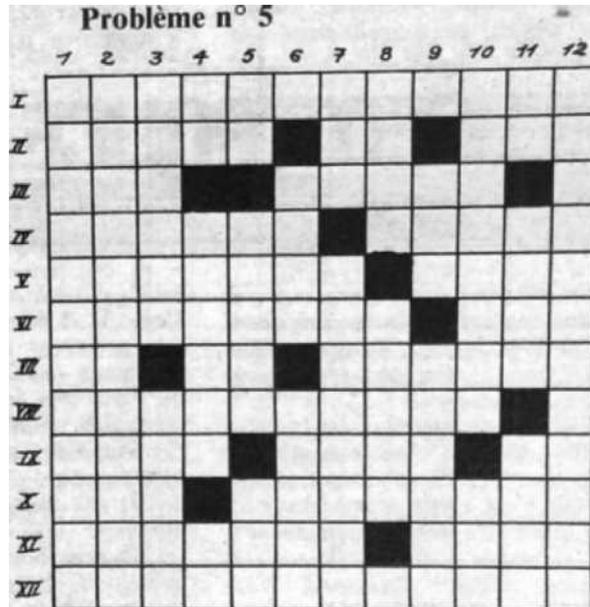
passions which abuse the pious.

t

VERTICALLY

I Always happy as a clam (and often as stupid as a broom)! 2. Will therefore be a good thing. 3. One-legged neighbour. Turbine in the turbine. 4. A bit of sex. Attoucha small balls. By fucking. 5. The beginning of an erection, for example. Obsolete refusal. Faith gone astray. 6. Squeezes everything that can be squeezed, except the buttocks. Inconsistent for Constant. 7. Not Latin. Sifts everything it touches. 8. After a cow kick. Those in bed are the hardest! 9. A very economical offer, though often ruinous. Avançc boldly 10. The priests are full of it and full of worship. A river that floods crossword puzzles in - 11. Incomplete law. A serious helping hand. Open, abusively (oh so). 12. They stretch out the small ends.

"bih



MOTS CROISES, issue no. 5 - June 1980) Source: Gai Pied issue 15.

HORIZONTALLY

- I. Kit to be carried.
- II. Cutting across party lines. Born crippled. This little one unloads.
- III. A pu par derrière. Fed up with acting like an egg.
- IV. More appreciated at 20 to 27 kg than if it weighed tons. Put in the hole.
- V. Made to measure. Three islands or one valley.
- VI. Has stirred mucous membranes. Is found or remains buried.
- VII. Penis tip. Penis tip. Taken by mouth.
- VIII. Ice cover.
- IX. Orna under the leg. Can be worn on the chest or tied around the neck. Becomes very small when doubled.

- X. By rambling. Attribute of Doctor Faustus.
- XI. Bite for laughs, or laugh to bite. Founded by Saint Malo.
- XII. Morbid passions that abuse the pious.

VERTICALLY

- 1. As cheerful as ever (and often as stupid as ever)!
- 2. So it will be a good thing.
- 3. One-legged neighbour. Turbine in the turbine.
- 4. A bit of sex. Attoucha small balls. Fucking.
- 5. The beginning of an erection, for example. Outdated refusal. Faith gone astray.
- 6. Squeezes everything you can squeeze, except your buttocks. Inconsistent for Constant.
- 7. Not Latin. Sifts everything it touches.
- 8. After a hard blow. The ones in bed are the hardest!
- 9. Very economical offer, although often ruinous. Move forward boldly.
- 10. The priests are full of it, and full of worship. A river that floods crossword puzzles in France.
- 11. Incomplete law. A serious helping hand. Open, abusively (oh so).
- 12. They make the little ends longer.

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - June 1980 *Source: Les Editions Bleues.*

Thur

sday Dear Jean-Pierre,

Alas, I continue to work with the same pain and slowness as always. My unfortunate novel will be a year behind schedule, and I doubt we'll be able to publish it before January. I'll have to go without the Goncourt again this year! Oh dear. That would do my finances a world of good - they've gone from catastrophic to unbelievable. But, after all, I like living like this, and the older I get, the more I enjoy it. Maso, eh?

L'enfant an masculin (the definitive title) will only be finished in the next few days; I've turned it into an ultra-personal little book, not a 'response' in the style of *Le Bon sexe*. The authors in question are too small fry to deserve a book [words crossed out]. At least Hachette had its million copies and its translations (so far, they've only translated my *Bon sexe* in Spain!), so I had someone to talk to. But the Legry-Sebbars... The simplest idea that my Child develops, in its own way, is that we must not separate adult gay men and under-age gay men - children or teenagers in our eventual behaviour - in the fight for these freedoms: because it is in the training of minors that heterosexuals manufacture from scratch the minority that we are and that we should not be. Forced heterosexualisation of all children, then 'letting live' the gay adults - i.e. the ex-children on whom this conditioning has not taken hold - is obviously, for the heterosexuals, muddying our waters. But this theme (about which I develop the notion, the polemical and sociological concept, of heterocracy (a patented notion, please don't steal it just yet!) calls for an infinite number of developments that I haven't had time to make. It's more like a passionate manifesto than a sage-study-on. Of course, these books are distributed and sold under the author's name - such is the difficulty of getting booksellers to swallow such subjects. But that's another advantage of the book business: the sauce keeps the fish afloat. Well, we'll see.

I am always very happy to receive your letters and to read *Masques*; less lazy, less preoccupied, I would answer you more often. I'm delighted to hear that Pinard has fallen out with you; it seems to me that you had given him a very fair share, and that it's inappropriate for him to complain about you. Especially when you consider that the interviews and responses from the couple in question are more inane than the book itself. The denunciation of 'consumerism

I especially laughed out loud at the idea - what a piece of work, Flaubert would

have laughed his head off! - that paedos enslave women because their taste for children implies that poor women 'must' become mothers! I bit into that one with unspeakable glee. Are we supposed to believe that people have kids for us? If only that were true...

Yes, the three-voice testimony (1) that you published is amazing. Beyond its obvious content, I admired the reservations it expressed: "you can't say that... you can't explain, you can't tell". This difficulty - putting into language, the language that is necessarily the enemy of today's culture, the experience of paedophilia - is something I've always had to face, and it's my headache as a writer. I manage as best I can; I have the impression that I too am producing very bitter compromises, successive failures. How can we bend their language to our experience? Words don't sound the same to them as they do to us; they have extraordinarily different connotations depending on which side of the fence you're on. The wretched Pinard-Sebbar books are a sinister example of this, lamentable proof.

Speaking of a dossier on paedophilia, are you familiar with the one recently produced by the Belgian paedophile machinima? It's excessively reasonable and takes up, with resigned courage, all the prevailing clichés and prejudices, in order to combat them. It's very well done, very convincing, a little soft. It would certainly be useful to publicise it in France. - If you don't have it, let me know and I'll send it to you (or if you're in funds, buy it from them, they'll be happy to oblige).

Unfortunately no, I won't have a minute to write this presentation of Augiéras that you're suggesting I do. I'd have liked to, but it's work that requires serious preparation, reading and rereading, in short, a hell of a lot of work that I can't envisage doing in the time you've given me. Especially as Augiéras has the major difficulty of being a writer without themes, without thought, a rather 'corny' type, who owes all his value to his writing, his sensitivity, his billions of nuances. There's no question of making a big deal of him; you need all the precautions and finesse that a study of James or Woolf, for example, would call for.

Bruno Roy (2) mentioned me to you because there had been talk of my writing a preface for his reprint of *Le Voyage* (3), a project which came to nothing. - Talking of prefaces, I'm preparing one for Denis Jampen's first book (4), which Ed. de Minuit may publish this autumn, and which I 'discovered' - he was a young Swiss man of eighteen at the time - when I was 'directing' Minuit. I'll tell you more about him when we meet (I'll end up going to Paris!); I could give you the manuscript if you'd like to consider publishing extracts in *Masques*. Very useful for a beginner! Small drawback (?): it's very hard homography. - The author, whom I haven't seen for four or five years and with

whom I don't get on at all (we have no relations, we can't even write to each other) is the coldest, most petrified, most uptight person I've ever met. The opposite of what he writes. He was an extremely pretty boy, but alcohol and reefer (in unbelievable quantities) didn't do him much good. Blond, white-skinned Swiss boys are as fragile as roses!

So I'm delighted that you're doing an Augiéras dossier, but it's impossible to collaborate on it. You may have noticed that, on the Gai-Pied side, I only manage to publish crosswords! And that's only because I've had a folder full of them for as long as I've been playing the game.

Well, back to the Belgians. I've received a copious parcel of work from a young photographer of children (with little or no nudity) who seems to me to be doing splendid work. There's some stuff in there that's decent enough (i.e. without pecs or bum...!) to be easily published. If you'd like to get in touch with him, I heartily recommend it. If he agrees to take the kind of photos I need, I'm thinking of doing a very luxurious book with him. It's an old project that my publisher accepted a long time ago. All that's left is to carry it out; two years?

And that's it. Thank you again for so kindly serving *Masques*, whose next works I'm very much looking forward to. (By the way, once you've got rid of that stupid Nelly, you'll be even more readable. What a load of rubbish! It seems (did you know) that feminism is used by some to disguise the worst prejudices of uptight petty-bourgeois women who are absolutely sick with hatred for women's freedom - real freedom. What a load of crap that one is).

Best regards
Tony

Le dossier pédophile belge: "S'aimer entre enfants et adultes", published by the G.E.P. Infor-homosexualité, 281 chaussée d'Ixelles, 1050 Brussels. (It costs 100 francs, but Belgian or French? I got it for free!)

The photographer: [name and address] (I forgot to mention that he also does little girls (I haven't seen any). Yummy!?) (5)

NOTES

(1) *Le garçon, son amant, et sa mère...* Interview published in *Masques n°5*, as part of a feature on paedophilia, in which the 'anti' camp (Sebbar, Pinard-Legry and Lapouge) and the paedophiles of the GRED also have their say.

(2) Director of the Fata Morgana publishing house, which has published two books by Duvert.

(3) *Le Voyage des morts*, by François Augiéras, republished by Fata Morgana

(NdE) (4) Denis Jampen (born 22 February 1956, died of lung cancer in Bangkok

on 18 February 2006, before reaching the age of 50), a Swiss citizen, ran a literary review with Mathieu Lindon at Éditions de Minuit. In his teens, he travelled extensively in Europe (Italy, Greece, Belgium, Holland, Spain), Asia (Burma, Bali, Borneo, Hong Kong, China, Thailand) and America (Mexico). In 1994, he published a novel, *La Fenêtre*, with the publisher H. Laporte, a novel, *La Fenêtre aux ombres*. Unfortunately, this publisher, which had begun publishing in 1987, went bankrupt in 1994. The French writer turned Mexican, Frédéric-Yves Jeannet, a friend of Denis Jampen and to whom I owe this information, has written a book of memories, *Osselets*, in which he recalls Jampen. According to him, a small publisher was due to publish another novel by Denis Jampen, written when he was 19 (*Héros*), but it never saw the light of day. Denis Jampen wrote another unpublished novel (*L'eau de feu*) set in Mexico, the manuscript of which is in the archives of the magazine *Masques* at the BNF. [NdÉ].

(5) Two lines typed vertically in the left-hand margin about the Belgian photographer, including his address and details of his work, have not been transcribed here.

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - Summer 1980 ?

Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, friend and editor of Masques magazine. Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.

Thurs

day Dear Jean-Pierre,

The girls who wrote a response to my article for Masques don't give me any contact details where I can send them my reply. So here it is. Would you be so kind as to send it to them? - I'm afraid they won't be very happy with it, and you might want to take a photocopy of it before you send it to them.

To be published as soon as possible? Many thanks in advance.

Friendship

Tony

IDEA ON NARCISSE - Right of reply - Summer 1980

Source: Letter from Tony Duvert published in *Masques* no. 5 (summer 1980) in response to a review of his article *Idée sur Narcisse*, published in *Masques* no. 4 and signed "quatre collaboratrices de *Masques*".



Dear Four,

Thank you for your response to my article: I was hoping, without really believing it, to be tickled a little on the sides that inspire this calm and learned anger. You write things, no one ever reacts, and you remain locked into ideas that, for want of exchange and controversy, stagnate on the spot.

Now, I'm not going to answer you precisely to *justify* my "false and crude" image of matriarchy. I'm not a historian, academic or archaeologist, and what the

20, 30 or 100 centuries ago is rather indifferent to me. It's maternal power - would you prefer to call it female power? - in *contemporary* society that concerns me; but that wasn't the point of this article, in which I had fun re-using a whole bunch of ancient junk that are commonplaces in 'Arcadian' mythology (that Narcissus, that Corydon, that Greece, those shrews, that Caravaggio, etc.) and that irritate me; I put them in a spicy sauce, I did as I pleased with them - in short, I took revenge on a certain gay cucuism.

Here's an important detail: you're answering me as if I were one of those intellectuals whose job it is to put forward definitive theories with a thousand authoritative arguments and a thousand footnotes. But I've never done that and I refuse to. I have no ideas to impose; I earn my living writing novels, not having an opinion on everything. Novels are serious; the rest, on the other hand - these little essays in particular - interest me only as mental recreation. And it seems to me that the tone of my writing makes this clear, and prevents any misunderstanding. That doesn't mean that I put forward any idea without believing in it, or lightly: it just means that I don't have a vocation as a teacher. I'd be appalled if anyone sensed the slightest desire to dominate in what I write. Hence my impression that you've read me the wrong way; it seems to me that I've shown since

for a long time that I'm not the kind of writer you think I am. You think I'm a

male. That's not very nice!

Let's move on. You criticise me for giving a patriarchal image of the legendary matriarchy. And you're right. I tend to believe that, if there is domination by one sex over the other, the techniques of domination are the same, whichever sex is in charge. I've therefore attributed to the reign of mothers those behaviours which are those of all the dominant classes, in whatever system.

And here I find your objections curious. You tell me that thinking this way means projecting onto "matristic societies" my narcissistic patriarchal-masculine image of patriarchy. That may be so. But as for you, you're projecting onto *your* image of patriarchy *all your representations of power* (and sexual violence): you want to prove to me, with scholarly examples to back it up, that 'matristic' society is not, and has not been, a society of domination, violence and so on. When women dominated, society was, of course, peaceful and egalitarian. Rousseau's innocence was pushed to the point where we didn't even know how children were made.

A society where one sex reigns... without exercising power, that's a mystery that delights me. No, I sincerely don't believe that a society of ruling mothers could have been an egalitarian and liveable society; certainly, the community of women-masters must have been very pleasant for them, and, as you suggest, probably lesbian - just as the Greek city of men must have been a delight for them. So what's your point? I see that you are making a mythological eulogy of female domination; and I reply that the sex - and the modalities - of power are indifferent to me, as long as there is power.

If I have accused matriarchy of 'masculine' behaviour, that's fine. But you contrast my image of mothers who are queens and hetero-babies with that of mothers who lay few eggs, love each other and gracefully separate the sexes from birth. (*Note from Editions Bleues: Duvert's interviewees mentioned the Amazons, who returned male children to their parents instead of killing them, as has been claimed*) I like that idea, but is it credible? I'm afraid my hypothesis, although 'crude', is sadly more likely. You credit women with all sorts of qualities, the least of which is that there is no known evidence for them. It's a pity for both sexes, but human space hasn't reached that point yet...

So much for the principle of your objections. Now to the specifics.

1 - Yes, I was referring to the Athenian version, heterosexualised and divinised, of the myth of Narcissus, because that's the one that was recuperated by

our own culture. The Boeotian version, which I knew from the Histories of Conon, I still prefer, but it hasn't prevailed here: and it's a real photo-novel, lacking the symbolic richness of the straight version. Incidentally, the Athenians

denounced Boeotia for its shameless pederasty. In other words, very materialistic (systematic sodomy) and very popular - in contrast to the aristocratic-pedagogic pederasty, with its puritanical affectations, that was on display in Athens.

But the heterosexualisation of the Narcissus myth is most interesting because it involves goddesses. And these goddesses - chosen from a pantheon in which all male and female behaviours are represented - these goddesses are indeed fountains. And there is no dichotomy between whoring and reproduction. Pleasure gives birth, begets: that's the stubborn lesson of these erotic myths. What can I do about it? Other than agree with you that it was men who invented them. Their dick-hungry goddesses and, more seriously, their mother-goddesses (please remember that, in the Greek pantheon, it's three women who give and spin life, not a father-god...), perhaps express a fear of maternal power. Who knows whether, in certain civilisations, women have been confined to this conjugal-familial-domestic imprisonment, because we (the men) considered them too dangerous - too violent, too stagnant, too raw, in short, too biological? So what was it that drove these men to see women as dirty beasts to be caged? The fantasy of the toothed vagina? That may well be. But while I'm at it, let me remind you that this fantasy is typical of men who, as children, suffered from... an abusive mother.

And a mother in the fullness of her power - read Bellotti again - 'castrates' young girls too. Dirty beast? At least you have to ask the question. I admire the fact that Italian feminists have tackled head-on this question of maternal power and - as you know from Macciochi's seminars at Vincennes - the relationship between maternal power and fascism, as a central problem of 'femininity'. Why were 'mothers' Allende's enemies and Pinochet's supporters? Don't answer them all at once...

I repeat that this was not the subject of my article. The myth of Narcissus, matriarchalised by these interventions from the goddesses, seemed more interesting to me, that's all.

And, at the same time, do we need to remind ourselves that, among Catholics, the cult of the Virgin Mother is widespread, to the point of fanaticism, among the... males of the most macho societies, in the Mediterranean and South America? Who are these who are these macho men who worship Mum? Bellotti's answer is perfect: it's the mums. Gone is the toothed vagina: here, it's *the mother-phallus*.

You'll tell me that they're being remote-controlled, poor women, by their husbands-fathers and so on. But who remote-controlled these husbands, who amputated them to turn them into men? Does the egg come before the chicken, or does the chicken come before the egg?

It seems to me that it's better to catch *the powers that be in action* and denounce and defuse them *where they are*. Systematically blaming the father for the dirty deeds that mothers commit on their children of both sexes (as if they were doing it unwillingly and with tears in their eyes...) is a game of "it's not me, it's him" - and it's certainly not likely to improve things. Saying "I've been alienated by phallocracy" and taking advantage of it to be a complete slut doesn't seem like progress to me.

2 - I have a terrible tendency to believe that boys have a horrible tendency to be gay, and that there's a whole game played by women-mothers to forcibly heterosexualise these poor beasts who have no desire to do so, and 'virilise' them to death.

You will reply that girls are also forcibly heterosexualised (by their mothers!): but things are not comparable, since, as far as I know, quite a few lesbians, misandrists or not, in no way renounce their uterine 'capacity' to be mothers - which they conceive as the idea not of giving birth but of keeping a child - of sequestering it under their 'natural love'. Another question I'd be happy to see women discuss a little more often...

3 - No, the example of the Eskimos does not convince me that 'matristic societies' ignore sexual domination. I confess I haven't read Borneman's book; I can only remember Malaurie's, where we see a patriarchy without sexual taboos, but not without sexual order; the property of the male over the female, and of adults over children, and of all able-bodied people over the elderly, is obvious. Under the igloo, it's the law of the strongest. If Borneman has seen otherwise, I'll certainly be delighted! All that's left to do is raze Paris to the ground and build an ice floe out of dry ice: and from that moment on, French mothers will be working - something quite unprecedented - to spread equality, respect for children and the right to homophilia. It's their dream!

4 - You criticise me for using the word "Nazi". It is perfectly true that selecting human beings is fascist. It is perfectly true that, in the myth I mentioned, the nymphs select. It is very likely that when the "Amazons" decided to invite a "spermophore" to have - according to your hypotheses - their extremely rare children, they certainly didn't choose the wobbliest and ugliest!

You can also explain to me why women who, according to you, only knew lesbianism as a means of love and "invocations to the moon" as a means of procreation, nevertheless decided to *mate with a man when they wanted to reproduce*. It seems contradictory to me... Am I indecorably 'patriarchal'?

5 - I agree, of course, that the armed violence of the "Amazons" as a response to male aggression. But this in no way resolves the question of relations between the sexes *within* the societies that clashed in this

way. You're telling me that women were good mistresses while men were bad masters: that's a nuance that I don't care about, and the mere mention of which revolts me.

By the way, I find it amusing that you write that the violence of the Amazons is unverified and unproven, and that you explain what caused it. You'd have to choose, wouldn't you? The murderer didn't kill, and what's more, gentlemen of the jury, he was right to kill. Oh!

6 - I don't have the feeling that patriarchal societies haven't been 'creative'; at least not if the last 25 or 30 centuries of world history are anything to go by! Which in no way invalidates the accumulative, possessive, hoarding side of patriarchy. Personally, I was contrasting the 'biological' side (nest, child, repetitive maintenance of the status quo) of maternal power with the capitalist side of the father-family. In truth, it's an intractably difficult historical problem, which can only inspire these biases.

7 - The family as an invention of fathers (the old Marxist thesis!) is, it should be pointed out, the extended family, with its 3 or 4 generations and its many collaterals - in short, it's a tribe. On the other hand, the restricted family (couple + 1.8 children, according to the statistics...) of contemporary society is undeniably feminine, centred on the lover-mother. It's the latest chic. It's a disaster; it's the child-object (the parents' obligatory lover); it's the desert island; it's the most idiotic, the most bastardised, the most bestial thing we've invented since there was a family. I wanted to make that clear. Because this dreadful family is indeed the creation of 'maternal power' - would women's accession to equality involve the absolute subjugation of children? In my view, motherhood today is a genuine kidnapping, with mothers as the main agents of incarceration and normalisation of new human beings - the so-called 'children'. The patriarchal family may have been a scourge: but what is the new family, incestuous and deadly?

No, I'm not defending the 'good old' patriarchy. But I am outraged that this right is being presented as progress, as freedom (!). The exorbitant power that all uterophores now intend to bestow on children. Call them women if you like.

Yes, in the final analysis, it may well be that the image of the woman-mother as a 'monster', as you put it, has a certain credibility. I'm certainly not saying this to exonerate monsters of the other sex: I hope you've understood that I'm simply angry at conjugal-familial-parental heterosexuality - and it doesn't matter what so-called 'sexes' it claims to be composed of. It's about crushing the infamous: a totalitarian bestiality where, really, the responsibilities of both sexes are equal. Is that the kind of equality you're defending?

Best regards, (1)

Tony Duvert

Needless to say, I'd be delighted if a future issue of *Masques* published this response. (That's what it's there for!). Thank you so much!

(1) This greeting and the following PS have not been published by *Masques*.

Problem no. 6

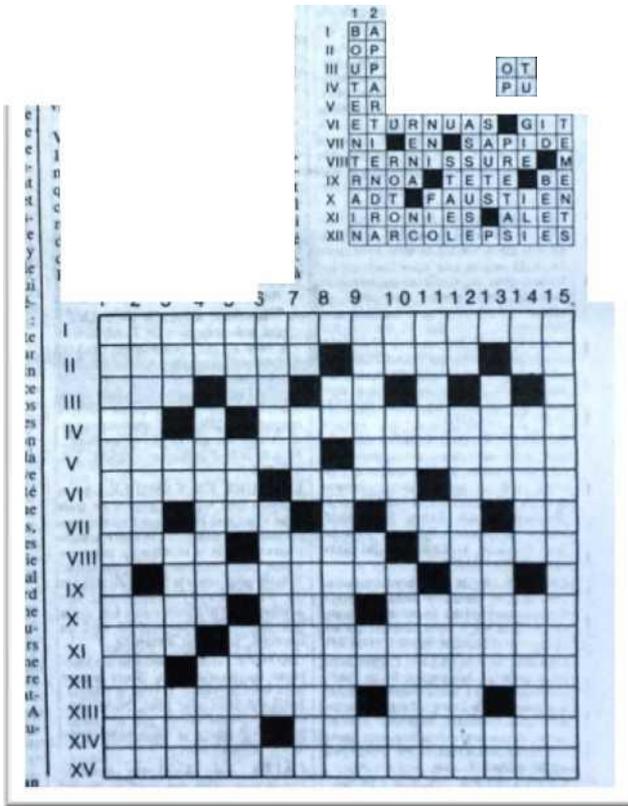
HORIZONTAL! MF NT

I. This IA ass keeps for a long time what you put into it... A concert lover. The garlic of the Tempest. III. Makes you laugh. I wish there was one missing. Late for his Age or ours. IV. They abuse tails, for example. Speechless type. V. Panic to fuck A bit of cheating. VI. Charming little name for the hole in the c. The eye weapon? Garnishes a certain hole, or emits cavernous sounds. VII Mises à sac. Incorporate VIII To forget without getting drunk. Has been coming out of certain lands for centuries. Throws off quite a juice. IX. In fugue, a lot of snot. Déduit de déduit The circumcised has two X. He splits knots. She splits the knots. Preserva du udder XL Mise nu feu, autrefois. Beauty milks. XII. Lack of order. In the loaves. XIII. The little end of a kid Surround the Under. Three to defecate. XIV. Passer A ça, c'est être sauté. Very nice sex (yes, yes!). One is better by a mackerel than by a ray. XV. Abusing going out on the town.

polite, the one." I Au lii. ? Pirfon un. Un peu 11" Demi "1' Se pitié. H. Lou". rude.fi I "" - f' cost! Boiphore him half! M>n name 9 luli" Point. Almost mol. 10. Non, celle legion d'Angle terre n'en pa" réservé" lui obiede" wiueli. He raises his elbow, or

often precedes down. Fucked, but not fucked. English love. sunshine. 12 Now, then. In other words, a cup I Still the small end of a kid 11. A gentleman with the queen, almost a king with us. Mute of upheaval?! Finds himself in the vomit. 14. Routées A la garçonne (from bottom to top). Leaves the whey. 15. Seized in the c... of enormous affection, but for whom?

Solution to n°5



Problem no.

HORIZONTALLY

I. Whatever you put up there, it keeps for a long time...

II. Concertgoer. L'air de la Tempête.

III. Makes you laugh a bit. Girl missing one. Late for her age or ours.

IV. They abuse tails, for example. Speechless guy.

V. Panicked to fuck. A bit of cheating.

VI. Charming little name for the c-hole. Garnishes a certain hole, or emits cavernous sounds.

VII. Sacked. Incorporal.

VIII. To forget without getting drunk. It's been coming out of certain lands for centuries. Throws off quite a juice.

IX. Running away. Lots of snot. Déduit de déduit. The circumcised has two.

X. He splits the knots. She splits the

Tony Duvert's crosswords

knots. Udder preservation.

XI. A fire in the past. Beauty milks...

XII. Out of order. In the buns.

XIII. The little end of a kid. Surround the Sous. Three to defecate.

XIV. To go to this is to get laid. Beautiful sex (yes, yes!). It's better to be fucked by a pimp than by a spleen.

XV. Abuses going out on the town.

VERTICALLY

1. Past simple.
2. The first, but after a dozen. Pre-Hellenic. In Saxony.
3. Lion's head. Small clupeid. In Brabant.
4. He wasn't in the headlines. Half and half.
5. Kinds of beards. Eros's side. Zoophile and sea bass.
6. Taking a detour. Always naked, that one! Off to bed.
7. Sometimes one. A little read. Half wise. Lends itself.
8. Long, steep, hanging and flowing! The Bosphorus owes its name to it.
9. Equality. Full stop. Almost silly.
10. No, this part of England is not just for the sexually obsessed. He raises his elbow, or lowers it.
11. Often precedes love. Fucked, but not fucked. English sunshine.
12. Now, then. In other words, a cup! Another little bit of a kid.
13. A gentleman in the queen's house, almost a king in ours. Mute... of upheaval?! Finds himself in the vomit. Caught in the buttocks.
14. Rolled garçon style (from bottom to top). Leave the whey.
15. Seized by the c... of enormous affection, but for whom?

ABC - 7 August 1980

Collage of texts taken literally from : La syntaxe de l'enfant avant 5 ans (Larousse, 1977), Les moins de 4 ans à l'école maternelle (Armand Colin, 1970), L'enfant et l'écriture (Jean-Pierre Delarge, 1977), Langage enfantin et aphasie, by Roman Jakobson (Minuit, 1969), and the Petit Robert. Source: Libération n°2015 of 7 August 1980, in the series "l'enfance de l'art - chaque jour un écrivain part à la recherche de sa langue d'enfance".

With Claire, aged 3: "she goes up to the ceiling", specifying a movement towards a landmark and reaching that landmark.

(Nicolas): "There was the rabbit, with the little pig who lost, who wanted to leave his umbrella there". This is a film shown in nursery school.

Lois Bloom tells us that the relationship between the two terms of *mommy sock* will be perceived thanks to situational information:

Child (11th century: lat. *infans* "who does not speak").

2,8 : *e(lle) disait elle mo(rd)rait ;*

want the book to tear Bubi apart.

"Listen to the banging... Let's stay where we are for a while: outside; these are the tables and chairs in the room".

Wondering whether the subjunctive in *il faut qu'il aille* still has the 'unreal' value it has in *un homme qui soit x* (v. *qui est x*) is more a matter of introspective feeling than demonstration.

don't go to Mamie's, because ja too many cars

let me see what's in your mouth

look at him, he's asleep!

the little Cajon, I want a little Cajon

it's mine. it's not yours

im bothering the trousers, are you bothered by the trousers?

And then there's a *daddy cat*, he was very big

cold is not hot

dog poo

cat poo

it's his pyjamas

make a pan

to realise that there is no absolute correspondence between the grapheme and the *phoneme*/Eric: - If he hadn't died, i would be zoli!

which doesn't prove much, other than that these difficulties (minor brain dysfunction) may be hereditary/M. Yes,

mistress!" (in a tone that invites repetition)/"That's my little armchair"/in his room daddy is reading/in his room daddy is reading a book/daddy is reading a book today in his room/*doigt walks horse that t(r)otters*

The 3-year-old :

- doesn't know how to *unbutton* his waistcoat or jacket (he often pulls the two fronts forward or to the sides, *risking* tearing the buttons).

- If he does manage to take it off, it's not by taking off each sleeve first, and the waistcoat automatically turns inside out... and stays there.

- The child can't tell right from wrong.

- He doesn't know how to hang his clothes on the coat rack, any more than he knows how to take them off.

- He doesn't know how to "hold" the sleeves of his apron.

- He doesn't know how to *put on* his clothes and comes to the teacher with his waistcoat tucked under his arm.

- He doesn't know how to *button* it. Jean-Marc presses the button on his stomach: "I don't want the button to come on".

IN PRIVATE, little girls know how to pull down their knickers but can't pull them up ABOVE the shirt ONLY.

The Slav has a childlike side (Balzac).

Ombredane, one of the most astute observers of the pathology of phonic changes, clearly understood that partial mutisms

Ombredane, one of the keenest observers of the pathology of the

Ombredane, one of the finest

Ombredane. Partial mutes.

self-affectation, a source of pleasure, the specific behaviours described in the previous paragraph, language is not only the general form of socialisation (...) its internal characteristics (...) lend themselves particularly well to the shaping of the non-actual.

joined words: *limage* for *image*, *je mélanche*, *soni* for his nest, *lécole* for school/arbitrary breakdowns: *l'égume* for vegetable, *il sé lance* for *il s'élanche*/unconcerned with the meaning of the sentence, as well as the semantic value of words

careless of the semantic value of words

the time allocated to the class as a whole is clearly insufficient for them, and what's more, they make mistakes on the wrong lines

they proceed letter by letter

32) speak dysarthrically and suffer from "ataxia of the phonatory muscles" (p.

the teacher serves as a role model for the children, putting on her own waistcoat in front of them

for LITTLE GIRLS, pull the doll's panties up and down, tucking the shirt into the panties.

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was a child of love (Henriot)

Il n'y a plus d'enfants, is said when a child does or says things that are not appropriate for his or her age.

Serge, 3 years, 7 months: - My dad went to work in Valloire.

Pascal, 3 years, 11 months: - Where is Valloire?

Serge: - At work.

Few children reach this level between themselves. On the other hand, with the teacher

Child: a person from (a country, an environment). T. of affection. *My (dear) child, my (dear) children*. *Enfant de troupe*, raised in a barracks, a military school. *Enfants de Marie*, Catholic congregation of young girls who

It's a good idea for families to be informed of the "contents" of their trousers.

hours spent at school/any unresolved emotional tension/putting things into words is done on a participant-trial basis. We have : *Titou* in first presentation, 20 times, in the form *Titou*, 10 times, *little boy called Titou*, 1 time, *he*, 4 times, *little boy*, 5 times

He, 4 times

Mouth positions for a and m

(cf. Ombredane, 1933, p. 407)

to structure space to a certain extent/to become *aware of others and enter into communication with them*/there are privileged areas in which and through which the subject can experience *pleasure*, pleasure that psychoanalysis calls sexual/only major psychopathological regressions can evoke it/.

Daddy walks with me, he takes a big step and I take a little one!

Yes teacher! (with a tone that invites repetition)

she's the prettiest in the world yes she's very good he's bigger than the little hen have you seen the chestnut in its shell have you seen the bird mistress? The teacher is telling a story The teacher doesn't understand *The children are very sad to lose their friend*

is said to younger people, as if they were your own children

adults simplify the models they provide to children (without going into detail here about all the reasons why)

on the other hand, the proportion of different words is between 26% and 39%.

they have a human basis/we are talking about the use of the phantom hand marrow without a castelet/how can this clinical object be of any use to

us/objection will be raised that we are talking about a seriously disturbed little girl/using movements along the corridors in this way

among 436 dentals and palatals - in short, the medium-sized, acoustically high-pitched consonants (the T, N, C and S in Murdock's table) they will be invited to express certain actions orally it should be remembered that in the use of this free material, newsprint, this same reason explains the small number of affricate Listen to the story of a little mouse who didn't have a broom. However, the family environment can also have an effect, even before starting nursery school: the impossibility for a Bulgarian to distinguish between rising and falling tones, by which I mean the figure of the mother (or her substitute) and at the same time the bodily sensations of need, satisfaction... the child will be asked to follow certain routes on command, making him recognise the outline of certain objects with his eyes closed; this is reminiscent of the sporadic survival of phonemes in Brazil, which is only used in graphics or to transcribe the sounds he sees. The child's apprehension of the mother's figure, the child's body image and the child's very primitive psychiatric clinic, certain regressive modests throughout the room without meeting the private small fellows will see them. the child's ability to get off his or her boot and even to exercise while sitting with his or her legs apart and then to stand on his or her feet the errors that we spoke of occur regularly in the child's case the persistence of phonetic confusion insufficient intelligence no instrumental disorders in the mother's care. the mistress appreciates the child's achievements the mistress may sometimes be asked to do so it will appear that the mistress has shown an interest the mistress is often the witness and will ask the child to do certain things at the mistress's request

peep-peep is the common name for birds

with sand and water

with a watering can

with a shovel

with a watering can and lots of sand

my brother is my brother, not me!

I did before he was four now he's six

I'm going to the little pigs' school, it's fun

the cat, the little cat, the pussycat

you're going to take the lion's book and you're going to bring it to me, so

"nose", "mouth", "ears" spinning top

broom

the child can't tell right from wrong

kitchen

child (from Latin *infans*: "who does not speak")

rubbish bin
fridge
comb it is a good idea for families to be informed of the "content" of the
comb.
auto
cry
comb
only major psychopathological regressions can evoke it
spoon
range
write to
router
know how to pull down their pants but can't pull them up
spoon
write to
cry
write to
cry
kitchen comb auto pleurer "nose", "mouth". "ears" write spinning top
it's good that families
rubbish bin
the child will be asked to complete certain routes on command

Tony Duvert

LES MOTS CROISES DE TONY DUVERT

PROBLEME N°7
 Voici, pour changer, deux petites grilles au lieu d'une grande. Elles présentent la particularité d'être "croisées" entre elles. En effet, elles sont entièrement différentes mais elles répondent à un seul jeu de définitions — quelques mots exceptés. Autrement dit, chaque définition a deux solutions justes, l'une pour la grille A, l'autre pour la grille B. Bien entendu, ces définitions à deux "sorties" sont spécialement tirées par les cheveux!

HORIZONTALEMENT
 I. Vade-mecum de la bête à deux dos. II. Met à jour. Pend souvent, mais pas au nez! III. Bon remontant. Megalomane, peut-être? IV. Commet des écarts. Trouvé dans une pantoufle. V. (pour A) eut des rapports, (pour B) avant les rapports. VI. Force, ou forcera. VII. Point de vue. N'est pas le pain quotidien de tout le monde. VIII. Certains en donnent dans le panneau. IX. Les mousses s'y attachent. A plus B est le carré de A.

VERTICALEMENT
 I. Habitude des coups de fusils et des coups de dents. 2. Coupe net certains effets. Vous a à l'estomac. 3. Travaille pour les croque-morts. 4. Pronom. Appelle la mangeoire. 5. Donne (et vend) sur la mer. Lettres pieuses (phon. en A). 6. Miettes de caillès. Pour de fructueux échanges. 7. En voie de crever (de bas en haut). Jolis bouts de terroir. 8. Toujours avec deux queues et à quatre pattes? Cherche le neuf ou le soixante-neuf. 9. Artisans du membre.

(Solution du problème n° 6)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
I	C	U	L	D	E	B	A	S	S	E	F	O	S	S	E
II	U	N	I	O	N	I	S	T	E	R	I	E	L		
III	R	I	N	N	A	A	R	R	I	E	R	E	E		
IV	R	E	S	Q	U	I	L	L	E	U	R	S	T	P	
V	I	M	P	U	I	S	S	A	N	T	E	T	I	H	
VI	C	E	R	I	S	E	C	I	L	T	U	B	A		
VII	U	A	C	R	A	T	T	A	C	H	E	N			
VIII	L	E	T	H	E	G	I	E	N	E	M	E	T		
IX	U	G	O	R	V	T	D	U	I	C	I				
X	M	E	A	T	E	P	E	E	S	E	V	R	A		
XI	V	E	S	T	A	L	E	S	P	E	R	M	E	S	
XII	I	N	S	E	C	U	R	I	T	E	S	E	M	I	
XIII	T	E	H	M	O	S	S	F	E	Q					
XIV	A	S	M	A	L	E	S	O	U	T	E	N	U		
XV	E	X	H	I	B	I	T	I	O	N	N	I	S	T	E

PROBLEM 7

For a change, here are two small grids instead of one large one. They have the unusual feature of being 'crossed' with each other. They are entirely different, but they answer the same set of definitions - except for a few words. In other words, each definition has two correct solutions, one for grid A and the other for grid B. Of course, these definitions with two "outputs" are especially far-fetched!

HORIZONTALLY

- I. Vade-mecum of the beast with two backs.
- II. Updates. Often hangs, but not on the nose!
- III. Bonremontant . A megalomaniac, perhaps?
- IV. Commits discrepancies. Found in a slipper.
- V. (for A) had reports, (for B) before the reports.

- VI. Force, or will force
- VII. Point of view. Is not everyone's daily bread.
- VIII. Some of them are too obvious.
- IX. Mosses attach themselves to it. A plus B is the square of A.

VERTICALLY

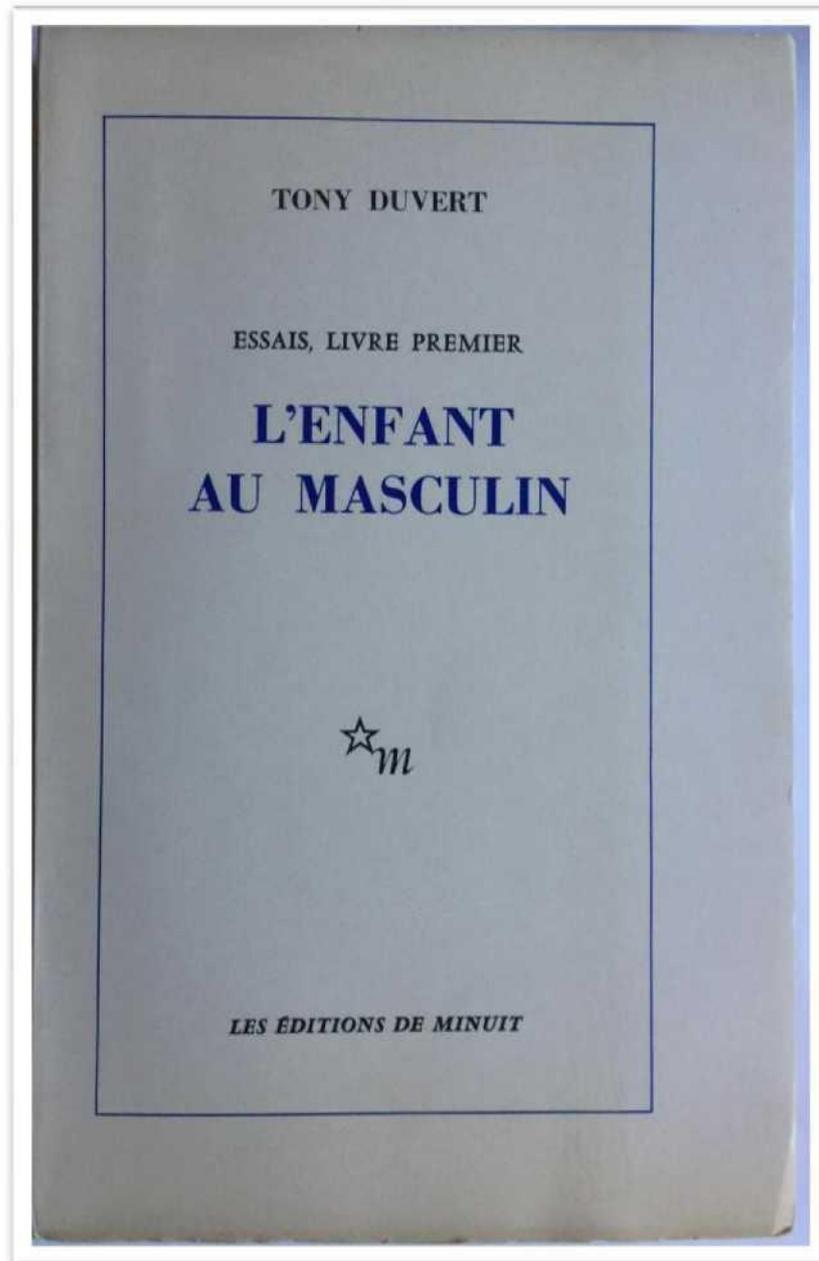
1. Used to being shot at and kicked in the teeth.
2. Cuts certain effects short. Gives you a stomachache.
3. Work for the bogeymen.
4. Pronoun. Call the manger.
5. Gives (and sells) on the sea. Pious letters (phon. in A).
6. Quail crumbs. For fruitful exchanges.
7. On the way to dying out (from top to bottom). Nice bits of local produce
8. Always with two tails and on all fours! Look for the nine or the sixty-nine
9. Artisans du membre.

- VI. Body of cock. Debris or remains. Abbreviated saints.
- VII. Makes touches. Gets caught in the navy but not from behind.
- IX. Pickpocketed. Taken at their word. Separated or grouped.
- X. Must be waving furiously in the hole. Continental root.
- XI. Second abbot of Cluny, of course. If he turns around. Certainly doesn't make up for a lack.
- XII. Makes a profession of deferring.

VERTICALLY

- 1. It makes cheap holes irresistible.
- 2. Seductive sensuality. Continental roots.
- 3. Created a popular hotel. Pushed the world. Entertained a lot but never went out.
- 4. Pronoun. Doesn't rhyme with anything.
- 5. Deprived of soup but filled with mashed potatoes. One-way street.
- 6. Enzyme. Bad seed.
- 7. Sometimes it's stale, often it's stale.
- 8. A well-fucked parting surely is. It's preceded by a cheer.
- 9. Ventriloquist, but what a breath!
- 10. Appeal. A rounded gesture. Lime without voice.
- 11. The one pleasure no brothel sells. A decapitated damsel.
- 12. Useful for any purpose. Beautiful cocks take their breath away.
- 13. Always released before the chase. Doubled in a trifecta. Gobbles up dollars or devours books.
- 14. At the front, he was afraid of the reds.

PUBLICATION OF THE SECOND ESSAY, *L'ENFANT AU MASCULIN* - October 1980



Source: Original numbered edition.

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 17 October 1980 *Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.*

Tours, Friday

Dear Jean-Pierre,

Yes, I did receive your kind letter this summer. And I selfishly took advantage of the pleasure it gave me not to reply! Will you forgive me?

The writers-and-homochosis survey: a reproach. There's no Peyrefitte or Matzneff on your list of authors (among others): a gap that needs to be filled, don't you think? I'm not telling you this because of the 'literary value' of the guys in question: but Roger is the only faggot in France, and as for Matzneff, he still hasn't got over having dared to advocate pederasty on TV two or three years ago. That's no mean feat. Because these militantisms, it seems to me, are worth a million times ours.

I'll try to send you, by the end of the month, a short reply to your survey (1), I don't like it very much, and I'm horribly deprived of leisure; but these are not reasons to keep quiet, I know. I hear that authors love to explain themselves. What a bloody chore!

I'm told that I'll have the first copies of *Mon Enfant au masculin* at the end of the month: and, of course, I'll offer you one. - Incidentally, I believe (it took me a lot of re-reading to dare to think it) that it's the best book I've ever written. The representatives of Sodis (which distributes Minuit) have found it appalling and, I'm told, seem determined to boycott it. And with good reason! It's not a pro-pedo plea, but an anti-hetero indictment. Easy to sell to booksellers, that's for sure...

I was disappointed that *Masques*, after promising to do some in-depth work on paedophilia (admirably inaugurated by this interview with a mother of a child with a paedo), was terribly silent on the subject in its latest issue. Does this mean that the homosexuality of minors is not a subject accessible to hard-line activists? This caution is starting to piss me off.

I'll be in Paris, after all, in a fortnight or so. Just to let you read my *Child*. I hope we'll see each other, and that you'll see him and adopt him!

Big kisses!

Tony

[manuscript:] *As for Denis Jampen, he's still hesitating whether or not to publish his book. The book has its (very tolerable) faults and... and... So, for my part, I'm waiting to see what he decides.*

(1) Survey on "life indoors", published in issue 7 (winter 80-81), which dealt with the subject of marriage (already!) (Editor's note)

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 29 October 1980

Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.

Tours,

Wednesday. Dear Jean-Pierre,

Yes, I did receive your kind letter of this summer; it gave me great pleasure, and I'm extremely excited about this project for a gay publishing house (2).

As for me, I was simply (as usual) overwhelmed with work and chores. But I'm beginning to see the end of it - temporarily. And in the next month or so I'll probably have a nice little period of semi-rest. It'll be time!

I'm sorry, but I don't have a moment to respond to the Masques survey within the timeframe you indicate. The problem posed, moreover, is rather 'academic' and does not inspire me very much... A thousand pardons.

My little essay is ready and will be published in a few days, I think. I'm not going to get involved and I'm not going to leave Tours for that. Judging by the initial reactions (from Sodis representatives, booksellers, etc.), we're expecting an outright boycott. It seems that the book is more brutal than I imagined; these people are quite fragile. Anyway, never mind, it's written and I've not thought about it for a long time now. - If Minuit doesn't send it to you (I'm not even in charge of the press office) let me know, of course, and I'll take care of it.

See you soon, I hope, for some less negative news (I'd love to write a new piece for Masques, on one hot topic or another).

Best regards

Tony

(2) Persona, founded by the *Masques* team (Note from Editions Bleues)

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 31 October 1980 *Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.*

Tours, Friday

Dear Jean-Pierre,

I'm definitely getting distracted. The day before yesterday (?), I was putting my affairs in a bit of order, and I came across the beginning of a letter addressed to you. I bravely took it down and sent it to you. I'd completely forgotten that I'd actually already finished the letter and sent it to you! And your reply - which was certainly very, very unexpected, especially as I haven't the slightest recollection of what I might have said to you and what you're commenting on... - tells me so today. My poor brain really needs a rest (no, I'm not saying: a rest home!). Anyway, forgive me, I'll soon be feeling a bit better.

But what did I write to you the day before yesterday, anyway? I don't really know any more. I spend twelve to fifteen hours a day on my little novel, and as for the rest, my skull is like a sieve. (Incidentally, I'd even forgotten to sign the book contract, something my publisher is kindly reminding me of these days).

In any case, I can confirm that I can't - not even cerebrally, I'm afraid! - to respond to the Masques survey. On the other hand, I'll probably come up with an unpublished text that I'll share with you by... I don't know when, but probably before the end of the year.

I'm glad you had a chance to have a look at L'Enfant, and that Alain Sanzio liked it. However, this is a book about my own personal feelings, not a catechism or manifesto 'on behalf' of homos or paedos: I'm used to speaking only for myself, and I hope my tone makes that clear. So don't hesitate, at Masques, to skin me alive if you see fit. I'm not Pinard, and nothing will upset me!

Friendship
Tony

LES MOTS CROISES DE TONY DUVERT

HORizontalement

I. Pelote ou fait sa pelote. II. S'exprime sans articles. A fourrai un slip à Adam et des orgies aux autres... III. Se sacrifie aux étalons. On n'y change pas facilement de camp. Prend l'enfance à la gorge. IV. Préfère être défoucée que de se défoncer. Prof à Rennes et père à la Butte. V. Se fait sur le pouce ou sur le majeur (ou même le mineur !). Couchée à l'Est. De g. à dr. littéralement mammi-fère. VI. Elles foncent au petit. VII. En maison close : eux par la bande. A l'armée, certains y passent sans être pédés. VIII. Compagnie très réduite. Au bord du lit. Se fait sauter en public. IX. Elle n'a donc rien de trop. Prend le vit du bon côté. Pète dans une botte. X. On est mieux dessous que dessus. Il a disparu des champs, mais elle envahit le Bois. Elle portait la culotte, mais il préférerait le jupon. XI. Irait dans une tasse s'il retrouvait une lettre. Passent le poivre, mais pas la muscade. Lui sans elle. XII. Toujours avant de me toucher. Une montre qui ne donne pas l'heure. XIII. Il faut savoir en jouer avant d'être bien monté. De g. à dr. : XIV. Agité de la baguette.

VERTICALEMENT

1. Le monde entier le laisse sur le cul. 2. Envoya par derrière. La grand-mère à Nestor. Pourrait finir tante. 3. S'achète dans les gares ou se vend dans les postes. Se borde en France et se mange en Chine. 4. N'est pas pur jusqu'au bout. Personne illustre. Liszt y fréquenta une maison de jeux. 5. Une création tombée à l'eau. Ce n'est pas dans *Moby Dick* qu'il s'en prend à Achab. 6. Fuit la tête. Mettez-le à ça après un premier jet ! Foutus à la voyou. 7. Fureur sanglante. Ville du Mali. Il suit n'importe quoi. 8. Sir en terre d'Islam. Pénétra-t-il en Virginie ?... Shérazade n'est rien sans elles. 9. Bon pour une pipe. Un peu grasse, mais très accueillante. 10. Prend son pied en se faisant des nœuds !... Elève nos maîtres. Prend son pied en se faisant des nœuds ! Elève nos maîtres. Flanqués dans la fente ou dans l'œillet. 11. Bouffé de lombric. Présumé. Epuisé. 12. La maman au foyer le fait quand elle ôte une couche. Fleur de rosière. 13. Croque-morts édenté, et d'ailleurs tropical. On le broute aux dames, on le prend aux chaites, on l'interdit aux pédés. Phon. : préfère les hommes. 14. Exile les monarques et assassine le peuple.

HORizontally

- I. Pelote or make your own pelote.
- II. Speaks without articles. Provided Adam with pants and the others with orgies...

- III. Sacrifices itself to the stallions. It's not easy to change sides. Grab childhood by the throat
- IV. Would rather be stoned than get stoned. Teacher in Rennes and father in La Butte.
- V. Done on the thumb or middle finger (or even the minor!). Lying down in the East.
- From left to right, literally mammal.*
- VI. They go for the little one.
- VII. In brothels: them by the gang. In the army, some pass through without being queer.
- VIII. Very small company. On the edge of the bed. Gets laid in public.
- IX. So there's nothing too much. Take the life from the right side. Fart in a boot.
- X. It's better underneath than on top. He disappeared from the fields, but she invaded the Boit. She wore knickers, but he preferred petticoats.
- XI. Would go in a cup if it found a letter. Pepper, but not nutmeg. Him without her.
- XII. Always before you touch me. A watch that doesn't tell the time.
- XIII. You have to know how to play it before you can ride it properly.
- From left to right: XIV. Agité de la baguette.*

VERTICALLY

1. The whole world leaves him on his arse.
2. Sent from behind. Grandmother to Nestor. Could end up an aunt.
3. Can be bought at railway stations or sold at post offices. It's tucked in France and eaten in Chiner
4. Is not pure to the end. Illustrious person. Liszt frequented a playhouse there.
5. A creation that fell through. It wasn't in *Moby Dick* that he attacked Ahab.
6. Make the face. Put it to that after a first draft! Pissed off like a thug.
7. Bloody fury. Town in Mali. He follows anything.
8. Sir in the land of Islam. Will he enter Virginia?... Shérazade is nothing without them.
9. Good for a pipe. A little greasy, but very welcoming.
10. GETS a kick out of tying **knots!**... our masters. flanked in the slit or in the eyelet.
11. Bits of earthworm. Presumed. Sold out.
12. The stay-at-home mum does it when she removes a nappy. Fleur de rosière.
13. A toothless undertaker, and a tropical one at that. It's grazed by ladies, taken by pussies, forbidden to fags. *Phon*. Prefers men.
14. Exile the monarchs and murder the people.

Avant-première
Gai-Pied



ANGEL
une pièce de Jacquemard
et Sénécald

avec
Patrick Cottenier

vend. 10/04 — 18 h 30
1/2 tarif
sur présentation du Gai-Pied

Théâtre de l'Atelier
M^o ANVERS - 606.49.24

Place Charles Dullin
Tous les jours à 18 h 30 sauf lundi

SPARTACUS
c'est le meilleur



EN VENTE :

Par correspondance : SPARTACUS, P.O. Box 3498
1001 A.G. AMSTERDAM - PAYS-BAS
Prière joindre mandat international de 100 F (port inclus)

CLUB VIDEO GAY - Paris, Nice, Lyon
ARCADIE - 61, rue du Château d'Eau, Paris 10^e
LE KIOSQUE DES AMIS, face au 29, bd des Italiens,
Paris 2^e
et dans les meilleurs bars, clubs, saunas « gay »
de France et de Navarre

L s'est passé une chose étrange. Les homos, depuis dix ou quinze ans, ont commencé à ressembler aux vieilles hontes. Fini de raser les murs, fini le rouge au front des pères de famille qu'on surprend à Sodome, finies les joues blêmes et les oreilles cramoisies des curés dont la main, quand elle fait le signe de croix, s'attarde un peu au fils, et même en dessous. (Le fils, mes très chers frères, c'est le nombril). Finies les doléances aux yeux baissés, les arrogances aux ongles vernis, les châtiments venimeux et les reproches prudents. Fini ce mélange de pipi et d'enfants de chorons, d'Anadie burlesque et de caca béni, de Chausson en folie et de chastes obèses.

Mais chacun sait l'histoire. Une histoire dans l'âge mérovingien est à peine achevée, quoique nous en ayons plutôt des sous-fairésants (je me demande si je suis clair).

La « sortie » des homos leur préparait, pourtant, une surprise — et c'est l'objet de ma chronique. Quelle surprise ? Celle qu'éprouve un chien qui s'évade de sa niche et qui découvre qu'il a une cassette au bout de la queue. Ou un grélot. Ou un flacon de nitrogl.

Quel flacon, quel grélot, quelle cassette ? (J'exagère, avec toutes ces images et ces lentilles. Autais-je la vocation de prêcher le Casmé à Notre Dame ? Hélas, ça se peut. Tant pis. Aussi bien, nous avons l'exemple d'un, hum, militant homo, une momie hargneuse, qui a entièrement accompli son dessein : composer des bulletins paroissiaux intégristes pour les sous-préfectures. Si vous ne devinez pas qui, je vous le désignerai — mais il faudrait être Daumier).

Oui, paroissiens de mes deux (ou de celles d'un autre), quand la queue sodomite et bestialitaire de l'homme apparut au soleil, il y avait quelque chose de sale dessus.

Cette sale ? Le pédéraste, le pédophile. Eh oui. On était homos tranquillement, entre mosotrachus qui préféraient l'odeur d'ainelles à l'odeur de lait, on formait des bates poilues dans des culs poilus, des langues velues sous des couilles velues — et les chauves à l'intérieur du crâne se jurèrent un amour éternel.

On oubliait seulement les mineurs. Chacun rayait, d'un coup de queue, les quinze à vingt premières années de sa vie ; et la jeunesse des autres ; et la forme d'amour que tout adulte peut — et devant — éprouver pour ceux qui ne sont pas adultes.

Suis-je net ? Et ce point de vue est précisément celui des familles. Qui sont, à une majorité écrasante, d'accord pour penser que l'homosexualité est une maladie, un cancer, une chute, dont il faut absolument préserver ou soigner les jeunes prisonniers de l'ordre public — les chères têtes blondes, si vous préférez. Les mineurs. Les hommes, tant et aussi longtemps qu'ils se sont écrasés sous la patte des parents, des médecins et des lies. (La sainte trinité qui remplace désormais celle du catholicisme, père, fils et saint-esprit). (Le « père » symbole des parents, maternité incluse, le « fils » comme symbole d'une médecine au service des familles et des nerfs ; le « saint-esprit », c'est la police, vous avez déjà compris).

Mais pourquoi donc les familles, après tant d'années de combat homosexuel, de films, d'articles et d'émissions, de propagande prudente et qui respecte la sensibilité publique, pourquoi les familles restent-elles si hostiles à l'homosexualité, dès que c'est celle de leurs enfants ?

J'ai ma réponse à cette question. Tout ce qu'on a appris, dans les familles, sur l'homosexualité et depuis quinze ans s'est présenté sous un aspect dégoûtant. Je serais maman, papa, je penserais, moi aussi, que si mon gosse devenait homo, il sera un monstre ou un déchet humain. Roubies, les tantes frisées et pointues, les parlers duchesse, les boutons de manchettes et les bagoues. Atterrantes, les môvrennes pointure filleste du petit

L au b

déjeuner entre homos, style : — Ma chérie, je m'aime. — Oui, ma chatte, moi je m'aime ! — Ah les dômes d'amants !

Inquiétants, les travels ; écœurantes, les filles ; équivoques, les barbous. Atroces, les SM. Est-ce que mon fils, un jour, aura pour idéal de prendre des bains de piscine dans un sauna, avant de se faire enfiler des avant-bras culturistes dans le derrière et de se faire poignarder dans un buisson ? C'est ça, être homo ? Quand mon gosse connaît un péché, c'est ça qu'il aime ?

Vous avouerez qu'il y a de quoi glacer les familles, et pas seulement elles.

Or il se trouve que les pédophiles et pédérastes réunis (société sans but lucratif) sont exactement le contraire de cette image publique, voyante et générale de l'homosexuel. Le pédophile — vous pouvez m'en croire — est invariablement un homme d'aspect neutre, indolore, modéré et décevant. Il n'est ni efféminé ni virilisé, il ne se déguise en rien, sauf en homme invisible : il ne fréquente aucun mauvais lieu, n'attrape aucune maladie, sauf, quelquefois, une timidité vaguement parano (la peur du fil). Il est le modèle même de l'irrévé du dimanche, on lui donnerait sans confession le bon Dieu en hostie, sinon Jésus en enfance.

Le voilà, propre, orthodoxe, insipide et banal, qui souffre des mille et une caricatures d'homosexualité que les homos adultes-entre-eux répandent dans les mass-média. Lui, il passe pour un sadique ; eux, ils passent pour des monstres. Le voilà, pauvre bonhomme sans qualité, encoché entre les dix ou vingt salu-és qui,



« Je serais maman, papa, je penserais, moi aussi, que si mon gosse devenait homo, il sera un monstre ou un déchet humain ». Photo DR

chaque année, agressement des enfants (il ne l'a jamais fait), et les quelques milliers de pédés fous de leur corps qui représentent, aux yeux des familles, l'homosexualité elle-même.

En termes moins baroïdes : les homos se sont dit : les pédés, les pédos nous font chier. Ils ont une sale réputation. Tripoteurs d'enfants. Sadiques. Malades. Malades ! Et tout et tout. On sera jamais libres, et ce sera à cause de ces mec-là.

Quand le mouvement gay prit forme aux États Unis, par exemple, les membres actifs jurement de ne jamais s'en prendre à un « moins de quatorze ans ». A l'époque, ça m'avait indigné : depuis, je suis devenu moins intraspirant.

Le principe, en tout cas, était nettement posé : il y a des homos honorables, qui vivent entre adultes des amours pudobdes, et il y a des homos (?) effroyables, qui violent les gosses et dont les exploits,

La casserole out de la queue

qui encombrent les journaux et les tribunaux, desservent l'homosexualité pure et moustrache. Bref, il y a des homos méritants, qui peuvent se présenter, la bouche en cœur et des fleurs à la main, chez les parents de leur « Ami » (majesté), et d'autres homos qui, eux, ne méritent que Cayenne, l'île du Diable ou leynchage. Pouah !

Plus condamné encore : l'homophile c'est bon, le pédosexuel, c'est mauvais. Figurez-vous que je suis exactement inversement cette proposition. Un tour de passe-passe difficile : ne regardez pas trop mes mains, mais suivez-moi bien. L'affaire de l'amendement Foray nous a prouvé, une fois de plus, que la répression des amours entre adultes et mineurs était avant tout une lutte anti-homosexuelle. Au Parlement, on n'a pas évoqué les plaintes entre hommes de cinquante et filles de quinze ans, entre la douane du Doubs et son armoire-petite-fille, entre Madame de *** impotente mais salace, et le gamin de son jardinier. Non : seul problème soulevé, et seul argument décisif : les relations entre un

pire que les parents contemplerait en murmurant : « Hélas, je ne suis pas digne ! »

Oui, à rejeter, réjet et demi. Aux homos qui jugent que les pédophiles « salissent » leur cause, je devrais répondre : Non, c'est vous, homos, qui, par l'imbécillité, les ridicules, les délits et les brutalités de vos meurtres, salissez la pédérastie. Vous êtes moches, cons et sauteux quand je connais un pose, ses parents ont peut-être un jour il rose ressemble. Alors on ne foot à la poitrine ou on appelle les filles. A cause de vous. Et non à cause de moi. Mais, on ne me « lit » qu'à travers vous.

Ça, c'est bien envoyé. Et, comme la morale du pape, il y a longtemps que je le garsais, ce coup de pied.

Conclusion : à bas les homos, ils sont infects, nous autres pédophiles n'avons rien de commun avec ces posantiers. Nos amours à nous, pédophiles, sont la soixante-dix-septième merveille du Monde — la meilleure !

man) ; sa passion du travesti, du cabotage, des manières, des chuchis et des fatifs ; et la bouleversante pureté de tant d'imperfections. Tous les mythes et tous les excès, tous les génies et toutes les saintetés, s'expriment et s'enflamment dans l'amour d'un enfant et d'un adulte. Puisque je sais cela, comment pourrais-je condamner, chez les adultes, ce qu'il leur reste d'enfance et que les familles appellent monstrosité ? Je serais un pédophile aveugle si je n'apercevais pas, et ne louais pas, dans tous les excès des homos devenus hommes, la part de génie amoureux qu'ils ont héritée de leur propre enfance.

Pour le dire sans lyrisme (parlons plus bas !), un pédophile ne peut regarder qu'avec plaisir, et même avec une pointe d'envie, car ses moeurs à lui sont très

sages, les comportements « excessifs » de ces hommes qui, hauts comme trois oranges ou, au contraire, musclés comme une vache bretonne, jouent à quelque chose qui rend moins malheureux et moins bête.

Seules les fautes venues rendent imbécile et méchant, même la souffrance et construisent des prisons. Un talent qu'il faut abandonner aux familles, qui y excellent. Mais pas de ça chez nous !

Ah, on dirait que je crois que la pédérastie rend beau. Je m'expliquerais là-dessus une autre fois.

En tout cas, les pédophiles homos et masculins (je veux bien qu'on m'injure, parce que je dis nous) semblent avoir, malgré l'étroitesse de leurs poches (moi, j'aime les très grands garçons aussi, mais c'est pas tout le monde !), une idée large, ample, inspirée, lumineuse et ouverte, de ce que l'amour veut dire. Et simplement parce qu'ils connaissent ou ont connus des enfants, certains enfants, et non les moindres. Il serait temps que l'homme de base daigne regarder un peu au-delà de sa moustrache ou de son accroche-cœur, et se rende compte qu'on ne naît pas à dix-huit ans. □

Tony Duvert



« Quelques milliers de pédés fous de leur corps représentant aux yeux des familles l'homosexualité elle-même ». Photo Fisher-Roux

homme et un garçon. Le reste, on le jette aux orties. Il n'y a que l'enculade qui ait du poids : tout autre amour compte pour du beurre (façon de parler). Autrement dit, les amours entre mineurs et adultes sont épouvantables, quand elles sont homosexuelles et masculines. Autrement dit, l'homosexuel mâle est épouvantable. Lui seul.

Donc, en bonne logique, le pédophile, le pédéaste, devait travailler énergiquement, et même agressivement, à se démarquer des « homosexuels », d'une part, et des « sadiques », d'autre part. (cf. Guide et sa haine des « invertis »).

En effet, si les homos « connus » n'existaient pas, et si les abus sexuels n'avaient pas lieu, le pédophile homo courant, avec ses milliards de vertus, passerait pour un modèle de citoyen (c'est bien mon cas) et non pour un monstre. La pédérastie serait une sainteté, un exem-

Et pourtant, les pédophiles ne disent rien de paillard. (En fait de merveille, ça c'en est une). Ils ne « dénoncent » pas les abominations de l'homosexualité entre adultes, ils ne crachent pas non plus à la figure de ceux d'entre eux qui ont commis des délits sexuels (un délit n'est pas une définition d'un homme). Ils — nous — les pédés ne pratiquent pas l'anathème.

Pourquoi ? Heïn, pourquoi.

Ah, ce n'est pas malin à deviner. Je suis pédophile ? Eh bien ça veut dire, simplement, que vous, vous autres homos à moustraches, je vous connais et je vous fréquente à l'âge où vous n'avez encore pas un seul poil.

Car tout pédophile pratiquant — je dis bien : pratiquant — découvre le paganisme sexuel de l'enfant. Son égoïsme. Son étonnant facilement malpropre, où le pipi-caca vaut bien celui du Conscient (américain) ; ses mûrverries, son narcissisme démesuré ; son sentimentalisme en chewing-gum et en clous (sous fo-



« Quand je connais un garçon, ses parents ont peur qu'un jour il vienne reconnaître sa photo ». Extrait de The Picture book 99

A strange thing has happened. Over the last ten or fifteen years, gay men have started to abandon the old shame. No more shaving walls, no more red foreheads for fathers caught in Sodom, no more pallid cheeks and crimson ears for priests whose hand, when making the sign of the cross, lingers a little on the son, and even under him. (The *son*, my dear brothers, is the navel). Gone are the downcast-eyed complaints, the nail-biting arrogance, the venomous chattemites and the cautious reproaches. Gone is the mix of wee-wees and choirboys, of blessed Arcadia and blessed poo, of mad Chazots and obese chasers.

But everyone knows the story. A history in which the Merovingian Age is barely over, although we're still more in the lazy kings phase (I wonder if I'm making myself clear).

The 'coming out' of the gays did, however, prepare them for a surprise - and that's the subject of my column. What surprise? Like a dog escaping from its kennel and discovering it has a saucepan at the end of its tail. Or a bell. Or a bottle of vitriol.

What flask, what bell, what saucepan? (I'm exaggerating, with all these images and slowness. Would I have the vocation to preach Lent to Notre Dame? Alas, perhaps. Too bad. Just as well, we have the example of a, um, militant homo, a snarling mummy, who has completely fulfilled his destiny:

composing fundamentalist parish bulletins for the sub-prefectures. If you can't guess who it is, I'll draw it for you - but you'd have to be Daumier).

Yes, parishioners of mine (or someone else's), when the sodomite, bestial tail of homo appeared in the sunlight, there was something dirty on it.

That bastard? The pederast, the paedophile. That's right. We were gay, quietly, between moustachioed men who preferred the smell of armpits to the smell of milk, sticking hairy cocks into hairy arses, hairy tongues under hairy balls - and bald-headed men inside skulls swore eternal love to each other.

Only the minors were forgotten. With a flick of their tails, each of them wiped out the first fifteen or twenty years of their lives; and the youth of others; and the kind of love that every adult can - and *should* - feel for those who are not adults.

Am I in the clear? And this is precisely the point of view of families. An overwhelming majority of them agree that homosexuality is a disease, a cancer, a downfall, from which young prisoners of public order - the little ones, if you prefer - must absolutely be preserved or cured. Minors. The *men*, as long as they've been crushed by parents, doctors and cops. (The holy trinity that now replaces Catholicism's father, son and holy

spirit). (The 'father' symbolises parents, motherhood included, the 'son' symbolises medicine at the service of families and morals; the 'holy spirit' is the police, you've already understood).

But why, after so many years of fighting homosexuality, of films, articles and broadcasts, of cautious propaganda that respects public sensitivity, are families still so hostile to homosexuality when it is their children's?

I have my answer to that question. Everything we've learned about homophobia in our families over the last fifteen years has been presented in a *disgusting light*. If I were a mum or dad, I'd think that if my kid became gay, he'd be a monster or human waste.

Risible: curly, pointed aunts, duchess talk, cufflinks and bagouzes. Landing, the mawkish, girlie breakfast talk between gays, like: - My darling, I love myself. - Yes, my pussy, I love myself! - What strange lovers!

Worrying, the travelos; disgusting, the crazy ones; equivocal, the bearded ones. S&M is excruciating. Will my son's ideal one day be to take piss baths in a sauna, before having body-building forearms shoved up his bum and being stabbed in a bush? Is that what being gay is all about? *When my kid knows a fag, is that what he's risking?*

You have to admit that it's

enough to send shivers down the spines of families, and not just them. As it happens, paedophiles and pederasts (a non-profit organisation) are the exact opposite of this public, flashy and general image of the homosexual. The paedophile - believe me - is invariably a man of neutral appearance, painless, moderate and decent. He's neither effeminate nor virilised, he doesn't dress up as anything but an invisible man; he doesn't frequent any bad places, he doesn't catch any diseases, except, sometimes, a vaguely paranoid shyness (fear of the cop). He's the very model of a Sunday guest, and you'd give him God as a wafer, if not Jesus as a child.

Here he is, clean-cut, orthodox, insipid and banal, suffering from the thousand and one caricatures of homosexuality that adult homosexuals spread in the mass media. He comes across as a Here he is, a poor man with no qualities, caught between the ten or twenty bastards who assault children every year (he's never done it) and the few thousand body-crazed faggots who, in the eyes of their families, represent homosexuality itself.

In less colourful terms: gays said to themselves: fags, fags piss us off. They have a bad reputation. Child molesters. Sadists. Sick. Sick! And everything. We'll never be free, and it'll be because of these guys.

When the gay movement took shape in the United States, for example, its active members swore never to attack anyone "under the age of fourteen". At the time, I was outraged: since then, I've become less intransigent.

The principle, in any case, was clearly established: there are honourable gay men, who live deep loves between adults, and there are (?) appalling gay men, who rape children and whose exploits, which clutter up the newspapers and the courts, do a disservice to pure, moustachioed homosexuality. In short, there are deserving gay men who can turn up, mouths agape and flowers in hand, at the home of the parents of their 'Friend' (of legal age), and other gay men who... They deserve only Cayenne, Devil's Island or lynching. Ugh!

In a nutshell: homophiles are good, paedosexuals are bad.

I'm going to do exactly the opposite. proposal. A difficult sleight of hand: don't look at my hands too much, but follow me carefully. The Foyer amendment affair proved once again that the repression of love between adults and minors was first and foremost an anti-homosexual struggle. In Parliament, there was no mention of the pleasures between hundred-year-old men and fifteen-year-old girls, between the oldest woman in the Doubs and her great-granddaughter, between Madame

de ***, impotent but salacious, and the boy in her gardener's garden. No: the only problem raised, and the only decisive argument: the relationship between a man and a boy. The rest is thrown out. It's only the ass-fucking that counts: any other love counts for nothing (so to speak).

In other words, love between minors and adults is appalling when it is homosexual and male. In other words, the male homosexual is appalling. He alone.

So, logically, the paedophile, the paederast, should work energetically, even aggressively, to distinguish himself from 'homosexuals', on the one hand, and from 'homosexuals', on the other. The first is the hatred of "sadists" (cf. Gide and his hatred of "inverts").

Indeed, if there were no such thing as "known" homosexuals, and if sexual abuse did not take place, the common homosexual paedophile, with his billions of virtues, would be seen as a model citizen (I am) and not a monster. Pederasty would be a sanctity, an example that parents would contemplate, murmuring: "Alas, I am not worthy!"

Yes, to rejection, rejection and a half. To the homos who think that paedophiles 'sully' their cause, I should reply: No, it's you homos who, through the imbecility, ridiculousness, offences and brutality of your morals, sully paedophilia.

You're ugly, stupid and bastards: when I get to know a kid, his parents are afraid that one day he'll look like *you*. So they kick me out or call the cops. Because *of you*. Not because of me. **People only 'read' me through you.**

That's well put. And, like the Pope's mule, I've been saving that kick for a long time.

Conclusion: down with gays, they're disgusting, we paedophiles have nothing in common with these scumbags. We paedophiles are the seventy-seventh wonder of the world - the best!

And yet paedophiles say nothing of the sort. (In fact, that's a marvel). They don't 'denounce' the abominations of homosexuality between adults, nor do they spit in the face of those among them who have committed sexual offences (an offence is not a definition of a man). They - we - the paedos do not practise anathema.

Why should I? Why?

Ah, it's not hard to guess. I'm a paedophile? Well, that just means that I know you, you moustachioed homos, and I've been seeing you since you were a hairy age.

Because every practising paedophile - and I do mean practising - discovers the sexual paganism of the child. Their selfishness. His easily messy eroticism, where the wee-wee is as good as the *Continental* (American);

his mawkishness, his inordinate narcissism; his sentimentality in chewing gum and nails (all sizes); his passion for transvestism, hamming it up, manners, fuss and make-up; and the overwhelming purity of so many imperfections. All the myths and all the worlds, all the crimes and all the excesses, all the geniuses and all the saints, are expressed and given birth to in the love of a child and an adult.

Since I know this, how could I condemn the

I'd be a blind paedophile if I didn't see, and praise, in all the excesses of gay men who have become men, the loving genius they have inherited from their own childhood. I'd be a blind paedophile if I didn't see, and praise, in all the excesses of gay men who have become men, the loving genius they have inherited from their own childhood.

To put it mildly (let's keep it low-key!), a paedophile can only watch with pleasure, and even with a touch of envy, because his morals are very wise, the 'excessive' behaviour of these men who, as tall as three oranges or, on the contrary, as muscular as a Breton cow, are playing something that makes them less unhappy and less stupid.

It's only false virtues that make people stupid and evil, sow suffering and build prisons. A talent that should be left to the families, who excel at it. But none of that here!

Ah, I seem to think that

pederasty makes you beautiful. I'll explain that another time.

In any case, gay and male paedophiles (I don't mind being called names because I say we) seem to have, despite their narrow tastes (I like very big boys too, but not everyone does!), a broad, wide, inspired, luminous and open idea of what love means. And simply because they know or have known children, some children, and not the least. It's about time the basic homo deigned to look a little beyond his moustache or his heartthrob, and realise that you're not born at eighteen. □

la chronique de Tony Duvert les Mules du pape

Il est évidemment défendu de raconter devant un bonno catholique. Ce passage banal est la variante d'un drame, il est la "vaine-vie" : complicités, respections et dévotion !

Agir autrement serait une preuve de lâcheté, de lâcheté, de mauvais goût, d'indignité. Les petits cathos peuvent compter sur notre silence éternel : tandis que pour leur courage aux bords vides de verres, nous oublierons nos propres habitudes, marottes et faiblesses, nos idées, qu'on en fait, toujours entre les dents.

Malgré tout, le mariage est envisagé par le dieu des mâles de MM. les cathos. De quoi qu'on dit, on est expert pour les petits. Amusez-vous les grands barbus ? C'est Lui. Les "chapeaux" vigoureux ? C'est Lui aussi. Les "épaves" éternels ? C'est Lui. Les couples de "doux" avec ? Les très jeunes parents ? Les sournois adultes ? C'est Lui, même Lui, toujours Lui. Vous l'aurez en tête, mystère et en crache rouge, en Oriental Espagnol et en Nordique gâté. Félicité, adieu les langues et les gâchis ! Indulgences, adieu les verges. Ses soufflets, Ses châtiments, la crucifixion ! Néophyte, cours à Turin s'enferme sous saute ! Quel fâcheux sans de peche, quel collage

de toutes les sélections, quel deux-pigeon ! Ah vraiment, il y a à boire et à manger ! Il ne lui manque que la parole.

Et c'est là que les petits cathos ont un petit problème. Le deux corps en celui d'un beau me, mais la voix d'une voix et celle d'une maître gîteuse - leur seule mère l'Église. Le Christ pour les allumés, l'Église pour les égarés. Le père Jésus, pas et grandiose, vous vend les bras en fixant les cœurs, et l'Église vous hurle : « Pas touche ! »

Cette dichotomie contradiction, moi je la trouve ridicule ; mais je n'ai pas de cœur, et j'ai le ventre tout lisse en Diable pour m'acheter. *Das Kapital*. Il ne me reste que mon nouveau !

Conscient de cela, je me serais tu - si le « problème » des bons cathos avait été seulement le leur. Ils croient en soi donc ? Ça les regarde, certes. Leur religion impose une morale anti-secularité et anti-homo ? A eux de se débrouiller avec leurs prêtres, nous on s'en fiche. Chacun ses idées, kein, Tolstoj, Tolstoj...

Malheureusement c'est impossible. Parce que les cathos, défrisés sont notre ennemi mortel, et à nous que ne sommes ni à leur... et cathos.

Catholique de choc, monsieur Foye - à qui nous devons le maintien de la loi anti-homo.

Catholique de choc, madame Dolin - la Bryant française, et qui a inventé de sup-

primer à jamais les hommes de cette terre en leur charbonnant la libido au seul âge où ils les font prisonniers - dans l'enfance.

Catholiques, les troupes de choc et les troupes des mouvements, associations, syndicats et clubs qui défendent les « hommes, moeurs », la famille, l'enfance, préviennent la cruauté, contrôlent l'enseignement, imposent l'ordre hiérarchique-patriarcal. Catholiques, les soutiens, les théoriciens, les propagandistes, les militants et les agents des pères formes d'homophobie.

Voilà pourquoi le « problème » des cathos homosexuels ne m'arrache aucune larme amère. Car, pour un père catho que se consacrer tourment, c'est mille peines incroyables que la morale catholique persécute dans leur chair, via les lois et les moeurs.

L'affaire Jean Foye nous a montré qui, en France, régisse la morale publique et au-delà les vies privées.

Les « gentils » cathos (style lui dit charbonnier) n'empêchent pas leur religion d'être celle d'une bourgeoisie ploutocrate, nationaliste, militariste, fasciste, qui vend des canons et qui coupe les sears. L'Église existe aussi malaisance qu'en ses siècles de splendeur. Nous lui devons nos pères souffrants quotidiennement, nos lois les plus sévères, et les plus revulsantes de nos difficultés d'être. Vraiment, il faut un omelet trop tendre et une lame trop douce pour se contenter de ricaner quand pense, tapette à croix et à banquette, un séigneur homo de cet enfer terrestre : la chrétienté.

Mais les pères cathos ont une « fus » à qui leur cache l'Église, eux, les vénéral ! D'où leur étonnement quand le pape se rappelle

à leur attention.

C'est ainsi, cependant, que les catholiques hommes peuvent se plaindre que l'Église les oublie ? Si l'Église ne mentionne de leur existence depuis longtemps et si l'Église varie. Les pères cathos ont choisi cette doctrine et cette Église - après les tentatives de leurs monastères qui étaient l'échec avec un miracle, un miracle et son sort le plus de la Bible, des Évangiles et des Corins.

Le pape a donc, évidemment raison de rendre une prière de sa sorte à lui sans quelle condition de présent se présente, quel qu'il soit : être le sein, le corps, la vie en général.

Ces traits physiques, en effet, sont toujours réservés aux autres « les marottes » qui assurent l'ordre de leur mort. Un chrétien, lui, a la Vie éternelle devant soi - mais sans être ni catho. L'alternative est simple, le bonhomme est fidèle. Donne-moi sa bête, j'aime une âme : j'en assure plus clair, et plus cynique, que le pur paradis.

Les cathos, hélas, vivent avec nous, c'est-à-dire en un âge positiviste, égalitaire et libéral. La morale sexuelle de l'homme catho a été diffusée, à abolir des siècles, à l'impact des droits : non seulement on a approuvé le « péché » (étrangement, prévarication, union libre, divorce, homosexualité...), mais partout où il règne on est plus positivement, on comprend, on tolère et respecte mieux aussi, on souffre moins et on aime moins mal. Les puritains des églises réformées eux-mêmes ont aperçu cela. En somme, il suffirait d'être un catholique la morale sexuelle de l'Église pour accomplir lui-même la lettre et l'esprit du message évangélique... Un comble !

Oui, les cathos ont dû s'en rendre compte. Et de là à espérer que le Vatican revienne ses positions et reconnaisse ses erreurs, il n'y avait qu'un pas. Mais l'Église s'en est qu'à rebâtir Golbte. L'infatigable Jean-Paul II a enfin aperçu la terre à tourner autour du Soleil ; voyez certains que, d'il y a quelques siècles, un Jean-Paul XIII autorisera les cathos à tourner autour des garçons. Pânes !

Pour l'instant, l'Église a évidemment fait le meilleur choix en réaffirmant sa morale familiale, son obscurantisme et sa répression. Certes, il y a des cathos progressistes que les furies anti-pânes ont brûlés, mais ils sont une minorité. Il y a longtemps que l'Église n'a été plus d'hommes séculiers, et elle sera de plus en plus un omelet de chrétiens. Elle le sait. Si elle affichait une morale permissive, cette morale vacillerait trop vite pour appuyer à Dieu les esprits libéraux, mais elle suffirait pour entraver le troupeau catholique et le patronat chrétien. Ce serait une terrible gaffe.

Mieux vaut donc, simplement, ou franchement rejeter, les cathos de progrès - et tous ces croyants ennemis d'aujourd'hui, qui ont troublés les succès de la morale et de savoir mécréants. Le vers du pape - d'un milliard de chrétiens et être étonnement payé pour ça.

Le pouvoir, le succès de l'Église ne sont concevables que sous des régimes politiques de droite dure. Régionalement, ces régimes ont besoin d'un ordre moral, familial et sexuel extrêmement rigoureux. Une perspective socio-politique très incertaine, dans les nations privilégiées. Tandis que les très et le quasi-monde personnel, fréquemment les conditions régimes : pauvreté, superstition, analphabétisme, dictature militaire, abolition d'une mafia de puissants qui rendent au plus offrant le travail du peuple et les ressources du sol. Telle est exactement la « niche » biologique au prospère l'Église, et d'ailleurs n'importe quelle religion à piéger.

On peut donc, considérer la doctrine sexuelle qu'a réaffirmée Jean-Paul II comme une véritable offre de services à tous les régimes de droite de la planète. Le pape dit : « Le catholicisme ne change pas, nous voulons les meilleurs fils de l'homme » - Embarras des jeunes, suppression des femmes, pouvoir de la famille, censure générale, obéissance sexuelle, amoralité, terreur, justice inéquitable, persécution morale : tous sont quelques-uns des articles ménagers que Jean-Paul propose à travers le monde. Avec aux amateurs ? Et on n'oublie pas que les nations dominées ont des régimes autoritaires. Bref, l'avenir de l'Église régit, sur les souffrances des trois quarts de l'humanité. Perpétue cette souffrance, et l'Église sera forte. A l'inverse, chaque homme qui se libère lui-même de son serf Dieu. Cinq fois deux sur l'Église pour accablé la douleur et la servitude des peuples : se propre vie se dépose.

Et voilà, à péchés cathos, une doctrine autrement plus angélique que vos problèmes de touche-pape.



Tony Duvert
 Gai Pied n° 26

It is strictly forbidden to sneer at a gay Catholic. This poor man is the victim of a tragedy, he is the All-Crucified: let's sympathise with him and respect his pain!

To do otherwise would be proof of stupidity, cruelty, bad taste and intolerance. The faggot Catholics can count on our impassioned silence: as their procession with its long widow's veils passes by, we will forget our usual toys, hammers and sickles, silly laughter, tails in the air, knives between our teeth.

In spite of everything, the materialist will envy a little the very masculine god of the Catholics. A god that seems to have been created especially for fags. Do you like tall bearded men? That's Him. Strong carpenters? That's Him too. Dreamy epebes? He's the one. Twelve-year-old rascals? The very young pissants? Plump infants? It's Him, Him again, always Him. You can have Him as a mystical madman and a drunken macho, as a liquid Oriental and a frozen Nordic. Pedophile, adore His swaddling clothes and His foreskin! Sado-maso, adore His rods, His bellows, His spittle, His crucifixion! Necrophile, run to Turin to venerate His shroud!

What a fabulous pocket lover, what a collage of all seductions, what a gigogne god! There's so much to eat and drink! The only thing missing is the spoken word.

And that's where Catholic fags have a bit of a problem. The divine

body is that of a handsome man, but the divine voice is that of a doddering shrew: their holy mother, the Church. Christ plays the tease, the Church plays the snuffer. Little Jesus, naked and chubby, holds out his arms and spreads his thighs, and the Church shouts "Hands off!"

I find this heart-rending contradiction laughable: but I have no heart, and I sold my soul to the Devil to buy *Das Kapital*. All I have left is my snout!

Aware of this, I would have kept quiet - if the 'problem' of gay Catholics had been theirs alone. Do they believe in a god? That's their business, of course. Their religion imposes an anti-sexual and anti-gay moral code (1)? They can deal with their priests, we don't care. Everyone has their own ideas. Let's tolerate, let's tolerate.

Unfortunately it's impossible. Because (straight) Catholics are our number one enemy, those *of us who are neither straight nor Catholic*.

A staunch Catholic, Mr Foyer - to whom we owe the maintenance of the anti-gay law.

Madam Dolto - the French Bryant, who invented the idea of eradicating gays from the face of the earth forever by cutting off their libido at the only age when we hold them prisoner: in childhood.

Catholics, the shock troops (and treasuries) of movements, associations, unions and clubs that defend "good morals", the family

and childhood, advocate censorship, control education and impose the hetero-patriarchal order.

Catholics, the supporters, theorists, propagandists, activists and agents of the worst forms of homophobia.

That's why the 'problem' of homosexual Catholics doesn't bring a tear to my eye. Because, for *one* Catholic faggot tormented by his conscience, it's a *thousand* unbelieving fags that Catholic morality persecutes in their flesh, through laws and morals.

The Jean Foyer affair showed us who, in France, governs public morality and all private lives.

The "nice" Catholics (coalman's faith style) don't prevent their religion from being that of a plutocratic, nationalist, militaristic, fascist bourgeoisie that sells cannons and cuts off the sexes. The Church remains as evil as in its centuries of splendour. We owe her our worst daily sufferings, our most iniquitous laws, and our most revolting difficulties of being. Truly, it takes too tender a heart and too gentle a soul to

be content to snigger when a gay zealot from that hell on earth - Christianity - flies past with a cross and a banner.

But Catholic fags have a 'faith' that hides the Church from them, the lucky ones! Hence their astonishment when the Pope comes to their attention.

How can gay Catholics complain that the Church condemns them? Its doctrine on sex has always been known and has never changed. Gay Catholics have chosen this doctrine and this Church - among the hundreds of monotheistic sects that worship (each with its own morality, theology and rite) the god of the Bible, the Gospels and the Koran. So the Pope is absolutely right to tell the faggots in his sect that they can only call themselves Catholics if they hate sex, the body and life in general.

These physical things are strictly reserved for atheists (wretches who accept the idea of their death). A Christian, on the other hand, has eternal life ahead of him: but without cocks or asses. The alternative is simple, the trick is obvious. Give me your cock, and you'll have a soul: it's even clearer, and more cynical, than the Pascalian wager.

Unfortunately, Catholics live with us, in a positivist, egalitarian and liberal age. The sexual morality of atheistic humanism has spread, abolished prohibitions and imposed rights: not only has 'sin' been tamed (eroticism, perversions, cohabitation, divorce, abortion, etc.), but wherever it reigns, people live more peacefully, understand, tolerate and respect others better, suffer less and love less. The Puritans of the Reformed Churches themselves saw this. In

short, all that was needed to fulfil the letter and spirit of the Gospel message here on earth was to reverse the Church's sexual morality... It's the last straw!

Yes, the Catholics must have been scratching their chins. And it was only a short step from there to hoping that the Vatican would revise its positions and acknowledge its errors. But the Church has only just rehabilitated Galileo. The infallible John Paul II has finally authorised the Earth to revolve around the Sun: you can be sure that, in a few centuries' time, a John Paul XXII will authorise Catholics to revolve around boys. Be patient!

For the moment, the Church has obviously made the best choice by reaffirming its family morality, its obscurantism and its repression. Of course, there are progressive Catholics who have been hurt by the fury of John Paul II, but they are in the minority. The Church stopped attracting intelligent men a long time ago, and it will become more and more an asylum for morons. It knows it. If

it displayed a permissive morality, this morality would remain too timid to call liberal minds to God, but it would be enough to frighten the Catholic flock and the clerical bosses. It would be a terrible blunder.

So it's better to slander, or frankly reject, the progressive Catholics - and all those believers mixed with atheism, who have been

troubled by the success of miscreant morality and knowledge. The Pope's wish: to dominate a billion morons and get paid a lot for it.

The power and success of the Church are only conceivable under hard right-wing political regimes. Conversely, these regimes need an extremely rigorous moral, family and sexual order. A highly uncertain socio-political prospect in privileged nations. The Third and Fourth Worlds, on the other hand, frequently present the requisite conditions: poverty, superstition, illiteracy, military dictatorship, the absolutism of a mafia of owners who sell the people's labour and the soil's resources to the highest bidder. This is exactly the historical 'niche' in which the Church thrives, as indeed does any powerful religion.

We can therefore consider the sexual doctrine reaffirmed by John Paul II as a genuine

offers its services to every right-wing regime on the planet. The Pope says: "Catholicism doesn't change, we remain the best cops in the universe." The recruitment of young people, the subjugation of women, the power of the family, general castration, blind obedience, prohibitions, terror, torturing militias, muscular patriarchy: these are just some of the household items that John Paul takes around the world. Attention fans! And let's not forget that the dominant - and (nonetheless) democratic - nations also need the dominated nations to have authoritarian regimes (1).

In short, the future of the Church rests on the suffering of three quarters of humanity. Perpetuate this suffering, and the Church will be strong. Conversely, every man who frees himself makes God die a little. So count on the Church to increase the pain and servitude of people: its own survival depends on it.

And there you have it, oh Catholic faggots, a threat far more frightening than your pee-pee problems.

(1) NdE: text corrected following Duvert's indications in his *Erratenfant des Mules du pape* (Gai-Pied n°27 page 42, June 1981).

THE CARNIVAL WITHOUT MASKS - June

81

Source: Gai Pied, issue 27, pages 42.

la chronique de Tony Duvert

LE CARNAVAL SANS MASQUES



ANDRÉ ROLLET (vainqueur 1935)



MANDOUKIAN (Finaliste 1937-1938)



ANDRÉ DRAPP (vainqueur 1947)



JAMES MATHE (vainqueur 1952-1953)

Colonne Pierre SURETET

Tout homme est tenu de se mettre en scène pour être vu, identifié, accepté socialement. Cette mise en scène de soi a longtemps été judicatoire, naïve : les rois se couvraient aussi d'une charge rituelle, à chaque groupe son vêtement, son argot, la démarche, son code mimique, ses formes (ou ses masques) masqués. On voit reconnaître de loin. En même temps, on vous regardait peu : un coup d'œil sur vos « signaux » d'identification, on était fixé, on n'en demandait pas davantage. Réquisitairement, la contrainte des conventions restait superficielle, l'habit faisait le moine et, là-dessous, peu importe quelle âme vous promettait.

Quand on lit aujourd'hui de vieux romans, de vieilles pièces de théâtre, on est étonné que leurs auteurs aient si souvent recours, pour ressortir d'une intrigue, au travesti : à la méprise sur l'identité ou à la tromperie — on croirait que, jusqu'au XX^e siècle, tous les personnages des romans (y compris les plus dignes) sont regards ou ne s'observent que la nuit, à la lueur d'une chandelle mal mouchée. Comment peut-on confondre un homme et une femme, un veuf et un jeune, un Maure et un Français, un bon et un méchant, un chaste et un lubrique, un riche et un pauvre, un grand magistère et un petit gros ? Ces romanciers exigèrent !

Justement non. Ces méprises n'étaient sans doute pas si inévitables qu'on croit, lorsqu'elles furent imaginées. Mais veut penser qu'en ces heureux temps on était si sûr de les uns envers les autres, on s'examine et on s'analyse et peu, que réellement une moussache en pail de laine, des talons doubles ou une voix contraltée vous « dépariaient » à la perfection. D'ailleurs, il y avait une règle de politesse commune à toutes les classes sociales : dévisager quelqu'un avec insolence était réputé grossier, provocateur ou injurieux. On pouvait résister à cette insulte, en demandant raison.

On retrouverait, de nos jours encore — et spécialement en milieu populaire — tout un art courtis de détourner les yeux face à quelqu'un de ne pas insister, de ne pas glâner en regardant trop — et tout un jeu mimique qui signifie : laissez-vous, je ne vois rien.

Règle d'attention qu'on devine liée aux conditions d'existence des petites gens : promiscuité extrême, et bien peu d'occasions de montrer quelque chose de beau.

Le bourgeois, au contraire, a l'œil vorace et impitoyable. Il ne veut pas simplement pour du spectacle d'autrui : non, il veut aussi savoir.

Nos vieux romans jouent avec cette manie, cette question obsessionnelle qui tourmentait leur public : qui est qui ? Mais, quand nos auteurs nous enseignent qu'il ne faut pas se fier aux apparences, et que tout homme en cache un autre, ils ne nous donnent pas un simple conseil de prudence : non, ils nous montrent que, pour savoir qui est qui, il faut fouiller sa vie privée, le déshabiller, voler son intimité et que ce vol est agrippé, jusqu'à être une recherche de la « vérité ». Nous avons le droit de savoir, et à ce droit nous soumettrons nos inférieurs, puis nos pairs.

Ainsi se construit (ou s'illustre) l'idée selon laquelle l'identité est toujours une chose cachée, une chose intérieure, et non un spectacle délibérément offert. Or la mise en scène de soi, quand elle était simple et théâtralisée, dissimulait-elle vraiment une « identité », une « personnalité » ? Impossible de répondre, sauf par l'évidence d'une conviction : et, quant à moi, je suis persuadé que, lorsque la comédie humaine était un carnaval, il n'y avait rien sous les masques. Car si vous dépensez du devoir, de la comédie, de la torture de posséder un « moi ». Ou plutôt, ce moi-là s'enflait et se retirait comme une pane de godaems. Et l'indicateur des gens était mobilité, anarchie, indétermination.

En somme, l'investigation aura créé l'objet : et notre identité « intérieure » serait l'impu artifice qui ont engendré en nous les regards indiscrets. A commencer par le nôtre même, tel qu'on nous a appris à l'exercer chacun sur soi, seul avec soi, ou plutôt seul contre soi. Car le chef d'œuvre, monstrueux, de cette culture de l'inspection, c'est l'auto-examen. Agréé de vous, en germanique, insaisissable, haissable, imbécile jusqu'à l'atroce, le pire ennemi que jamais homme, de mémoire d'homme, aura eu à subir — ses propres yeux, rédupliqués pour être ceux d'un fic qui ne le quittera plus d'une seconde et qui ne lui passera rien. À la douce coutume ou l'on avait détourné son regard d'autrui, la conscience bourgeoise subit le règne du regard pénétrant, malfaisant, disciplinaire et soupçonneux que la police bourgeoise et le positivisme exigent désormais à toute apparence.

Dés qu'on prétend que l'identité est « intérieure », les anciennes et candides conventions de mise en scène de soi perdent toute valeur : on y dénonce des artifices, et la nouvelle convention s'appelle le naturel.

Avoir l'air naturel, est-ce si naturel que cela ? Et s'agit-il réellement d'une liberté, ou, au contraire, ne serait-ce pas un nouveau renfermement, un réajustement plus, implicite, de l'ancien artifice ? Impossible de s'y tromper : si l'habit ne fait plus le moine, ce qui vous serait obligé de montrer, c'est votre « chair nue », à nu ». Toutes trépas dehors, vous voici « vrai ». Comme si ce paradoxe triomphant : l'emploi d'un code qui permette de dire qu'il n'y a pas de code si c'est ce code-là qui on emploie. Et une convention de la « sincérité » devient garante de la « sincérité » d'une convention. Le cinéma, et beaucoup plus encore la télévision, auront opéré une action semblable sur le jeu des acteurs professionnels. Car ce jeu, observé d'aussi près, fut accusé d'être... théâtral ! Les comédiens, comme tout le monde, étaient mis en demeure de devenir « naturels » ou de disparaître.

Ce qui est très curieux, c'est que le « naturel » qu'on réclame, sans que l'acteur n'ait rien de nouveau en tant qu'exigence (hélas Diderot) mis en tant que système de ponctif. Contrairement à ce qu'on a écrit, la télévision n'a supprimé aucune emphase, aucune grandiloquence, aucun effet, « téléphoné », dans le jeu des comédiens : elle les a simplement déplaçés, restés. Déclamation et cabotage, affectations, outrances, sont rédupliqués aux dimensions du petit écran et à l'espace privé de la représentation : le living familial. Le comédien renonce à la théâtralité de la salle de spectacle et adopte plutôt le jeu mimique et vocal de l'intimité bourgeoise (la théâtralité de bouche à oreille, le gaguet à cœur ouvert. Même chose au cinéma. Ainsi le théâtre professionnel et le théâtre d'amateur (à vie privée) ne répondent plus qu'à un seul code socio-culturel. Cela fait dire que l'art (cinéma, théâtre) est beaucoup plus « naturel » que jadis, je dirai, à l'inverse, que c'est notre vie privée qui est devenue beaucoup plus artificielle. En fait, nous nous tous acteurs professionnels — tant il faut jouer même.

Au passage, malheureusement, ce code du « naturel » s'est emparé de toutes nos spontanéités, à présent répertoriées, cataloguées, et qui font couramment l'objet d'une enculturation et d'un contrôle, des petites enfance. Apprendre à « avoir l'air naturel » est le devoir du plus humble bumpkin, surtout quand on le photographie. Il faut prendre un air libre dans l'intant même où l'on pose et où l'on obéit. L'empire du « naturel » s'est imposé aux corps aussi, à leur nudité. Les pubescentes

tenues de bain de nos aïeux nous font sourire, pourtant, sous ces habits-là, ils gardaient le droit d'être gras et mal foutus. Tandis qu'aujourd'hui, votre corps nu est un vêtement, comme les autres, et vous devez le mettre en bon état pour le montrer. Régime, musculature, bronzage, tel est l'art de nouveau-coutures. C'est dans votre propre chair qu'on prendra l'étoffe de votre costume de bain. Gêne aux toilettes évitées, défilés, moulinettes, dilués ! Votre chair est un métier à elle n'est pas à vous, elle est soumise au regard de la société sur vous.

Le règne du « naturel » me paraît donc, abondamment, demeurer toujours davantage notre droit d'être. La sphère de notre intimité — la partie de moi qui n'est qu'à moi — se rétrécit, se renforce. C'est une petite bile dure et incompressible, quelque part tout au fond de moi : mais quel fond ? Est-ce que cela existe ? Je n'arrive plus à me qui reste, une fois écartées ces couches de moi que la société exige que je sacrifie à son théâtre : ma figure, ma peau, mes muscles, mes visages, mes organes, mon sexe, mes gestes, mon regard et ma parole. Rien de cela ne m'appartient, rien de cela n'a plus le droit d'être invisible, insaisissable, incommensurable et indéfini. Je n'ai plus sous moi un moineau. Au contraire, je souffre de ne pas avoir, et que ma chair vive en terre neu. Ce corps-là est aussi inhabitable qu'une cellule éclairée 24 heures sur 24. Et ce pour cela que pensent, nous amons faire la nuit ?

Erratant

des Mules du pape (Chronique de mai)

• Colonne 2, ligne 13 en partant du bas : une morale anti-sexuelle et anti-homme ? et non : une morale anti... etc.

• Colonne 4, ligne 13 (ce chiffre porte malheur ?) en partant du bas (ah, le bas... il nous aura tous ?) charabia. Le sexe était celui-ci ; teurs. Et on n'oublie pas que les nations dominantes — et néanmoins démocratiques — ont beaux, elles aussi, que les nations dominées aussi des régimes autoritaires.

Gal-Pied n° 87

Everyone has to put on a show in order to be visible, identified and socially accepted. For a long time, this self-presentation was rudimentary and naïve, and so were the social rituals. Each class, each group had its own dress, slang, gait, mimic code, good (or bad) manners. People recognised you from afar. At the same time, they didn't look at you very much: one glance at your identification 'signals' and you were fixed, and they didn't ask for more. Conversely, the constraints of convention remained superficial, the habit made the monk and, underneath it all, it didn't matter what kind of soul you were walking around with.

When you read old novels and plays today, you are astonished that their authors so often resorted to cross-dressing, mistaken identity or deception as a plot device: you'd think that, until the 19th century, all the characters in novels (including the most serious ones) were short-sighted or only observed each other at night, by the light of a poorly snuffed candle. How can you confuse a man with a woman, an old man with a young man, a Moor with a Frenchman, a good man with a bad man, a chaste man with a lecherous man, a rich man with a poor man, a skinny man with a fat man? These novelists exaggerate!

Precisely not. These misunderstandings were probably not all that improbable when they

were imagined.

It's better to think that in those happy days we were so uncooperative towards each other, we examined and analysed each other so little, that really a donkey-hair moustache, double heels or a fake voice 'disguised' you to perfection. Moreover, there was a rule of politeness common to all social classes: to stare at someone was considered rude, provocative or insulting. You could point out the insult and demand a reason for it.

Even today - and especially in working-class environments - there is a whole courteous art of looking away from others, of not inspecting, of not disturbing by looking too much - and a whole mimicry that means: don't worry, I can't see a thing.

A rule of abstention that we can guess is linked to the living conditions of the little people: extreme promiscuity, and very few opportunities to show off something beautiful.

The bourgeois, on the other hand, has a voracious and ruthless eye. He doesn't just want to enjoy the spectacle of others: no, he also wants to know. Our old novels play with this mania, this question obsession that tormented their audience: *who is who?* But when our authors teach us that we must not trust appearances, and that every man hides another, they are not simply giving us a word of caution:

no. They are showing us that, to find out who is who, we have to delve into his private life, undress him, violate his privacy. They show us that, to find out *who is who*, we have to delve into his private life, undress him, violate his privacy: and that this violation is *legitimate*, since it is a search for the 'truth'. We have *the right to know*, and to this right we will subject our inferiors, then our peers.

This builds (or illustrates) the idea that identity is always something hidden, something internal, and not a deliberately offered spectacle. But did the simplistic, theatrical presentation of the self really conceal an 'identity', an 'interiority'? It's impossible to answer, except by stating a conviction: and, for my part, I'm convinced that when the human comedy was a carnival, there was *nothing* under the masks. For they relieved you of the duty, the drudgery, the torture of possessing a 'self'. Or rather, that self could be slipped on and off like a pair of shoes. And *inside* people was mobility, anarchy, indeterminacy.

In short, investigation will have created the object: and our identity".

inner self" would be the impure artefact created in us by indiscreet gazes. Beginning with our own, as we

have been taught to exercise it, each on himself, alone with himself, or rather alone against himself. The monstrous masterpiece of this inspection culture is self-examination. You are constantly surrounded by the worst enemy in living memory: your own eyes, re-educated to be those of a cop who will never leave your side for a second and who will never let you off the hook. In place of the gentle civilisation in which we knew how to look away from others, bourgeois conscience has replaced the reign of the perpetual, malevolent, disciplinary and suspicious gaze that the bourgeois police and positivism now inflict on every appearance.

As soon as it is claimed that identity is 'inner', the old, candid conventions of self-presentation lose all value: they are denounced as artifice, and the new convention is called *naturalness*.

Is looking natural really all that natural? And is it really freedom, or is it a new tightening, a more implacable readjustment, of the old artifice? There's no mistaking it: if the suit no longer fits the As a monk, what you will be obliged to show is your "heart laid bare". With all your guts out, you are 'real'. It's as if this paradox has triumphed: the use of a code that allows us to say there is no code if that's the code we're using. And a convention of 'sincerity' becomes a guarantee of the 'sincerity' of a convention.

Cinema, and even more so television, have had a similar effect on the acting of professional actors. Because this acting, observed so closely, was accused of being... theatrical! Actors, like everyone else, were told to become "natural" or disappear.

The curious thing is that the 'naturalness' demanded of actors was not new as a requirement (re-read Diderot) but as a *system of clichés*. Contrary to what has been written, television has not done away with any of the emphases, grandiloquence or 'phoned-in' effects of acting: it has simply displaced them and put them in a new place. Declamation and hamming it up, affectation and outrageousness, have been adapted to the dimensions of the small screen and the private space of the performance: the family living room. The actor foregoes the theatricality of the auditorium and instead adopts the mimicry and vocal acting of bourgeois intimacy: the theatricality of the home.

by word of mouth, the open-hearted guignol.

The same goes for the cinema. So professional theatre and amateur theatre (private life) now respond to a single socio-cultural code. This means that art (cinema, theatre) is much more 'natural' than it used to be; conversely, I would say that it is our private lives that have become much more artificial. In fact, we've

all become professional actors - so much so that we have to *play so tightly*.

Unfortunately, this code of 'natural' has taken over all our spontaneity, which is now catalogued and enculturated and controlled from early childhood. Learning to "look natural" is the duty of the humblest toddler, especially when being photographed. You have to look free at the very moment when you are posing and obeying. The hold of the "natural" has also been imposed on bodies and their nudity. The prudish swimming costumes of our ancestors make us smile: yet, under those clothes, they retained the right to be fat and unkempt. Today, however, your naked body is just like any other item of clothing, and you have to keep it in good condition to show it off. Diet, weight training, tanning: this is the art of the new couturiers. It's in your own flesh that we'll take the fabric of your swimming costume. Beware of slouchy, shabby, musty, faded fabrics! Your flesh is a material, it's not yours, it's society's way of looking at you.

The reign of the "natural" seems to me to be absurdly diminishing our right to be. The sphere of our intimacy - the part of me that is mine alone - is shrinking, sinking. It's a hard, unknowable little marble, somewhere deep inside me: but which deep? Does it exist? That's what I call what's left, once the

layers of me that society demands I sacrifice to its theatre have been removed: my face, my skin, my muscles, my viscera, my organs, my sex, my gestures, my gaze and my speech. None of it belongs to me, none of it has the *right to be invisible or inaudible*,

unnamed, unknown and shapeless. No: I'm not suffocating under a mask. On the contrary, I suffer from not having one, and from the fact that my living flesh takes its place. This body is as uninhabitable as a cell lit 24 hours a day. Is that why we perverts love the night so much?

Erratenfant

des Mules du pape (May Chronicle)

- *Column 2, line 13 from bottom: an anti-sexual and anti-gay morality? not: an anti... etc. morality.*
- *Column 4, line 13 (that number's bad luck!) from the bottom (ah, the bottom... it'll get us all!) gibberish. The text was as follows: teurs. And let's not forget that the dominant - and nonetheless democratic - nations also need the dominated nations to have authoritarian regimes.*

Now that sexual freedom is a major humanist cause, and we're as interested in our sexual 'needs' as we are in those of our pets, there's a large area of silence and shyness in the pleas for liberation that, I confess, intrigues me.

We'll give you the right to do your own thing (one bag of sawdust per person, that's democracy for cats): But we'd rather not know *how* you go about it.

The right to contraception, to abortion, is certainly not a practical convenience that has been put at the service of frenzied fuckers. That would be dirty. They are therefore chaste freedoms, cold abstract dignities: a relief for wives forced into an ungrateful conjugal duty (the famous male bestiality), the free choice of motherhood (the human being in the form of a husband is scum, but in the form of a child, he's a god. Strange...). Prude and frigid, such is the strange philosophy of the right to make love without 'consequences'.

In this strange country, do you have to wear a habit and a cilice to defend physical love?

As we all know, the same contradiction exists in gay activism. Because homosexuality, as seen by our fighters, is so wise and so gentle, so reserved, so respectful, so affectionate, so modest, so so brave and so good that it's hard to see what it has to do with the (disgusting) mores of silent homos

and non-activists. There are millions of gay people in our country (leaving aside, as a statistical crime, the half-homos, quarter-homos and other little bits of aunts): but when a militant group opens an office somewhere, it attracts fewer people than the emptiest pissoir in the saddest street.

Do faggots hate moral lessons? One wonders why. And we note with despair that the more vicious, slutty, pornographic, self-indulgent and disgusting a queer publication is (*Gai Pied de mon cœur*, you're not out of the woods yet!), the more successful it is. Imagine, from that, what they are like, the gays - the taciturn ones. It's chilling. What monsters! It's a good thing they hide!

Homosexual thinkers and discourse stumble over the indefensible behaviour of those they are campaigning for. Sexual abuse, naughty habits, zipper-zapping lunatics, pornography, prostitution, paedophilia, incest, tourist trips to third and fourth worlds, pleasures taken from those who don't want to give them: these are just some of the private immoralities that, I'm afraid, are forming, a whole daily gay life that our speakers just can't get their heads around.

And the virtuous thrill of reading the contact ads - especially the 'Chéri(e)s' in *Libé*, which are even trickier than here. *They're* maniacs,

they're obsessed, *they're* racists, *they* like this and not that, *they* want lovers who dress up as Mickey Mouse, or who wet their knickers, or who breed goats, *they* hate crazy women and old women, their arsehole gasps as soon as a male has dark skin or wears black leather, they need huge tails or elephantine feelings, they're disgusting, not intelligent, not normal. A bit perverse, in fact. Foreign classifieds, American or German for example, are even more appalling: you can publish your photo in them. And what faces, what anatomies! Teratological. As ugly as the crowds in the metro, the families on the beaches, the clientele in prisons, hospitals and brothels.

No. It's impossible! Homosexuality is a very sweet little thing, a bit silly, a bit stupid, that happens timidly between nice-good boys, young and cute. The rest is not nice, it's not fresh. It's vice.

However, I'm not making a bold assumption when I say that the vast majority of gay men and women - because

our lesbian sisters are pretty crusty too - resembles the majority of French citizens. Quite simply. They're ugly, old-fashioned, illiterate, lazy, selfish, a pain in the arse, a pain in the arse, a pain in the arse, and so on. It's only a matter of time before those who aren't will become so...

And, as soon as you look even

a little bit like this, tell me what use is the 'sexual' freedom to make friends? Sleeping with losers like you? It's doable, but not very desirable.

What do you do? We bang out pornos and images; we treat ourselves to gigs when we've got the money. And if all that seems too meagre, you force other people's hand a little (your hand, so to speak). It's very, very wrong: but it's that or nothing. And most people who have nothing are more likely to become thieves than die of starvation. You awful people!

Speaking of silent and 'undefensible' homos, I often think with admiration of Montherlant's private life, as Roger Peyrefitte had the genial indiscretion to tell us (*Propos Secrets I*). It is easy to understand why the little great man was such a mediocre writer: nothing of his life entered into his work; a biographer of his bad morals, on the other hand, might have been a genius.

Grey coat, crazy eyes, wandering hands, sordid places, shame, cynicism, lost kids, sad queries, bad asses, contempt, police and bad tricks, this crazy prowler reminds me of M le Maudit, I drool with jealousy, naively. What a dark novel that would be to write!

A second "Université homosexuelle d'été" is to be held in

Marseille. I didn't agree to take part. Just laziness! But I wonder if our homos will manage to invite a single fag with something to say. Or will they organise a seminar devoted to this superb chapter by Peyrefitte? Chickens in front of a crocodile egg: that'll be fun. But I'm afraid they'll prefer Alexandre's youth to Henri's old age. The latter is more commonplace than the former, and more representative of the lives of many of those who won't be going to Marseille.

Of course, it will be said that the immoral and vaguely delinquent intimate life of faded homos is just a regrettable effect of the aesthetic prejudices and age-old racisms that reign in our time. We modestly forget that the 'scandal' of desire is not that of ideal, virile friendship, platonic or otherwise, as Michel Foucault advocated in this journal. The height and the scandal of sexuality is egoism.

refusal to love, indifference to the 'person' of others, desire without reciprocity, enjoyment that is snatched away rather than received.

I obviously don't want to glorify rape. But how can we deny that the pleasure of raping, of abusing, of enjoying you without knowing whether you like it or not, is at the heart of our erotic acts, our loves, even our most tender friendships? Our mating, our possessiveness, our happiness at being told yes, all play with rape; the

collective sexuality of saunas and gardens is a complex game of small-scale mutual and consensual rapes; the passions of love most marked by idealism and beautiful sentiments transpose, crumble and consume in pretty phrases and abstract powers a delirious rage to rape.

Will we ever come to terms with it? The Puritans are right: sexuality is bestial. We can invent an ideal that excludes all malfeasance, of course: but it risks resembling the political utopias according to which man is good and, in a 'good' society, remains so.

The hunt for the bad things that used to be part of our world is now being dubbed "social progress". The list of new prohibitions is dizzying.

What was it like before we decided to live happily ever after? It was simple. Billions of vices were practised with impunity within the order itself.

Being a husband meant being a rapist and tyrant. Being a father or mother meant you could be an executioner, a despot and a dictator. Being a teacher meant you could be a spy, a cop, a boss, a censor, a propagandist and a watchdog. Being a shopkeeper or industrialist meant you could be a crook, a thief, a windbag or a shit merchant. Being an average Frenchman meant you could be a racist, an anti-Semite, an anti-faggot, a fat cunt, a fat arse, a fat slob, a bastard, a drunkard, a sworn

murderer of murderers, a torturer colonist, a voter of bastards, beans and brutes. You name it!

Now, all these abuses of rights, these basenesses, these ignominies that made up the fabric of everyday France, are being fought. For a better society, and in the name of happiness.

What kind of happiness? Certainly not the happiness of the people who will be deprived of their pleasures by so many necessary virtues. Aren't there thirty or forty million vicious people, scum, that we want to put out of work? Find me a reason to live, if I am obliged to be good, whatever I do.

No company has ever had the temerity to ask so much of its employees.

those who made it up. It would have been unbearable.

If the social and economic order, institutions and current values no longer encouraged or endorsed inequality, abuse of power, domination, theft and rape, nothing could be more desirable; and perhaps few people want this as much as I do. But at the same time, I think of the immense mass of *evil without a job*, of violence without a target, of abominations without social structures to accommodate them, which we are freeing at the same time.

Tomorrow or the day after, or in any case, one day or another, we will really no longer be able to live

and exercise the evils and pleasures that the state of mother, boss, soldier, heterosexual, 'white', Christian, etc., allowed us, I insist, the thousand and one underhand manoeuvres that pleasure invented under the order of things and under authority.

And if there is no longer any right, any role, any code that can cover and absolve our misdeeds, on which side will we commit them? With whose consent?

Private life, and private life alone, can become the wilderness where we have the freedom to be bad. With nothing to authorise it, and by taking increasingly concrete 'risks'. Bad heads have a bright future.

Où, l'est s'achève. L'homme-cangis payés
 rentre à la niche, après avoir ravagé (bien sûr)
 les bruyères du Tiers-Monde, en son violer
 capitaliste-phallo-myogène colonialiste qu'il
 est. Délivré des pédiatres, la saine jeunesse
 d'Afrique, d'Asie, d'Amérique Latine, pousse
 un immense soupir de soulagement et masse
 avec beaucoup de tendresse et de beurre de
 yak, ses organes génitaux meurtris et ses amis
 affaiblis.

Puis elle recouvre ses yeux, cette jeunesse, et
 elle prépare, à l'insension des oléagineux qui
 ont cyniquement lassé leur adresse aux
 victimes, quelque belle lettre catastrophique
 en français ou en anglais : « Mon père a été
 écorché par un énorme serpent, une voiture a
 morlé ma mère, mon beau-frère a abandonné
 ma sœur de doute au avec onze enfants sur
 les bras, mon petit frère a été enlevé par un
 passementier obèse et escroquer, on a volé
 mon slip et mes chaussettes à la bibliothèque
 pendant que je lisais le Coran, il faut toujours
 aussi chasser, il n'y a plus de thé à la maison,
 mon frère il faut m'envoyer un mandat. »
 C'est de moins ce que vous m'avez l'homme
 cangis payés : il ne reçoit que ce genre de
 lettres-là, il dit :

— Oh là-là, oui, c'est facile, mais je suis
 intéressé. On n'est pas aimé pour soi-même.
 Ça, jamais, jamais.
 Ainsi grâce, tout aimé, la saine-justice-
 colonialiste-cangis payés qui, retour de
 Naples, de Barcelone, de Rio, de Colombo ou
 de Marrakech, ou de quelques millions
 d'autres lieux, s'est envolé en trois semaines
 exotiques plus de jolis garçons qu'en onze
 mois de France. Elle a soulagé tout ce qu'elle
 pouvait de jeunes célibataires de 3 à 33 centi-
 mètres (selon les goûts) ; elle a perforé tout
 ce qu'elle a approché de fesses, depuis la pointe
 couche-culotte jusqu'au format rugby-
 man ; elle a rapporté des dépôts de ses proies et
 elle va se braver dessus jusqu'à l'être prochain.
 Et elle grogne !

Car elle n'a pas trouvé l'amour-toujours. Elle
 a un mépris abattu, le sale tarte, pour les
 "amours sans lendemain". Elle ne veut parler
 qu'ami et de grands sentiments ; mais
 elle gâche ses vacances d'est à courir le sau-
 rison, et elle considère la planète entière

comme un immense réservoir de bites où il n'y
 a pas un être humain. Pas un seul. Y a que des
 pauvres, et en plus il faut les laver avant de
 s'en servir. Et les payer ensuite. Le Grand
 Amour n'hésite évidemment pas la culotte en
 lambeaux de ces "indigènes" qui n'ont pas le
 sou et qui ne pensent qu'à l'argent.
 Ma plaisance s'écroule. Elle est de très mauvais
 goût, j'arrête !

Tout le monde a remarqué, ces derniers mois,
 que la grande presse — Le Monde en tête — se
 livre à une campagne antihomosexuelle d'un
 genre nouveau, et même sulfureux. On s'en
 est pris à la pédérastie ou la pédophilie des
 hommes en vacances : on a dénoncé l'atroce
 prostitution de jeunes garçons qui affligent ces
 pays qu'on visite, l'étré, en un coup de charbon.
 Le "fléau social", la pédérastie, se répand
 comme le choléra grâce aux agences de
 voyage et à la démocratisation des vacances
 intercontinentales. Dès qu'il fait beau, l'Europe
 lâche sur la planète entière ses hordes d'obé-
 disants, nantis de devises fortes et de
 faux carnets. Il faut que cela cesse !
 Ainsi, on a accusé les pédés d'exploiter sexuel-

lement la pauvreté des pays pauvres.
 Cette énormité reposait sur deux arrière-
 pensées :

1) "Prouver" qu'universellement les
 mineurs ont horreur de s'accoupler à des adultes
 s'ils y a tant de pays où ils le font, c'est
 seulement la misère qui les y pousse. Sinon, ça
 n'existerait jamais, une calamité pareille !

2) Faire oublier au lecteur que, si ces pays
 pauvres existent, ils doivent leur indigence aux
 nations privilégiées qui, telle la France, même
 socialiste, contribuent obstinément à un ordre
 économique mondial qui paupérise les trois-
 quarts de l'humanité.

J'ai coup double, en somme. Le beau ! qui il
 ces journaux versieux apprené que les gays où
 l'on meurt de faim souffrent à cause des pédés
 et non à cause des beaux !

C'est toujours nous qu'on a tort, et pendant
 ce temps-là les hérités (qui ne trépassent, eux,
 que leurs propres gosses) et, statistiques sur
 les vols d'enfants, papa-fille) s'offrent en
 toute bonne conscience ces mêmes voyages
 tiers-mondistes — Nohés climatisés, piscines
 asseptées, cuisine "française", arrosant local,

le tout produit par des millions de miches des
 deux sexes qui transforment douze heures par
 jour et qu'un père d'un rien de souge et de
 beaucoup de gifles. Mais qu'importe ! Ces
 enfants-là, au moins, ils ne se "prostituèrent"
 pas, ils ne sont pas "tombés" jusqu'à la
 "vendre leur force de travail", simplement.
 C'est tout de même plus propre !

Etrange, singulier, admirable journalisme
 français. Je veux dire : si pédophile, si habile
 abouder les vrais salauds et à dénigrer
 les bœufs émoussés. Le grand journaliste fran-
 çais ! Un art de lécher le cul du public dans le
 sens du poil.

Et il en a, du poil aux fesses, ce public-là ! Et
 riche, et généreux de rancore, merde et suture-
 millés, sur le siège des "bais" — depuis Rim-
 baud, ce n'est plus une chaise de paille, c'est
 un fauteuil Conformera ou Léviton. On y pour-
 rit beaucoup plus vite, la tête (!) emmaillottée
 de coule qui mijote. Foutre que j'aime les
 Français !

En tout cas, l'"ENFANT", une fois de plus,
 aura servi à faire casser du pédé. Des enfants,
 l'an dernier, il en est mort quinze millions dans
 le monde. Mort de faim. Et non pas de "trau-
 matisse sexual". Ce qui, certes, s'empêche
 aucun hérités de donner, et aucun pédé de her-
 der. Ce qui n'empêche pas, non plus, que
 chaque année, sur cette terre, la "paix" sou-
 jadis est deux fois plus meurtrière (s'il s'agit
 d'enfants) ou neuf fois plus (s'il s'agit de tout le
 monde) que l'holocauste anti-juif de la guerre
 hitlérienne en 5 ans. Vive la paix !

Oh, bien sûr, ce n'est pas un argument pour
 disculper les pédés d'être, comme je le disais
 en commençant, des sales tantes colonialistes
 etc. C'est juste histoire de dire que la presse
 néo-républicaine démontre la petite classe à nos
 côtés d'anti que la montagne de merde qui
 coule de son gros cul plantureux philanthropi-
 que, gauloise-ricard.

Mon vocabulaire tourne à la Fère Duchêne, je
 rough. Je n'écris pas pour des sains-cultures !
 J'aurais dû me contenter de langage chrétien,
 que la paille et le pouce. (Mais je me con-
 nais dans quel trou je les aurais logés,
 celles-là !)

Si mon aimable lecteur, mon aimable lectrice,
 et les géroneux aux yeux un peu cernés qui
 visitent le Gai Pied à leur papa, ont suggéré
 jusqu'ici les simonistes très curieuses de ma
 pensée, ils vont cueillir la récompense de leur
 effort : une conclusion implacablement logi-
 que, comme il en faut écrire quand on veut
 laisser croire à ses lecteurs qu'ils sont intelli-
 gents. Pas de bonne philosophie sans ce petit
 coup de langue affectueux dans les yeux enri-
 gieux du lecteur attentif.

Il m'a semblé que je faisais aussi énergique-
 ment les gens qui condamnent la pédérastie "co-
 lonialiste", les gens qui la pratiquent, et
 quelques-uns même ceux qui la subissent. J'ai
 donc pensé qu'en cinq ou six chroniques,
 j'arriverais à expliquer un peu ce sentiment ;
 voire à explorer de près ce que signifie
 l'amour fou entre hommes qui ne se ressem-
 blent pas. C'est évidemment le seul amour que
 j'aime : dès que je me vois un pauvre commu-
 avec quelqu'un, j'en débarrade — aimer n'est
 pas semblable, et violemment aimer les "con-
 traires", ce n'est pas très "homophile". Tant
 pis.

Et qu'est-ce, au juste, qu'un homme "diffé-
 rent" ? Beaucoup d'entre nous ne s'entendent
 pas qu'à ceux qui leur ressemblent en toutes
 choses. Mais leur ressemblent-ils autant qu'ils
 se le figurent ? Et ceux qui sont comme moi,
 tombés amoureux d'un autre peuple, d'une
 autre culture, d'une autre langue, ont-ils fait
 autre chose que découvrir entre leur propre
 identité, leur être véritable, et le langage
 après, leur naissance civile, leur terre natale ?
 Car nous sommes nés très loin des cuisines de
 nos mères.
 (A suivre.)

LA CHRONIQUE DE TONY DUVERT L'AMOUR EN VISITE



Ces derniers mois, la grande presse — Le Monde en tête — s'est livrée à une campagne antihomosexuelle d'un genre nouveau, et même sulfureux. On s'en est pris à la pédérastie ou la pédophilie des hommes en vacances. (Photo extraite de Denis Paturel aux Editions de la Joie)

Phew, summer's over. Paid homo-congés are coming back into the fold, after having ravaged (of course) the fly of the Third World, like the filthy capitalist-phallo-misogynist-colonialist rapist that they are. Freed from pederasts, the healthy youth of Africa, Asia and Latin America breathe a huge sigh of relief and massage their bruised genitals and offended anuses with a great deal of tenderness and yak butter.

Then they count their pennies, this youth, and prepare, for the offenders who have cynically left their address with the said victims, some beautiful catastrophic letter in French or English: "My father was run over by a huge snake, a car bit my mother, my brother-in-law abandoned my twelve-year-old sister with eleven children in her arms, my little brother was kidnapped by a fat, fucked-up carpenter, my pants and socks were stolen from the library while I was reading the Koran, it's still as hot as ever, there's no more tea at home, my brother, you've got to send me a money order. "

At least that's what the gay man with holiday pay tells you: he only gets letters like that, he says:

- Oh yes, it's easy there, but they're interested. You're not loved for yourself. That, never, never.

This is the bitter grumbling of the dirty-colonialist-holiday-paid-aunt who, on her return from Naples, Barcelona, Rio, Colombo or Marrakech, or a few million other

places, sent herself more pretty boys in three exotic weeks than in eleven months in France. She's relieved all she can of young bachelors from 3 to 33 centimetres tall (depending on your taste); she's perforated all the buttocks she could get her hands on, from nappy size to rugby player size; she's brought back slides of her prey and she's going to be wanking on them until next summer. And she's growling!

Because she hasn't always found love. The dirty aunt has absolute contempt for 'unrequited love'. She'll only talk to you about friendship and great feelings: but she wastes her summer holidays chasing sausages, and she sees the whole planet as a huge reservoir of cocks where there isn't a single human being. Not a single human being. Nothing but poor people, and you have to wash them before you use them. And then you have to pay them. The Great Love obviously doesn't live in the tattered panties of these penniless "natives" who think only of money.

My joke is wearing thin. It's in very bad taste. I'm going to stop!

Over the last few months, everyone has noticed that the great The press - led by *Le Monde* - was engaged in a new, even daring, kind of anti-homosexual campaign. They attacked the pederasty or paedophilia of gay holidaymakers, denouncing the atrocious prostitution of young boys that

afflicts the countries we visit in the summer with a quick charter flight. The "social scourge", pederasty, is spreading like cholera thanks to travel agencies and the democratisation of intercontinental holidays. As soon as the weather is fine, Europe unleashes its hordes of sex addicts on the entire planet, armed with hard currency and carnivorous hunger. This has got to stop! Fags have been accused of sexual exploitation

Fags were accused of sexually exploiting the poverty of poor countries. This enormity was based on two ulterior motives.

1/ "Prove" that minors universally hate mating with adults: if there are so many countries where they do it, it's only poverty that drives them to it. Otherwise, such a calamity would never exist!

2/ To make the reader forget that, if these poor countries exist, they owe their indigence to the privileged nations which, like France, even a socialist country, stubbornly contribute to a world economic order that impoverishes three-quarters of humanity.

A nice double coup, in short. The redneck who reads these virtuous newspapers learns that the countries where people are dying of hunger are suffering because of fags, not rednecks.

It's always us who are wrong, and meanwhile the heterosexuals (who only grope their own kids: cf.

statistics on child rape, father-daughter) will be able to indulge in these same third-world trips with a clear conscience - air-conditioned hotels, sanitised swimming pools, 'French' cuisine, local crafts, all produced by millions of kids of both sexes who work twelve hours a day and are paid with a little soup and a lot of slaps. But who cares? At least these children aren't "prostituting" themselves, they haven't "fallen" that far: they're simply "selling their labour power"... It's *cleaner all the same!*

Strange, singular, admirable journalism. So French. I mean: so Poujadist, so adept at absolving the real bastards and pointing the finger at the scapegoats. Great French journalism? The art of kissing the public's ass.

And they're a hairy bunch, that audience! And rough, and pasty with rancidity, shit and sweat all mixed up together, on the 'seated' seat - since Rimbaud, it's no longer a straw chair, it's a Conforama or Levitan. You rot much quicker there, with your head (?) swaddled in simmering colic. Damn, I love the French!

In any case, the "CHILD" has once again been used to break faggots. Last year, fifteen million children died around the world. They died of hunger. And not from "sexual trauma". Which, of course, doesn't stop straight people having dinner, and doesn't stop fags getting a hard-

on. But that doesn't prevent the fact that every year, on this earth, Poujadist "peace" is twice as deadly (if it's children) or nine times more deadly (if it's everyone) than the anti-Jewish holocaust of Hitler's war in 5 years. Long live peace!

Oh, of course, that's not an argument to exonerate fags from being, as I said at the beginning, dirty colonialist aunts etc. It's just to say that the straight press would rather denounce the little shit at the corner of our eye than the mountain of shit flowing out of their fat, philanthropic, Gaulish-ricard, planetarian arses.

My vocabulary turns to Père Duchêne and I blush. I don't write for sans-culottes! I should have contented myself with the language of Christ: the mote and the beam. (But I know myself: in which hole would I have lodged those?)

If my kind readers, and the boys with slightly dark circles around their eyes who steal the *Gai Pied* à leur papa, have so far put up with the very curious sinuosities of my thought, they are going to reap the reward for their effort: a relentlessly logical conclusion, such as you have to write when you want your readers to believe that they are intelligent. There is no good philosophy without that little affectionate lick in the intrigued eyes of the attentive reader.

It seemed to me that I hated just as energetically the people who

condemned 'colonialist' pederasty, the people who practised it, and sometimes even those who were subjected to it. So I thought that in five or six columns I'd be able to explain a bit about this feeling, and even explore what crazy love means between men who don't look alike. It's really the only kind of love I like; as soon as I see something in common with someone, I spill my guts - loving your fellow men so little, so violently loving your 'opposites', that's not very 'homophilic'. Too bad.

And what exactly is a 'different' person? Many of us are only interested in those who are like us in every way. But are they as much like them as they think they are? And have those who, like me, have fallen in love with another people, another culture, another language, done anything other than finally discover their own identity?

their true being, and, so long afterwards, their civil birth, their native land! For we were born a long way from our mothers' thighs.

(To be continued.)

DANGER PEDOS!

La chronique de Tony Duvert
L'amour en visite, 2

S

tu veux voir un éléphant qui te fasse rire, tu n'es qu'à lui jeter une noisette. Il essaie de la prendre avec le bout de sa trompe - mais, dès qu'il approche celle-ci, l'air qu'elle souffle fait s'envoler la noisette. Alors l'éléphant repousse la noisette et la reconstruit - et le souffle de sa trompe repousse à nouveau la noisette. Et l'éléphant continue ce manège sans jamais pouvoir attraper la noisette.

Ceci n'est pas une fable d'Ésope - mais une observation de psychologie animale qu'on peut lire dans le Kitab al-Hayawan (Le Livre des Animaux) de Dîlîmî, qui fut écrit au neuvième siècle de notre ère très chrétienne, en la belle ville de Bassora (Irak). (La traduction que je rasque est adaptée et abrégée).

La première fois que j'ai lu ça, j'en ai ri à m'en rouler par terre et à en pisser partout. Un rien de gai - c'est mon amour des éléphants. (Surtout en rue).

Et puis, quand on voit visualiser les choses qu'on lit, le gag que raconte Dîlîmî veut largement mieux de Tintin (mais qui vit en Isant Tintin ?) ou du bonhomme Wan Dooey.

À part ça, l'éléphant et la noisette ont un petit goût d'apollin. L'amateur de garçons qui se cale le voir assis dans le rôle de l'éléphant - et son léger amour, c'est la noisette.

Encore pour cette raison que, jadis, les hommes, princes et poètes, qui habitaient le monde arabe, et qui ont exprimé leur amour des jeunes garçons, nous ont décrits des gens si obèses ? Les jous comme des lunes, les fesses lourdes qui tombent à chaque pas, les cuisses abondantes d'un doux du lit et des viandes. Venus au secours ? Peut-être, mais par le cul, et moins la fargue faneuse.

Le petit amour gros, enveloppé de grasses délicate comme un gâteau l'est de moi fin, si d'allures un beau visage - large sourcil noir, nez

LA CHRONIQUE
 DE TONY DUVERT
 L'AMOUR EN VISITE

d'enfant, cils de femme, joues de fruit, dents de lait (elles ont un effet bleu), le sourire et les lèvres du bon-parleur. Et son trou est aussi petit que ses chairs sont rondes. En langage moderne, (et le demandeur, celui qui n'a jamais eu d'amour gros ne sait rien du plaisir).

Cette passion des éléphants était évidemment matérialisée - quel anacard, à l'époque d'Abû Nawâs (c'est l'illustre poète pédestre qu'on voit aux côtés du calife Harûn al-Rashîd), sur un lit de sauter le petit cul maigre et nerveux des enfants de la rue ? Volupté signifiait abondance. Vous auriez donc escaladé des croupes pneumatiques, et frouté - d'un membre sec et dur comme une lance - le trou effilé, saut, palpant, pède, infolument bavard, de ces jolis gourmands qu'ordonnaient le gras de moulin, les glissoux et les huiles. Comme ces amantâs furent heureux ?

Non, vraiment, les garçons qui les hommes (je comprends mal car c'était la principale forme d'adulation) choisissaient pour « amis », en ces temps disparus, n'étaient pas des noisettes ! (Plus ne me répondez pas que c'étaient des courtoises, sinon je ne dis plus rien).

Dans la pédophilie moderne, le goût du gros n'est plus guère répandu. Le régime idéaliste de la minceur prévaut. À tel point que, lorsque Marcel Proust nous montre, fronde à transformation, les belles joues d'Albertine), nous voyons une guêpe de boucher à claquer les lèvres d'un sierge de huit hâts.

Je connais, quelques part à Bagdad, deux frères, l'un avait onze ans et l'autre avait quatorze ans. Je ne les ai pas rencontrés ensemble. Car, si le petit aime les hommes, le grand, lui, aime seulement les sourcils.

Un soir de petit que je connus d'abord, il me montra, au lit, des muscles délicats et des passions riantes. Ce qui rend la v. pédophilie - si romantique, c'est que les bons gamins qui, plus curieux que des mouettes, viennent visiter votre lit, se réveillent encore plus enthousiastes de vous que vous-mêmes. Vous d'enfance, vous n'êtes enthousiastes d'eux.

Toujours dévorants. Le petit croque, et le grand lèche. À croire que l'amour a été inventé pour nous.

Mais je ne l'accusais pas. Avec un gosse, on se laisse faire, on obéit. Et puis, un soir où il dort chez moi, il me dit (j'ai était éveillé sur le côté, moi contre ses fesses, la queue entre ses cuisses) - « Nique-moi si tu veux. Mais tu me jurais de le dire à personne ! ».

Je connaissais bien ces deux phantasmes. Je les ai vu souvent ensemble. Comme, je pense, tous les amoureux bon bagdad. Parce qu'un n'écrit pas un gosse (comme on bourne une chère). Les petits garçons ont facilement le cul en feu (y a pas qu'aux), mais ils attendent de vous aimer beaucoup, camaraderie, confiance, (chairs) strictes, avant de dire : « Fais-le moi si tu veux ».

Mais j'ai d'autres idées. Je n'ai pas profité de l'occasion. Je connais trop les amis. Et le sien était à la fois proposé (il savait à quelle grosse) et serré. Au contraire, un garçonnnet de Bagdad qui brêle de nous arborer votre queue d'homme - je le saisis de très longue expérience - à le trou aussi décontracté, je n'ose dire gorge ouverte, que s'il se préparait à chier une énorme croûte. (Et j'ai été garçonnnet avant d'être cet homme).

Alors j'ai compris que je lui ferai mal, que ses tendresses amies étaient dans sa tête mais pas dans son cul, et voilà.

C'est vertueux à ne pas croire, cette honneur - mais le bonheur rend doux. Et je parle de ce d'écouter qui avait l'œil plus gros que le ventre, parce qu'il est le seul gosse un peu rondouillard que j'ai connu.

Pas gras, mais l'homme, seulement. Son jeune grand frère, quand on se mit à faire l'amour à trois, le petit pench dans ma bouche et le petit grand dans mon cul, se moqua des fesses du frangin. « Il a un gros derrière ! » s'écria-t-il.

« Ça n'était donc pas moi qui... » entend cette pauvre modernité du corps, ces adolescents hétéro, à peine haut comme ça, qui me font manger, son cul d'arg de cuisine, un foutre bras, criminel, vaillé, que je liguai sur son ventre, ce j'ai enfiler, quelle et nerveuse comme une chère, mépris, les ronds énergiques de son cou de petit frère. Il ne s'agissait même plus de gros (il n'y en avait aucun) : ça devenait des ronds de valaine. Même plus le droit d'être chère. Un mec - « bon », c'est le peu et les os.

Entre les cultures genre « train de la boucherie » et les sacs d'es dégrais, quels beaux bleus, quelles belles ecchymoses, l'amour va nous faire ! La poubonderie (l'horreur de la chair telles que, dans leur diversité infuse, les chairs peuvent être) n'a pas fini de nous flaquez des gosses. Et tous connexion, et au lit, et « beauté » s'appelle l'amour, en 2000, sera cette raclette qui s'effilait deux corps « parfaits ».

Mais j'en reviens à mes éléphants et mes noisettes.

À Bagdad, moi, j'étais résident. J'habitais, bien sûr, un palas des Mille et une Nuits, et, en tout cas, dans le quartier que j'avais choisi, il n'y avait pas un seul Européen à un grand kilomètre à un kilomètre. Mais j'allais en ville, et rien ne m'inquiétait davantage que les comportements, vraiment curieux, de mes confrères pédés. Pédés et français. Je parlais de Tintin tout à l'heure. Et le sourcil pédé français qui, avec ou sans l'acte de mission, l'égale et de ses "Gentils Organiseurs", s'en vont passer trois semaines dans l'une des mille Bagdad de la terre, ressemble décidément au professeur Tournesol et aux Chapout et Dupont. Fond, il se glisse.

Quand j'en voyais l'un de mes petits camarades s'acquiescer avec un sourcil, j'étais impatient qu'il me raconte comment ça s'était passé. Les récits ne me satisfaisaient pas : les garçons qui aiment l'amour physique (je n'en fréquente pas un d'autre) sont d'une gentillesse enfante, et ils avaient même les humiliations qu'ils subissent.

À Bagdad, le seul pédé que ces garçons - qui n'étaient pas du tout des prostitués, de choc ou pas - trouvaient, et trop lassés ! - ont « puis », c'était un sale gros cou, racine et richissime, donc avare, si dénigrant et si méprisant qu'à la fin, écumés, les gosses qu'il utilisait ont rallié les pneus et cassé les verres de sa voiture. Une nuit où il n'était même pas dehors. La patience de ces garçons, face à ce genre de mec qui je mettrais en bouillie pour le moindre geste dédaigneux, le moindre mot autoritaire, qu'il aurait envers ces enfants, la patience et la douceur des victimes de ce « pédé-colonialiste » m'ont bouleversé. Je l'aurais assassiné. Il est seulement aimé sa voiture.

Ce ras-le-bloc mis à part, c'est vrai que mes compatriotes, dans leurs relations avec les « meurtres » de Bagdad, me déconcertent. De toute ma vie, je n'ai jamais supposé que les amoureux des jeunes garçons puissent

(à suivre)

Gai Pied n°21

If you want to see an elephant that makes you laugh, all you have to do is throw him a hazelnut. He tries to pick it up with the tip of his trunk, but as soon as he approaches it, the air it blows makes the nut fly away. So the elephant goes back to the hazelnut and tries again: and the breath of his trunk pushes the hazelnut away again. And the elephant continues this merry-go-round without ever being able to catch the hazelnut.

This is not a fable by Aesop, but an observation on animal psychology that can be found in the *Kitab al-Hayawan* (The Book of Animals) by Jâhiz, which was written in the ninth century of our very Christian era, in the good city of Basra (Iraq). (The translation I am risking is adapted and abbreviated).

The first time I read it, I laughed until I was rolling on the floor and pissing everywhere. Nothing amuses me - hence my love of elephants. (Especially in rut).

And when you can visualise what you're reading, Djâhiz's gags are as good as those in Tintin (but who laughs when they read Tintin?) or the beloved Walt Disney.

Apart from that, The Elephant and the Hazelnut has the flavour of an apologue. The boy-lover who reads this immediately sees himself in the role of the elephant: and his slight lover is the hazelnut. Is this why, in days gone by, the men, princes and poets, who lived in the

Arab world, who have expressed their love of young boys, have portrayed such obese gitons? Cheeks like moons, heavy buttocks that tremble with every step, the abundant thighs of a god of wheat and meat. Aurignacian Venus? Perhaps, but with an arse that's less female.

The fat little lover, wrapped in delicate fat like a cake is wrapped in fine honey, has a beautiful face: broad black eyebrow, child's eye, woman's eyelashes, fruit cheeks, baby teeth (they have a blue sheen), the smile and lips of the well-spoken. And his hole is as small as his flesh is round. In modern parlance, *fat is beautiful*. Anyone who has never had a fat lover knows nothing about pleasure.

This passion for elephants was obviously materialistic: what fucker, in the time of Abû Nuwâs (the illustrious pederast poet pictured alongside the caliph Hârûm al-Rashîd), would have had the idea of fucking the skinny, nervous little asses of street children? Voluptuousness meant abundance. So you would have climbed up pneumatic rumps, and fucked - with a dry, spear-hard member - the frantic, sweating, throbbing, greedy, infinitely talkative hole of these pretty gourmands rounded out by mutton fat, cakes and oils. How happy these lovers were!

No, really, the boys that men (including married men, because

that was the main form of adultery) chose to 'love' in those bygone days were not nuts! (But don't tell me they were pumpkins, or I won't say another word).

In modern paedophilia, the taste for fat is no longer widespread. The idealistic reign of thinness prevails. So much so that, when Marcel Proust shows us Albert(ine)'s beautiful cheeks, we see a butcher's face with couperose or the tears of an eight-kilo candle.

I knew two brothers somewhere in Baghdâd, one was eleven and the other fourteen. I had never met them together. The younger brother liked men, but the older brother only liked tourists: so it was the younger brother that I met first.

He showed me, in bed, delicious morals and laughable passions. What makes 'paedophilia' so convincing is that the good kids who, more curious than flies, come to visit your bed, turn out to be even more enthusiastic about you than you, crazy about childhood, are about them. Tender devours. The little one crunches and the big one licks. It's as if love was invented for us.

But I didn't fuck him. With a kid, you just do as you're told, you obey. And then, one night when he was sleeping at my place, he said to me (we were lying on our sides, me against his buttocks, my cock between his thighs): "Fuck me if you

want. But you must swear not to tell anyone!

I knew those two phrases well. I'd heard them often. Like, I think, all good fuckers. Because you can't fuck a kid like you'd stuff a goat. It's easy for little boys to get their arses in a knot (they're not the only ones), but they'll wait until they like you a lot - camaraderie, trust, secret heat - before they say: "Do it to me if you want".

But I have other ideas. I didn't take advantage of the invitation. I know too much about anuses. And his was both on offer (he knew what a big cock it was) and tight. On the contrary, a boy from Baghdâd who's burning to swallow your man-dick - I knew this from long experience - has his hole as relaxed, I dare say open-throated, as if he were preparing to shit a huge turd. (And I was that boy before I was that man).

So I realised that I'd be hurting him, that his anal tenderness was in his head but not in his arse, and that was that.

It's virtuous not to believe, that story: but happiness makes you sweet. And I'm talking about this funny who had an eye bigger than his belly, because he's the only slightly plump kid I've ever known. Not fat, alas: just fleshy. When his younger brother and I started having three-way sex, the little one in my mouth and the big one in my arse, he used to make fun of his brother's bottom.

"He's got a big bum!" he exclaimed, delighted.

So it wasn't me who had invented this poor modernity of the body, this straight teenager, barely that high, who made me eat, his eyes widened with curiosity, a fresh, creamy, vanilla-coloured cum that I lapped up on his belly, this pretty child, slender and wiry as a goat, despised the energetic curves of his naughty little brother. It wasn't even a question of fat (there wasn't any): it became an obsession with volume. He wasn't even allowed to be fleshy. A 'good' guy is all skin and bones.

Between the 'butcher's market' bodybuilders and the elegant bags of bones, what beautiful bruises love is going to give us! Pudibonderie (the horror of the flesh in all its infinite diversity) has not finished giving us a hard time. And all conviction, and in bed, and with 'beauty' to back it up. In the year 2000, love will be the beating that two 'perfect' bodies give each other.

But I'm back to my elephants and my nuts.

In Baghdad, I was a resident. I lived, of course, in a palace from the Arabian Nights, and in any case, in the district I had chosen, there wasn't a single European within a radius of half a kilometre; two or three within a kilometre. But I went 'into town', and nothing intrigued me more than the truly curious behaviour of my fellow queers.

Queer and French. I was talking about Tintin earlier: the French queer tourist who, with or without the help of Monsieur Trigano and his 'Kind Organisers', comes to spend three weeks in one of the thousand Baghdâds of the world, is decidedly like Professor Tournesol and Dupont and Dupond. Fool, he screws up.

When I saw one of my little friends hooking up with a tourist, I couldn't wait for him to tell me how it went. The stories didn't satisfy me: the boys who like physical love (I don't date any others) are infinitely kind, and they even swallow the humiliations they suffer. In Baghdâd, the only faggot that these boys - who weren't prostitutes at all, shock or no: too small and too lascivious! - punished' was a filthy, fat, racist, rich, miserly prick, so disgusting...

and so contemptuous that in the end, disgusted, the kids he was using slashed the tyres and smashed the windows of his car. One night he wasn't even in it. The patience of these boys, faced with the kind of guy I'd beat to a pulp for the slightest disdainful gesture, the slightest authoritarian word, that he might have towards these children, the patience and gentleness of the victims of this "colonialist faggot" overwhelmed me. I would have murdered him: all they did was damage his car.

This borderline case aside, it's true that my compatriots, in their relations with the "minors" of Baghdâd, disconcerted me. In all my life, I had never supposed that lovers of young boys could...

(more)

* I would remind you that the subject of "L'amour en visite" is pederastic tourism outside France.

... in all my life, I had never imagined that lovers of young boys could treat them with contempt, with shamelessness, like a pimp who trains a whore or like a mother who brings up a brat. I thought paedophile love was different, and I had observed for myself that it could make the meanest of men good.

I was wrong. My fellow paedophiles weren't bad enough for the simple kindness of a kid to improve them. I've seen bastards who fuck kids hard, and who come out all proud of having haggled over the hole, the cock, of having got them cheap, like a carpet, a ewer, a copper tray, afraid of being robbed, they sell you everything too dear for what it's worth.

I remember three aunts in particular, speaking exquisite French, you'd have thought you were listening to France-Culture, they were chatting, cocotating, popotait, uh uh, ah ces dames froufrou qu'ont des lettres, they were, the aunts, at a table near mine, a café terrace in the late afternoon. One of these aunts, thirty years old, very tea room, white jeans, cowboy shirt, exclaimed:

"I only give them five francs! Ah, for what they do, that's already well paid!

The other cucutes chuckled in approval.

When you're as angry as I am, you have to be paralysed by extreme despair not to stand up when you hear that, and not to kick the shit out of those faggots.

I was desperate, I held back. But I understood, better than ever, that French fags had no business in Baghdad. As I studied certain samples of homosexual tourists more closely, among those who lusted after little boys, I discovered this invariable feature of their minds:

"Ah! l'Enfant, l'Enfant, l'Enfant! First communion, little blond angels, special friendships, cu-cu-cu-cu-cu-cu-cu- cu- pi-pi-pi-pi-pi-pi-pi!... Little pink buttocks and little white knees. Jesus made of sugar. Blessed Virgin, oh mother who doesn't incest! These little mouchous mimis, blond roseroses, la mourtoujour. Ma mourtoujour à moi, chouchou mimi, cucul blonblond."

(To sum up...)

People who had that prayer in their heads, like a widowed Madame Bovary who, gorged on the *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, would have had as her ideal only an impubescent Rodolphe with curls, people like that, as soon as they left cold France to gobble themselves up at the

I almost expected one of these paedophiles to confide in me, with tears in their eyes. I would almost have expected one of these paedophiles to confide in me, with

tears in his eyes:

"In France, there's nothing we can do. I'm afraid. I've been through an immense, unhappy love affair. A blond child, extraordinarily beautiful, he was this, that, that, that. I only once dared to kiss his cheek. The fire still burns! His ecstatic purity was pure ecstasy, I swear! I never touched her on the..., or even the..., let alone the.... Hou hou, Blessed Virgin, how dirty that would have been! Tony, it was our pure love. It's not from my side that I know Hanffansse's side".

I would have sympathised. He would have continued:

"And that's it. That's what I've come to. I spend my holidays in Baghdâd. Oh sure, the children of Baghdâd, they're uninhibited, but they're not blond, nor bourgeois, nor Catholic, it's not pure love, every time it's an immense bitterness. Do you understand what's atrocious? I'm going to grope one of those spics who only think about money, that'll make me feel better, then I'll go back to the hotel and read Roger Peyrefitte again. Besides, he himself wrote that it's too easy to make love with Arab boys, it's despicable. And I cry..."

By the way, anyone of you who visits a particular Maghreb country every year and knows more than ten words of Arabic should write to me: you deserve a statue.

What I'm really getting at is this: our frustrated paedophiles go

on holiday to all sorts of countries where, they've been told, *it's easy*. And they take with them all the racist and xenophobic bullshit, all the petty-bourgeois vanity, all the Jesus-is-my-joy-is-dead fantasies they've cultivated during eleven months of constipation in France.

It never occurs to them that if *it's easy* in the country they're going to, it's because they're *somewhere else*. And really, the most tender paedo, who whines into his pillow one evening because he spotted some cute kid on the bus in Paris, suddenly turns into a disgusted john who visits a dog harem as soon as he crosses the Mediterranean and has to deal with kids who say yes, but who say yes because, in all their immense, tiny existence, they have never known it was forbidden to have sex with them. The French paedophile on holiday there often looks like a seminarian let loose in the middle of Pigalle. He both lusts after the creatures of perdition he sees and is appalled by them. Sweet Jesus, my rose and blue, where shall I find you among all these pagans?

So the paedophile cynicism I mentioned ("five francs is all it's worth") is based on a disappointed idealism. Our paedos go off to live, with savages, *La faute de l'abbé Mouret*, in a Paradou populated by shady palm trees and sneaky camels, and they come back from there all chilled not to have touched little

Jesus. They'd give their lives, their fortunes, their huge hearts, to any little boy who belonged to their dream pantheon of the Henphanzzze, but little racoons aren't real kids, they look like people like you and me, and they're only worth five francs.

The funny thing is (because there are things so filthy that we'll never have enough tears to cry about them, so we just snigger), the funny thing is that the pederasts in question don't say to themselves at all: "Well, in this country there aren't any super-sweet kids, not even one with blue eyes, so I'm going home". No. They stay. They send kids to each other all the same. They have fun taking them by the hand. They flirt with them, sweet-talk them, lisp them, chaff them, mother them, suckle them, like wolves who, for lack of cubs, are horribly reduced to cuddling men.

After they'd played their touching little games of mum to In the same way that they had built up their particular, intimate scenarios in their habitual solitude, they consumed the benevolent doll, the p'tit bounoule. And five francs.

Since, in my country, I can't live out my great dream of love with the eternal Hen-phan whom whom whom, I'm shagging the little Arab but without my great dream of love.

To say that what makes the paedo on holiday so stupid, so monstrous, isn't racism or

colonialism, it's rather his way of exporting, to a civilisation that isn't his own - and that he's totally incapable of loving and understanding - the narrow-minded fantasies, the indecrottable daydreams, that he caresses in his head like a virgin sniffs his knickers.

But since they touch them, suck them and fuck them, these little brown children who are as unhappy as the sun and who never see anyone's wickedness, since they discover them, our paedos, these children really as they are, how is it that this revelation doesn't open their eyes? I can understand how a paedophile in France, who isn't very bold, can cultivate in his heart a bizarre and silly image of childhood. It's the imagery of the families themselves, it's the children we're given to worry about.

to prove to us that Childhood-is-not-touching. But over there, in the light and dust of real life, among those kids who aren't "Children", but simply men too small, too weak to have the right to be any man at all, among them, and in the overwhelming brilliance of their laughter, their distress and their beauty, how can we cling to the idiotic illusions we had about Childhood, how can we still believe in the beliefs we learned in the children's hospital - France - where we live?

I'm afraid that too many paedophiles, through their love of children, are merely wanking their sinister navels. The love of children has a long, gloomy and morose face in our country. Impotent, revolted, disgusted, as soon as a kid, a real kid, a kid from over there, takes this love literally. That kid, that Martian, who says to you with all his heart: *"I'm not a kid. I'm me.*

(To be continued)

La chronique de Tony Duvert L'amour en visite, 4

Un ami qui me veut du bien, et à qui je ne souhaite aucun mal, m'a traité de Méné Grégoire, de François Dolto, de Foyer, de Élie, de Minnie, de Canard enchaîné, et même d'association de parents d'élèves, parce que, selon lui, mon feuilleton de « l'amour en visite » est anti-pédophile.

Est-ce judicieux, honnête, opportun, au moment où la justice des familles va assassiner Dugué et s'est payé la ruffe, style Alut, et brouillant de l'affaire Amaniera, et tandis que cette France soi-disant socialiste est plus poujadiste que jamais, est-ce opportun d'écrire, dans un journal homo, une critique du comportement des pédocrates ?

Non. Mon ami a raison. Mais :

1. J'écris mes chroniques un mois et demi, avant qu'elles paraissent. En plus (quelle honneur !) j'y pense très longtemps avant de les écrire, et j'ai une peine inexplicable à les composer. Ce qui les rend inactuelles, dans tous les cas. En somme, je ne suis pas journaliste, et je n'ai aucune envie de le devenir.

2. Les pédocrates que la justice des familles et ses petites Marie Grégoire, Himmler, et

Crabibels du temps de paix, sont, à l'heure où j'écris, résolus à brûler vifs au nom de l'Élément-Parents, ces pédocrates ont vécu la vie même que j'aime vivre et leur « cynisme » est dans la droite ligne d'un comportement sexuel qui est, presque unanime, celui même des jeunes garçons (je dis bien : les garçons, ne mélangeons pas les garçons et les enfants, les enfants c'est une invention de mères frigides).

Où, les gamins aiment faire l'amour comme on se mouche, et leur *monoculture sexuelle* choquée à la fois les psychiatres-experts qui voudraient dénicher des « traumatismes », et les pédocrates qui voudraient être aimés, aimés d'amour. Dugué, Amaniera, ne sont ni des psychiatres, ni des pédocrates : en cela, ils ressemblent absolument aux gosses qui leur ont dit oui. Des gamins de France qui, eux, ressemblent à ce que sont l'immense majorité des gamins de la planète entière. Une exception chez nous, une règle partout ailleurs. Les procès de pédocrates se dressent encore davantage pour condamner — par principe — les enfants qui ressemblent à des non-Français, que les adultes qui ont eu le bonheur de les connaître et qu'ils jouissent ensemble de s'être accordés. Identifiés !

3. Les pédocrates que la police attrape et que nos lois concernent ne sont pratiquement jamais ceux qui, très prudents en France, attendent

leurs vacances pour se déchaîner à l'étranger. Simple question d'argent, peut-être. Ici, on pourrait déplorer que les pédocrates importants — linguistiquement, politiquement, socialement, culturellement, etc. — ne se mouillent jamais. La liste de leurs noms est un secret de polichinelle : doivent-ils, eux, leur impunité à ce silence qu'ils gardent sur eux-mêmes, et qu'on garde sur eux ? Comparée à toutes les autres causes qui soient, la pédocratie souffre essentiellement — comme la bonne vieille homosexualité juive — que ceux qui la vivent et qui sont importants se talentent. A l'avant-propos de Dugué, Matznell et Schärer sont venus témoigner : je les en admire ; de plus célèbres qu'eux ont fermé leur gueule et leur yeux : je n'ai pas fait de les en admirer. N'est-ce pas, M.F. ?

Où, c'est le problème fondamental que rencontre, en France, la cause de nos amours : les pédocrates influents et importants ne se mouillent jamais. Quant au jour où un champion français, sa médaille olympique au cou, dira à TF1 qu'il se fait enculer délicieusement depuis l'âge de huit ans, ou même le jour où un spécialiste en économie de RTL avouera que la bouffe l'indresse moins que les bouffes, il y aura beaucoup de choses changées dans le royaume de Méné Grégoire et de Robert Chapatte, qui serait sûrement à la retraite d'ici que nos vedettes lâchent le morceau.

Je reviendrai — (du)vertement, pardon — sur ce sujet dans une chronique ultérieure. Je sou-

haitais simplement indiquer, aujourd'hui, que je parle, moi, de la pédocratie, comme si elle était légitime. Je ne m'occupe pas qu'on l'approuve, qu'on la taise ou qu'on la condamne : je pense à ses victimes, à ce que j'en vois, à ce que j'en sais.

Et si, d'aventure, une quantité regrettable de pédos plutôt bien en cour et assez argencés se comportent, en vacances, comme des salauds, et que moi, pédos fauché, j'ai connu, fréquenté, aimé leurs victimes, sans plus. La pédocratie n'est pas plus un brevet de sainteté qu'une preuve de malhonnêteté. Comme toute forme de sexualité, elle vaut ce que valent ceux qui la pratiquent. Ici, la proportion de salauds est exactement la même qu'ailleurs. Tant pis si on me reproche d'en être conscient. Moi, ce que j'aime, c'est les gamins. Les pédocrates, je m'en fous (enfin, presque...). Avez-vous déjà vu un enfant, un petit garçon ? N'importe lequel. Ah, non. Vous n'avez jamais regardé n'importe lequel. Parlez d'autre chose, alors. Qui n'aime pas les enfants n'aime pas les gens, c'est le cas de le dire. Pauvres chiens à leurs mémoires, on n'a pas fini, queue en l'air ou seins en bas, de les regarder de travers.

De tous les êtres humains, l'enfant est le plus inquiétant. L'hérédité est malicieuse : elle communique aux gosses certains airs de famille dont les familles jubilent et se réjouissent : mais ça en reste là. Chaque gamin ne ressemble qu'à lui, et pas ce qui engage ses parents. A plus forte raison, vous connaissez un gosse d'un pays que vous ne connaissez pas ; vous vous découvrez des atomes crochus ; vous vous aimez ; vous vous apercevez bientôt qu'il n'est pas plus de son pays que vous ne l'êtes du vôtre. Votre seul pays à tous deux, c'est cet amour. Les familles-pères ne sont pas près de vous le pardonner.

Le mois dernier, j'étais sur le cynisme des michetons idéalistes et idéologues qui est, si fréquemment, celui des pédocrates français en vacances à l'étranger. Maintenant, renverrons la proposition.

J'ai été à Baghdad. J'y ai, par-dessus tout, aimé les gosses qui font profession de monnaie. L'un d'eux m'a rendu, pour cette tendresse coquine et querueuse, qui est la douceur même, il préférait vivre avec moi et n'importe où, plutôt qu'à Baghdad et sans moi. Bizarre, bizarre, mais on s'est reconnu, on est le même genre de chiens. Ceux qui se lâchent entre eux, mais qui morfondent au sujet des maîtres et des maîtresses. Deux sauvages. Deux bons enfants un peu idiots. Des pédés ! On ne se demande jamais, l'un à l'autre, si on « est pédé », quand on a des raisons si urgentes et si parfaites d'être ensemble. On s'encule ! Ben oui, jusqu'on se parle. L'amour c'est fait pour ça. Le sexe c'est bien pour l'amour, c'est affreux partout ailleurs, voyez les familles... les « couples »...

Bon. Comment amener ce gamin chez moi, ici, en France, si on le veut être ? Impossible. Comment faire mieux que de lui dire au revoir, et envoyer chez lui, quand je peux, des mandats internationaux que sa très honnête famille hétero découvrira et qui se partageront en moitié pour le père et l'autre moitié pour la mère, plutôt qu'en bien-être et en études confortables (on a ses livres, ses cahiers, ses stylos, un dictionnaire ?) pour le paix ? Une culotte propre à la place de celle, ruinée, qu'il porte ? Plus, je connais des gosses qui foudroient jusqu'au dernier coin de leur maison pour trouver un endroit où cacher la gare de chaussettes sans trou, le maillot de bain rouge qui a un élastique qui tance, le drôle de journal en français (Paris-Match, photos couleur et grosses lettres lillibés) qu'ils ont mis par un pédé, leur regard, leur seul frère, parce que s'ils n'arrivent pas à cacher tout ça, moi frère sans par les plus vieux (parents, grands frères, grandes sœurs) et revendu ou foutu à la poubelle. Ces humbles trésors-là ne parlent pas de bite-et-cul. Ils disent seulement : j'ai une autre vie que celle que mes parents m'ont donnée. Mes parents ne m'ont donné que le bonheur de vivre. Tandis que cet homme-là, moi frère, putain quel sale pédé ! Il m'a donné l'autre vie, la vraie. Mais elle est encore plus malheureuse. Parce que personne ne veut nous le laisser vivre.

Entre le garçon de là-bas et le pédé d'ici, qui se sont révélés l'un à l'autre comme habitants d'un monde qui n'est pas inscrit au répertoire géographique des nations, aucun amour durable, aucune union n'est possible : les frontières — une invention d'adultes, de mamans, de parents — empêchent tout.

Mon frère, je te quitte. La dispute nous sépare. Nous sommes illégaux. Nous nous aimerons bien l'un de l'autre. Après tout, ça ne compte pas. Tous le monde crève, hein, et si faut crever saut.

(à suivre)
 Gai-Pied n° 34



Photo Arthur Tress - Jeffery Coste and David (D.R.)

A friend who wishes me well, and to whom I wish no harm, called me M^{énie} Grégoire, Françoise Dolto, Foyer, *Elle*, *Minute*, *Canard enchaîné*, and even a parents' association, because, according to him, my soap opera 'L'amour en visite' is anti-pedophile.

Is it wise, honest, timely, at a time when the family justice system is going to murder Dugué and has paid for the *Nuit et brouillard*-style roundup of the Amaniera affair, and when so-called socialist France is more pansy than ever, to write, in a gay newspaper, a criticism of the behaviour of pederasts?

No. My friend is right. But :

1. I write my reviews a month and a half before they appear. What's more (what a horror!) I think about them for a very long time before writing them, and I have an inexplicable difficulty composing them. Which makes them out of date, in any case. In short, I'm not a journalist, and I have no desire to become one.

2. The paedophiles whom family justice and its little M^{énie} Grégoire, Himmler and Goebbels of peacetime, are, as I write, resolved to burn alive in the name of the Child-parent, these paedophiles have lived life itself

I like to live with and their 'cynicism'

is in line with their sexual behaviour, which is, almost unanimously, that of young boys (and I do mean boys, let's not mix up boys and children, children are an invention of frigid mothers).

Yes, kids like to make love like they blow their noses, and their sexual casualness shocks both the expert psychiatrists who would like to find "traumas", and the paedophiles who would like to be loved, loved with love. Dugué and Amaniera are neither psychiatrists nor *sentimental* paedophiles: in this, they are absolutely like the kids who said yes to them. Kids from France who, for their part, resembled the vast majority of kids around the world. An exception here, a rule everywhere else. Paedophile trials are even more likely to condemn - as a matter of principle - children who look like non-French citizens than adults who have had the good fortune to get to know them and enjoy their relationship with them. Identified?

3. The paedophiles that the police catch and that our laws nail are practically never those who, very careful in

France, wait for their holidays to go wild abroad. A simple question of money, perhaps. Here, we could deplore the fact that paedophiles who are important - financially,

politically, socially, culturally, etc. - never come forward. The list of their names is an open secret: do they owe their impunity to the silence they keep about themselves, and that is kept about them? Compared to all other causes, paedophilia suffers essentially - like good old homosexuality once did - from the fact that those who live it and who are *important* keep silent. At the Dugué pre-trial, Matzneff and Schérer came to testify; I admire them for that; more famous people than them have shut their mouths and their pens; I have not finished despising them for it. Isn't that right, Mr F.?

Yes, that's the fundamental problem facing the cause of our love affairs in France: the influential and important fags/pedos never stick their necks out. As for the day when a French champion, his Olympic medal around his neck, tells TF1 that he's been fucked deliciously since the age of eight, or even the day when an economic specialist on RTL admits that the stock market interests him less than the stock market, a lot will have changed in the kingdom of Ménie Grégoire and Robert Chapatte, who will surely be retired by the time *our* stars drop the ball.

I'll come back to this subject in a later column. I just wanted to say today that I talk about pederasty *as*

if it were legal. I don't care whether people approve of it, keep quiet about it or condemn it: I'm thinking about its experiences, what I see of it and what I know about it.

And if, by any chance, a regrettable number of rather well-heeled and well-to-do pedos behave like bastards on holiday, and I, a broke pedo, have known, associated with and loved their victims, so be it. Paedophilia is no more a badge of holiness than it is proof of malfeasance. Like any form of sexuality, it is only as good as those who practise it. Here, the proportion of bastards is exactly the same as elsewhere. So much the worse if I'm criticised for being aware of it. What I like is kids. I couldn't care less about paedophiles (well, almost). Have you ever seen a child, a little boy? Any child. No, you haven't. You've never looked at just any child. Let's talk about something else, then. If you don't like dogs, you don't like people, so to speak.

Poor dogs with their mums, we're not done looking at them sideways, tails up or tits down.

Of all human beings, children are the most worrying. Heredity is mischievous: it imparts to children certain family traits that families rejoice in and claim as their own: but that's as far as it goes. But that's as far as it goes. Every kid is his own

person, and that's what infuriates his parents.

Even more so when you meet a kid from a country you don't know; you discover you've got something in common: you like each other; you soon realise that he's no more from his country than you are from yours. The only country you both have is this love. Your homelands are not about to forgive you for this.

Last month, I was ironic about the cynicism of the idealistic and disdainful cads who are so often to be found among French pederasts on holiday abroad. Now, let's turn the proposition on its head.

I've been to Baghdâd. Above all, I loved the kids there who make a *profession of begging*. One of them gave me, laughing, that naughty, queer tenderness that is gentleness itself. He'd rather live with me, anywhere, than with me.

than in Baghdâd and without me. Strange, strange, but we recognised each other, we're the same kind of dogs. The kind that lick each other, but bite their masters and mistresses to the bone. Two savages. Two good kids who are a bit stupid. Fags? Neither of us ever asks ourselves if we're "queer", when we have such urgent and perfect reasons to be together. We fuck each other! Yes, we do, because we *talk* to each other. That's what love is for. Sex is good for friendship, it's awful

everywhere else, just look at families... "couples"...

So how do I get this kid to my home, here in France, where he wants to be? Impossible. How can I do better than to say goodbye to him, and send him home, when I can, international money orders that his very honest straight family will misappropriate and which will turn into motorbikes for the father and new dresses for the mother, rather than well-being and comfortable studies (we have his books, his notebooks, his pens, a dictionary!) for the kid? Clean underpants instead of the ruined ones he wears? I know kids who search every last corner of their house to find a place to hide the pair of socks with no holes, the red swimming costume with the elastic that holds, the funny French newspaper (*Paris-Match*, colour photos and big readable lines) they got from a fag,

their boyfriend, their only brother, because if they don't manage to hide it all, it will be seized by the older generation (parents, older brothers, older sisters) and sold or thrown away. These humble treasures don't talk cock-and-bull. They're just saying: I have a different life to the one my parents gave me. My parents only gave me the misfortune of living. But that man, my brother, what a fucking faggot! He gave me the other life, the real one. But it's even more miserable. Because nobody wants to let us live it.

Between the boy from over there and the fag from here, who have revealed themselves to each other as inhabitants of a world that is not part of the intangible repertoire of nations, no lasting love or friendship is possible: borders - an invention of straight men, mothers and parents - prevent everything.

My brother, I'm leaving you. Customs are separating us. We are illegals. We'll love each other far away. After all, it doesn't matter. Everyone dies, and you have to die alone.

(more)

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - Late 1981

*Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, director of the review Masques.
Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.*

Monday.

Dear Jean-Pierre,

Thanks for your excellent letter. I'll try to get back to you in three or four days - I'm more overwhelmed than ever with (good) work + (big) bullshit that's eating up all my energy. Ah, the life of an artist! - I'm trying to send you the few pages you were kind enough to ask me about Genet: given the appalling lack of time, I'll settle for a little speech about Bataille's arch-con text on Genet in 'Literature and Evil'. Let me know as soon as possible if this project overlaps with another collaboration, so that I can change my mind.

Best regards

Tony

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - Late 1981

*Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, director of the review Masques.
Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.*

Monday.

Dear Jean-Pierre,

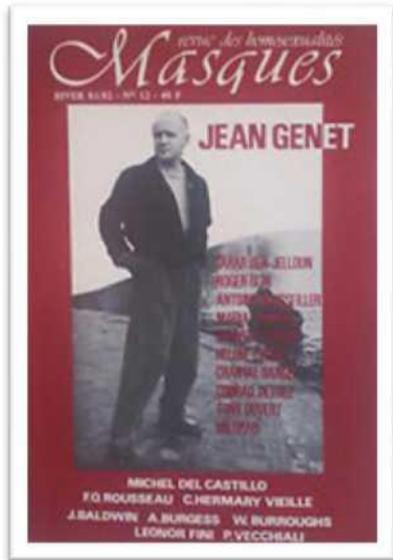
Enclosed is the text on Genet. You'll probably receive it too late to include it in Masques. I'm sending it anyway, as promised. You can imagine that it was really impossible for me to write it earlier. I've got a crazy schedule!

My apologies and best wishes

Tony

BATTLE AGAINST GENET - Winter 1981-82

Source: *Masques*, quarterly review of homosexuality, winter 81/82, issue 12.
Editorial secretariat: Jean-Marie Combette, Jean-Pierre Joecker, Patrice Lorenzo,
Nelly Mello, Alain Sanzo.



BATTLE AGAINST GENET

Georges Bataille (whom I don't think the gay public reads much) devoted the study that concludes *Literature and Evil* to Genet's work.

The confrontation between Jean Genet and this little chapel writer who saw in *Wuthering Heights* "one of the most beautiful books of literature of all time" could have been

It is only aborted. Bataille was not at all interested in Genet's books: he read them, in truth, through Sartre's *Saint Genet*. The writer Genet did not appeal to him: "his stories interest but do not *enthral*", said Bataille, who added: "there is nothing colder, less touching, beneath the sparkling parade of words". He denounced Genet's "verbal glitter" and "je ne sais quoi de frêle, de froid, de friable". He sees in Genet "a writer who, while singular, undoubtedly gifted and humanly distressing, is far from being the equal of the greatest in every respect". Genet, "the victim of a fad", needs to be "stripped of the halo of literary snobbery". And so on.

Since this proves that Genet is not Emily Brontë, Bataille will focus his study on what Sartre sees as the philosophical - metaphysical and moral - problematic of this 'glittering' work. Sovereignty in/through evil, abjection, betrayal, sanctity through the transgression of all the prohibitions that underpin the Good, and so on. - Over the last thirty years and more, this problematic has been so obstinately expounded and commented on, and Genet himself is so willingly hounded on the subject when he is interviewed, that I won't go into it again here. On the contrary, I prefer to sidestep these clichéd questions and look at things from the outside - from the angle of total indifference to this mystical nonsense.

Admittedly, Genet did not steal being invariably read and glossed over for his philosophy of Evil. He did everything he needed to do so, and his

stories/novels (*Querelle de Brest* and *Pompes funèbres* are, however, more discreet in this respect) are largely drowned in these poetic and often bloated 'moral' considerations, which Sartre was happy to collect and amalgamate to cook up the enormous mush of *Saint Genet*.

But I wonder if, in fact, reading Genet through what he thinks of himself or his heroes isn't reading him very far from himself. These are novels that were, and still are, a *problem*. I mean, problems within the established culture and the French literary heritage. A heritage which, as its name suggests, is made up of 'great' works and 'great' men - sovereign, patriarchal, profound geniuses who, like good fathers, tackled the 'great' questions of the Human Condition.

That this conception of Literature (which is precisely the one developed by Georges Bataille) smacks of his hetero with braces and omnipotence is obvious. That Genet's books borrow the appearances, the 'beauties', the 'universal' and 'sovereign' themes of this literature of the Fathers, nothing could be clearer: but the watchdogs of patriarchy are not mistaken, they quickly sniff out the cheat, the faggot who has disguised himself as a man - sorry, as a 'great man'.

The 'glitz', the 'fake', the bagouzes, the plastic pearls, the borrowing and the derision - Divine's royal crown on the day she is crowned is her own dentures - is in fact so manifest in Jean Genet's moral philosophy that such an affront to the most essential Values of Creation and Thought will be the source of the malaise that Sartre and Bataille, each in their own way, are trying to get rid of. Sartre pretends to take Genet literally, playing the game all the better because Genet, the Genet man, seems to be playing it to the hilt (so it's 'sincere', let's go); Bataille, who has an incomparably finer nose, discovers the deception, and analyses it very skilfully. To condemn it, of course. Genet doesn't give a damn about the world," says Bataille, "he's neither a Saint nor a Sovereign Creator, he's a failure.

A failure, yes. Genet fell into the "impasse of unlimited transgression". Sovereignty through Evil does not grow or liberate Genet, it turns him into a slave: "Evil has become a duty, which is what Good is", says Bataille. And since Genet, he asserts, "has neither the power nor the intention of communicating with his readers", and the sovereignty of writing is

With this communication, this "sovereign operation" (again!), Bataille concludes: "Genet's life is a failure and, under the guise of success, so are his works".

I've outrageously summarised Bataille's argument, but the point was simply to show how he enters into Genet's game to denounce cheating and accuse Genet of 'duping others, so as to be able, if he can, to dupe himself'. In other words: You're just a cheating little faggot, you're not a King-Father.

And that's precisely my opinion too - with the difference that, where Bataille condemns a deception, I admire it. The failure of sovereignty through abjection (a simple variant on the no more idealistic theme of greatness through the Good) is the failure of the *Master's philosophy*. Bataille exalted it, and Genet's rigged thinking tears it to shreds. And that is the truest victory of *betrayal*.

The same applies to the "failure" of books. Because, if we don't read, can't read, don't have the right to read, Genet's novels for what they are 'universal' - their way of dealing with the question of Good and Evil, their way of manifesting the superhuman sovereignty of the literary Creator - what's left of them? Nothing that the heterosexual heritage can love, integrate or enshrine. These books can hardly attract anyone but faggots in need of a hand job. Unable to communicate, Genet is a little pornographer for specialised amateurs. False philosopher, false writer, false poet, Genet has been expelled from the Pantheon, he has missed his destiny as a Master. No pedestal for this bastard.

Does this mean that Genet's *homosexual* readers must consider negligible, if not his genius - which, admittedly, is not where a Bataille is looking for it, delighted not to find it there - then at least the moral thought that intertwines the most beautiful cock stories of all time? I don't know. Genet's 'philosophy' has always left me as cold as, for example, those mountains of philosophical detritus, general ideas and profound thoughts, that clutter up Balzac's prose, that pachydermic intelligence so satisfied with itself that it never misses an opportunity to comment on, analyse and underline every feature of the story; and I wondered why a literary beast as perfect as Balzac could so often commit the enormous blunder of sullyng his novels with grotesque ideas, phoney sociology, infantile psychology and spoiled politology.

We have to admit that it is to this very imbecility that we owe Balzac's work; just as we owe Émile Zola's work to the indigent theoreticism of "naturalism". Zola, it is true, had the good taste not to piss in his novels themselves, and to take care of his intellectual needs away from them. Without big stupid ideas, no real novelists? These people would have us believe so. And Céline.

In Genet's case, the omnipresence of a thought on Evil, an indefensible, inviable thought, does not produce any embarrassment: far from any contribution to "Philosophy", it is rather a variant of *poetic expression*. When, in mirliton verse, a lover says he is ready to die for his sweetheart, he is obviously a bloody liar, he is writing (bad) poetry: he is using a trope which, if not literally true, illustrates and rhetorically expresses the unbelievable extent of his feelings. In short, he doesn't want to kill himself, but he's got a hard-on. And everyone understands. In the same way, the metaphysical and moral garlands that *decorate* Genet's stories have a tropical, even erotic, function. A precise review would certainly show that it is, each time, the carnal intensity of the discourse, of the object of the discourse at such and such a moment, that triggers a discharge of philosophical rhetoric. It's an art of oratory that you may or may not like, but which is absolutely inseparable from the expressiveness of the novel, and from the people and actions it privileges.

This is something that the heterosexual reader cannot perceive, because the heterosexual reader (Bataille's opinion of Genet's art is a perfect example) is impervious, blind, blocked, to the considerable and magnificent disturbance that Genet's *homosexual* writing engenders in the queer reader.

On the understanding that I don't call gay literature that which tells us about homosexuality - which I don't give a damn about - but that which... tells us about *boys*. We've all made love to Jean Genet's boys: we'll do it again. And since Bataille insisted on 'communication' as the essential criterion of sovereignty in writing, I'll be ironic if I say that Genet is indeed 'sovereign'. After all, Georges Bataille must have suspected as much - he whose text oozes horror and disgust that Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs and Mignon had fucked him straight across the page.

LETTERS TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 5 February 1982

*Letter from Tony Duvert to Jean-Pierre Joecker, director of the review Masques.
Source: Un Homme Parle, Les Editions Bleues.*

Tours, 5

February Dear Jean-Pierre,

I always reply so quickly... You mustn't blame me too much. Between money, work, health and intimacy problems, I'm like a piece of (bad) meat in a freezer: it's not easy to survive. And my availability suffers.

You were very kind to ask me to do something for the issue Masques was preparing on paedophilia. Initially, I would have preferred not to intervene (always the same people talking, you know the reproach, and it's justified, after all). I hate holding the spittoon so much that I even refused (politely) an interview that Le Matin asked me to do for its feature on the Family. That's how virtuous I am, in the not-obtrusive kind of way (hmm).

Now - and while I've got so many little sorrows that I can't even manage to provide Gai Pied with my monthly column - I think I could have suggested a text for this Masques. An anti... well, an anti a lot of things! Anti-pedophile, in particular.

Because there's a lot of cleaning up to do.

But I think it's too late for this issue. If I'm wrong, would you be so kind as to let me know as soon as possible (example: a three-word telegram), and this text will be done immediately.

Changing the subject, I'm delighted with what Persona (1) has published. And I'm just as pleased about the projects you've announced. Is the Marseille trans. case (2) the same as the admirable one where, I think, 500 mothers (real, biological ones!) signed a petition so that she could keep her 'stolen' kid? - But if you have to have your willy cut off to get mothers to sign for you... Big sigh.

(1) Added in the margin to apologise for the mistake on Persona: *oh, sorry!*

(2) A pregnant prostitute (woman) who did not want a child gave birth under the name of a transsexual friend and colleague who wanted one... (NdE)

My major misfortunes mean that I'm still just as incapable of finding the freedom, the minimum level of well-being, that would allow me to take a trip to Paris, for example. I haven't seen Chirac's city for over two years. It's not that Jean Royer's town is a paradise: but at least I can hole up there until things get a bit better. Long live the holes! (Yes, they are!)

Best wishes to you
Tony

QUAND on traite un sujet intemporel, et qu'on l'effleure, comme je l'ai fait, à coup de digressions, de fantaisies, on s'y empêtre, on n'en sort plus. On est trop dedans : on risque d'ensuyer. La politesse oblige à couper court. Je préfère donc achever aujourd'hui cet amour en visite; j'y reviendrai si j'apprends à en parler mieux, et autrement, et avec moins de timidité et de vague.

Les pays que fréquentent les pédérastes et les pédophiles se lassent, un à un, de ce tourisme-là. Ils créent des lois pour l'ensuyer. J'habituais l'un de ces pays quand on y édicta, en 1974 je crois, une loi anti-homosexuels. Un matin, je rentrais du marché, et un gamin que je connaissais m'aborde, le visage atterré :
 — T'as entendu la radio ?
 — Non, qu'est-ce qu'il y a ? La guerre ?

On rentre chez moi. Le garçon m'explique de quelle guerre il s'agit : désormais, les actes homosexuels seront punis de prison.

Pas de quoi s'affoler, pensais-je. Dans toutes les nations du monde, aujourd'hui, les chefs d'Etat posent pour la photo officielle en complet rayé et cravate, devant une cheminée Louis XVI : c'est une question de standing, de bonne image de marque internationale. Au même titre, ils épureront les mœurs de leur déplorable population : la morale chrétienne, c'est propre, ça fait riche, docile, bien élevé, c'est très bien vu sur le marché de la main-d'œuvre.

Le détail de la loi (plusieurs pays que les homos fréquentent massivement l'été ont la même) était vraiment intéressant. Car on interdisait les relations homos entre mineurs et majeurs (ô Foyer, quel régal !). Mais la loi punissait identiquement le mineur et le majeur qui avaient « collaboré » à cette infamie.

Oui, tous les deux flanqués au trou. Pas question d'un « coupable » adulte et d'une « victime » enfantine. Non : deux coupables, un gamin, un adulte. Coupables d'homosexualité, tout simplement. Des complices. Comme s'ils avaient volé, ensemble, quelque chose. Mais quoi, et à qui ?...

L'amour en Visite (5)

Le coin de Tony Duvert

Cette originalité de la loi m'avait enchanté. Elle prouvait qu'on n'instaurait pas l'ordre moral pour « protéger » les enfants de l'horrible appétit sexuel des touristes — mais pour dissuader le mineur de partager ses jeux avec les grandes personnes venues d'ailleurs. Il fallait réprimer l'homosexualité naïve du petit peuple garçonnier, lui qui, certes, n'avait eu besoin d'aucun touriste, d'aucun colon, pour s'enculer en toute innocence. Et, puisque ces garçons-là n'ont pas de préjugés anti-vieux, au contraire, on peut être certain qu'ils lâchaient plus de foutre avec les vieilles tantes de l'Europe qu'avec les jeunes femmes de chez eux. Et pour cause.

Cette loi a-t-elle été appliquée ? Je ne l'ai pas constaté, et je ne l'ai pas entendu dire. Ce n'était sûrement pas sa raison d'être. Il s'agissait, je le répète, d'un simple cadeau que cet Etat faisait à ces messieurs puritains et baptistes qui dirigent les multinationales, et qui adorent qu'on soit vertueux et digne dans les pays dont ils exploitent la misère.

Une pétition de principe leur suffit, heureusement. Ces bons apôtres savent que la répression efficace coûte cher : un pays « en voie de développement » n'a pas les moyens de s'offrir une police des culs, même avec l'appui moral (ô combien) du business frigidé des USA. Et l'ONU n'a pas encore osé envoyer ses casques bleus pour soutenir les convictions sexuelles des petits saints qui nous gouvernent.

Aloes la police locale fait ce qu'elle peut : et elle a des missions politiques qui l'épuisent trop et qui lui ôtent le loisir de casser du pédé.

Ces lois manquent donc de défenseurs. Elles effraient un petit coup — juste assez pour rappeler au bon peuple que les gouvernements ont le bras long, si long qu'il peut descendre jusqu'aux braguettes. Mais ce bras manque

d'hommes de main, il ne va pas au bout de ses bonnes intentions. Un triporteur manchot. Un Vatican sans *Opus Dei* ni budget anti-mœurs.

Il fallait lancer ce cri d'alarme. Vous aimez les enfants ? Cotisez pour leurs flics. Ce monde entier claque du bec. Le gamin qui me raconta cette nouvelle loi était, quant à lui, dépassé. Comme si, dans son pays, on avait subitement décidé de fusiller les gosses qui pissent contre un mur. Ou les nerveux qui éternuent.

La morale « populaire » (quand la vie survit dans un peuple : ce n'est pas chez nous) est fondée, je crois, sur un sens très concret du préjudice réel qu'on inflige à autrui si on fait quelque chose. On existe ensemble : pas question d'examen de conscience solitaire, pas question de tourner sept fois autour de son nombril pour juger du bien et du mal. Pas d'intériorisation. On vide ses querelles entre personnes ; on apprécie ses actes avec ceux qui les ont partagés ou subis.

Bien sûr, la pédérastie n'était pas approuvée, là-bas : mais l'opinion gamine n'y voyait qu'une petite chose pas bien, comme le mensonge ou la moquerie. Tout le monde y cède, personne ne peut se sentir coupable d'y avoir cédé. Un éternuement ou un pet, oui, rien de plus : on s'excuse, on rougit, mais on ne s'attend pas à ce que les gendarmes se dérangent pour si peu.

De telles lois n'ont donc aucune crédibilité pour la population qu'elles veulent européaniser sexuellement. Les gens ont de'autres chats à fouetter. Ah, petit crétin, tu t'es frotté aux touristes et ça t'a fait mal aux fesses ? Bon tu l'as pas volé, te plains pas à ta mère. Etc.

Imaginons cependant que les lois en question deviennent efficaces : qu'on les applique ; qu'on filtre les homos aux frontières ; qu'on quadrille les rues, les jardins, les plages, de flics-là

pudeur en uniforme, payés par l'ITT ou par Coca-Cola. Un rêve !...
 Que se passera-t-il ?

Les nations « privilégiées », les pays riches, exportent chaque été, c'est vrai, leurs frustrations sexuelles. Ces frustrés trouvent, un peu partout sur la planète, des hommes ou des femmes, des garçons ou des filles, qui ne leur crachent pas à la figure et qui acceptent sans peine leurs mœurs ou leur âge ou leur aspect physique ou tout cela ensemble.

Cette rencontre n'est pas plus simple qu'aucune autre et a lieu entre n'importe qui et n'importe qui. Il s'y passe souvent des choses presque aussi dégoûtantes que les « Trottoirs de Manille » du fils Debré (encore un fils qui donne follement envie de faire des gosses...), mais moins écurantées que la poignée de main hilare entre Jean-Paul II et le président Marcos, dictateur des Philippines, capitale Manille (quelle coïncidence !). A ordures, ordures et demie, même si on vilipende celle des touristes à cultoter tandis qu'on louange celle des salauds à soutenir.

En tout cas, si l'entreprise néo-colonialiste qui s'appelle : infliger aux miséreux des tropiques l'ordre moral des châtisseries françaises, si cette entreprise aboutit, que se produira-t-il ? Evidemment, un reflux de nos frustrés sexuels vers leur pays d'origine à chacun.

Xénophobe, bouché, borné, incapable d'aimer aucune culture au monde — pas même la sienne —, le Français moyen, pédophile ou non, ne sera pas beaucoup privé d'échanges et de sociabilité si on l'oblige à rester chez lui. Puisque, lorsqu'il met le nez dehors, il est encore plus infect qu'il n'ose l'être entre soi. (Un cas limite qui déconcentre le monde entier).

Je continue à réduire. Les amours que notre pédophile français ne pourra plus vivre en vacances, il les rapatriera et... essaiera de les vivre ici. Ici même. Avec des petits Français d'âge illégal.

Et ça deviendra amusant : car chez nous, non seulement les lois sont pires que celles dont j'ai parlé, mais en outre nous sommes assez riches pour qu'elles soient appliquées. L'argent n'est même pas tout, puisque, à côté de la police et de la justice généreusement salariable pour nous dépister et nous punir, il existe en France une quantité exemplaire de flics bénévoles — ces millions de braves gens qui adorent « protéger l'enfance » si ça leur donne l'occasion de taper sur quelqu'un. Oui, chez nous la « vertu » a des bras innombrables, et qui se musclent au pastis : c'est dire leur énergie. On n'a pas le Coran de Khomeiny, mais on a du Ricard. La civilisation et la morale n'ont pas fini de s'abreuver aux meilleures sources.

Dans ce contexte, le pédophile français refoult loin des Arabies heureuses, et renvoyé à ses pantouffles, que fera-t-il ? Solution vertueuse : il va militer vigilement pour qu'on reconnaisse en France sa liberté de vivre ce qu'il peut avec qui il peut.

Solutions probables : porno, prostitution et viol. Petits enfants de l'hexagone, ouvrez grand vos grands yeux : vous allez sûrement nous aimer.



Duvert
te, 4

hatais simplement indiquer, aujourd'hui, que je parle, moi, de la pédérastie, comme si elle était légale. Je ne m'occupe pas qu'on l'approuve, qu'on la taise ou qu'on la condamne : je pense à ses vécus, à ce que j'en vois, à ce que j'en sais.

Et si, d'aventure, une quantité regrettable de pédos plutôt bien en cour et assez argentés se comportent, en vacances, comme des salauds, et que moi, pédé fouché, j'ai connu, fréquenté, aimé leurs victimes, tant pis. La pédophilie n'est pas plus un breuvage qu'un péché, qu'une preuve de...

Photo Stephen Shauer (DK)

WHEN you deal with an inexhaustible subject, and touch on it, as I did, with digressions and fantasies, you get bogged down in it, you can't get out. You get too much into it: you risk boring people. It's polite to cut to the chase. I'll come back to it if I learn to talk about it better, and differently, and with less shyness and vagueness.

One by one, the countries frequented by paedophiles and paedophiles are tiring of this kind of tourism. They are creating laws to stop it.

I was living in one of these countries when, in 1974 I think it was, an anti-gay law was passed. One morning, I was walking home from the market when a kid I knew came up to me with a look of dismay on his face:

- Did you hear the radio?

- No, what is it? The war?

We go back home. The boy explains to me what the war is about: from now on, homosexual acts will be punishable by imprisonment.

Nothing to panic about, I thought. In every nation in the world today, heads of state pose for the official photo in striped suits and ties, in front of a Louis XVI mantelpiece: it's a question of standing, of good international image. At the same time, they purify the morals of their deplorable population: Christian morals are clean, that's what they're all about.

is rich, docile and well-behaved, and is highly regarded on the labour market.

The details of the law (several countries where gay people flock during the summer have the same law) were really interesting. Homosexual relations between minors and adults were banned (oh, Foyer, what a treat!). But the law punished both the minor and the adult who had 'collaborated' in this infamy.

Yes, both sent to prison. No question of an adult "culprit" and a child "victim". No: two guilty parties, one kid, one adult. Guilty of homosexuality, quite simply. Accomplices. As if they had stolen something together. But what, and from whom?

I was delighted by the originality of the law. It proved that moral order was not being introduced to 'protect' children from the horrible sexual appetite of tourists - but to dissuade minors from sharing their games with grown-ups from elsewhere. It was necessary to repress the naive homosexuality of the little boyish people, who certainly didn't need any tourists or colonists to fuck themselves in complete innocence. And, since these boys had no anti-older people prejudices, on the contrary, we can be sure that they gave off more cum with the old aunts of Europe.

than with the young women back

home. And for good reason.

Has this law been applied? I haven't seen it, and I haven't heard about it. That was certainly not its *raison d'être*. It was, I repeat, a simple gift from the State to the Puritan and Baptist gentlemen who run the multinationals, and who love it when people are virtuous and dignified in the countries whose misery they exploit.

Fortunately, a petition of principle is enough for them. These good apostles know that effective repression is expensive: a "developing" country cannot afford an ass police force, even with the moral support (oh so much) of frigid US business. And the UN has not yet dared to send in its blue helmets to support the sexual convictions of the little saints who govern us.

So the local police do what they can: and they have political missions that exhaust them too much and take away their leisure to break faggots.

So these laws lack defenders. They scare people a little - just enough to remind them that governments have a long arm, so long that it can reach right down to the zip. But this arm lacks the manpower to carry out its good intentions. A groper one-armed. A Vatican without *Opus Dei* or an anti-morality budget.

We had to sound the alarm. Do you love children? Pay for their cops. The whole world is snapping at

its heels. As for the kid who told me about this new law, he was out of his depth. As if, in his country, they'd suddenly decided to shoot kids for pissing against a wall. Or nervous people who sneeze.

Popular" morality (when life survives in a people: that's not where we come from) is based, I believe, on a very concrete sense of the real harm we inflict on others if we do something. We exist together: there's no question of solitary self-examination, no question of turning around your navel seven times to judge right from wrong. No inward looking. We resolve our quarrels between people; we appreciate our actions with those who have shared them or suffered them.

Of course, pederasty wasn't approved of there: but childish opinion saw it as just a little thing that was wrong, like lying or mockery. Everybody gave in to it, nobody could feel guilty about having given in to it. A sneeze or a fart, yes, nothing more: you apologise, you blush, but you don't expect the gendarmes to bother for so little. Laws like these have no credibility whatsoever with the population they seek to Europeanise. sexually. People have other things to worry about. Ah, you little twerp, you rubbed yourself on the tourists and it hurt your bottom? Well, you didn't steal it, so don't complain to your mother. And so on.

Let's imagine, though, that the

laws in question become effective; that they are enforced; that gays are filtered at the borders; that the streets, gardens and beaches are lined with modesty cops in uniform, paid by ITT or Coca-Cola. A dream!

What will happen?

It's true that the 'privileged' nations, the rich countries, export their sexually frustrated every summer. All over the world, these frustrated people find men or women, boys or girls, who don't spit in their faces and who readily accept their morals or their age or their physical appearance, or all of the above.

This encounter is no simpler than any other, and takes place between anyone and anyone. Things often happen that are almost as disgusting as the "Trottoirs de Manille" by the Debré son (yet another son who makes you want to have children...), but less disgusting than the hilarious handshake between John Paul II and President Marcos, dictator of the Philippines, in the capital Manila (what a coincidence!). Half the rubbish is rubbish, even if we vilify the other half.

while the bastards in their cassocks are praised.

In any case, if the neo-colonialist enterprise called inflicting on the wretched of the tropics the moral order of the French chaisières, if this enterprise succeeds, what will happen? Obviously, a backflow of

our sexually frustrated to their respective countries of origin.

Xenophobic, closed-minded, narrow-minded, incapable of loving any culture in the world - not even his own - the average Frenchman, paedophile or not, won't be deprived of much in the way of 'exchanges' and sociability if he's forced to stay at home. (A borderline case that baffles the whole world).

I'm still narrowing it down. The loves that our French paedophile will no longer be able to experience on holiday, he will repatriate and... try to experience them here. Right here. With little French boys of illegal age. And that'll be fun: because here, not only are the laws worse than the ones I mentioned, but we're rich enough to enforce them. Money isn't even everything, because alongside the police and the judiciary, who are generously paid to track us down and punish us, there are an exemplary number of volunteer cops in France - those millions of good people who love to 'protect children' if it means anything to them.

gives you the opportunity to hit someone. Yes, here 'virtue' has countless arms, and they're all beefed up on pastis: that's how energetic they are. We don't have Khomeini's Koran, but we do have Ricard. Civilisation and morality have not finished drinking from the best sources.

In this context, what is the French paedophile going to do if he is turned away from happy Arabies and sent back to his slippers? A virtuous solution: he will campaign hard for recognition in France of his freedom to live as he pleases with whomever he pleases.

Likely solutions: porn, prostitution and rape. Children of France, open your eyes wide: you're going to love us.

Les Autres

LES VOLEURS DE VENT

DEPUIS mai 1981, il y a eu beaucoup de procès d'homosexuels en France. D'homosexuels qui s'en étaient pris à des « mineurs ». Et jamais la presse, nationale ou régionale, n'a tant consacré de prose à des procès de ce genre-là.

Sûrement que la victoire électorale d'une gauche pro-pédé a terriblement embarrassé une quantité d'électeurs de gauche qui ne souhaitent pas du tout que le « progrès » aille jusque vers nous. (Souvenez-vous de ces magnifiques mégères anti-nucléaires de Plogoff qui expliquaient naïvement à Lohé que, si elles ne voulaient pas de la fameuse usine, c'est parce que ça ferait venir, à deux pas de leur home sweet home, des milliers de ces gens qui font du terrassement, du béton : des ratons, des melons, des bougnoules. Usine atomique égale : des Arabes. Les risques d'irradiation, à la rigueur, d'accord. Mais des « immigrés », là non, vraiment non : c'est trop polluant.) (On avait dit aux mètres que la construction de l'usine atomique implanterait 3 ou 4 000 Algériens pour plusieurs années.)

Oui, pareil. La « gauche » qui a voté pour la gauche veut bien s'enrichir, devenons tous des bourgeois, mais elle renvoie à, dans ses extases de progrès, elle est obligée d'inclure les homos. Aucun rapport ! On a voté pour que les riches soient moins riches, et que les braves gens, les braves gens, soient moins pauvres. C'est des braves gens, les pédés, madame ? ... Non, madame, non. Ah non. Parce que ce qu'ils demandent, c'est même pas de l'argent (ça, au moins, c'est propre) : non, ils veulent NOS ENFANTS.

Et moi, madame, voilà trente-cinq ans que j'emboîte des sardines pour l'usine de Saint-Ducou-Dulong, Finistère. Les patrons m'ont pris toutes mes sardines, toute ma vie ! Je vous jure qu'on ne me prendra pas aussi mes enfants, avec leurs histoires d'homos à tous ces gens ! Madame, mes gosses je les ai faits en dehors des heures de travail, alors j'espère qu'ils sont à moi, à moi, à moi, à moi, eux au moins, si l'état nous enlève même ça.

Non madame, l'Etat ne vous enlèvera pas vos enfants, et surtout pas au profit des pédés. On détruirait vos gosses seulement pour le bon motif. On les ramènera à l'école (et vous les taloches s'ils osent résister à l'institut) ; on vous les écrabouillera au CET (et vous appelez les flics s'ils en ont marre et qu'ils fuguent) ; on vous les viriliserà à la caserne (il faut que les mètres aient écrabouillé un garçon presque vingt ans pour qu'il soit, ensuite, virilissime) ; et alors vos superbes fils seront devenus des ordures, des sous-hommes crétins et despotiques juste semblables au mari que vous avez et de qui vous vous plaignez chaque jour.

Faudrait que les féministes vous expliquent certaines petites choses, je crois : mais elles n'ont pas le temps de s'occuper de ça. Elles aussi, elles préfèrent cogner sur les pédés. C'est si confortable, les pédés ! Les seuls mecs sur qui on peut taper. Hein, les filles ? ... Parce que, justement, certains d'entre eux s'en prennent aux enfants. A ce qu'on appelle des enfants. A ce que les parents appellent des enfants. A ce que

l'Education Nationale appelle des enfants.

Avez-vous jamais parlé avec un gosse ? Si vous en avez jamais vu un qui ait envie de rester un enfant, dites-le moi. Ils ne se plaignent pas souvent de leur état, surtout quand des enquêtes d'opinion les interrogent. Ils adorent TOUJOURS (d'après les instituts d'opinion) leur famille, leur papa, et leur école, et surtout leur maman. Mais parlez-leur, demandez-leur s'ils ne préféreraient pas être, plutôt qu'enfants, des adultes, et vous comprendrez. Ils n'ont aucune idée réaliste de ce que c'est d'être adulte : mais tous veulent grandir, et le plus vite possible. Vite, vite, vite échapper à ce malheur d'être mineur. Hélas, on ne commence à aimer son enfance que lorsqu'on l'a perdue. Par vos bons soins, familles, l'Enfance n'est que ce purgatoire qui mènera vos gosses vers l'Enfer d'être majeurs. C'est-à-dire rien.

Tout cela pour rappeler, une fois de plus (mais je le rappellerai un million de fois, je suis obstiné), que les protecteurs de l'enfant ne protègent que le malheur institutionnel que parents et enseignants ont le droit d'infliger aux plus jeunes des êtres humains. Et les procès absurdes que notre société, socialiste ou non, fait aux pédérastes me paraissent plus crédibles si les familles, les instit' et la DASS n'étaient pas, face aux gosses, d'authentiques criminels qu'on ne punit jamais — tandis que les malheureux pédophiles qu'on traîne en justice et qu'on liquide en prison ne sont pas du tout, eux, DES ASSASSINS.

Je reconnais qu'en revanche ce sont des chapardeurs. Dans chacun des procès qui ont fait du bruit, l'accusé avait commis, à peu de choses près, les mêmes actes : il avait profité du laxisme sexuel de certains mineurs pour faire l'amour avec eux. Il avait profité aussi de son métier ou de sa fonction : enseignant, encadreur, animateur, etc.

Et il y a là une bizarrerie statistique qui mérite un effort d'explication. Prenons l'état nul. Vous êtes célibataire, vous ne connaissez pas de famille, ou bien celle-ci, que vous connaissez n'ont que des gamins affreux ou très réfractaires à votre présence, et vous n'êtes même pas enseignant. Donc, si vous voulez rencontrer des moins-de-quinze-ans, ça sera au hasard

de la rue. Un hasard pas évident, un risque effrayant, une angoisse qui étrangle. Vous n'oserez pas.

En revanche, si vous enseignez le latin, les maths, la gym, ou si vous « animez » les mercredis après-midi, les dimanches, ou si vous faites le catéchisme (réservé aux curés pour l'instant, ou aux femmes barrées), ou si vous cheftainez des scouts, etc., etc., là vous avez un tas de marmaille sous la main. Les colonies de vacances ça sert aussi, et puis tous les étés qu'on a vécus quand on était hauts comme ça et où y avait un type bizarre qu'on se rappelle drôlement bien.

Les nouvelles lois sont très sensibles à ce problème. Puisqu'elles aggravent, en effet, la punition des pédérastes s'ils ont pédérastisé tout en étant enseignants — et que ce soit pendant leurs heures de travail ou en dehors d'elles. Ces lois sont magnifiques. Elles signifient clairement que l'Education Nationale accepte parfaitement bien qu'un instit', ou un prof, soit pédé, à condition qu'il soit rigoureusement pédagogique, y compris dans sa vie privée. On l'a déjà écrit cent fois : les pédophiles ont un « contact » formidable avec les gosses, ils ne vivent que pour les gosses, c'est des gens pas comme les familles, y a pas de plus meilleurs pédagogues que dont auxquels à la chose dont quoi que qu'il s'agit.

Des dresseurs d'enfants qui seraient formidables, formidables. Hélas, ils ont la main baladeuse, et ça gâche tout. Ça pourrait le dressage. A la limite, les profs de latin, les profs de maths, se servent du prestige universel du latin et des maths pour flanquer leurs vilains doigts nouveaux dans les jolies braguettes élastiques des bambins qu'éblouissent Cicéron ou Euclide et qui ont une queue quand même.

Pouacré. Kochons-tranzai-douchourlamsur. (Comme on dit dans les BD). N'empêche que le problème est clair : ou bien on fait de l'enseignement avec des adultes aseptisés qui, par pudeur, décence, doctisme, à respect de l'Hanphan », se refusent à toute relation avec leurs élèves, ou bien on surs des mecs et des filles qui ne vivent que pour les gosses (les gosses qu'il y a, vous comprenez : pas ceux qu'on se fabrique à la maison dans son lave-vaisselle) : et ces mecs et ces filles-là ne savent pas mesurer leurs relations avec les « mineurs » à l'étage pédagogique-castré que l'Etat

et les Parents d'Elèves exigent. Les enseignants « normaux » n'en font pas assez ; les enseignants « anormaux » en font « trop », et finissent en taule.

Quel malheur ! Quel malheur, mais pour qui ? Bien entendu, les pédés ne peuvent, ne pourront jamais servir d'attrape-con pour dresser idéalement les gosses ; quand aux bêtises, leur aptitude à avoir de bonnes relations avec les (beaucoup) plus jeunes qu'eux n'est vraiment pas évidente. En dépit des efforts du magazine Parents pour enseigner à être aimés-adultes par leurs petits prisonniers.

A la lumière des remarques, aussi brèves qu'équivoques, que je viens de noter, la solution est sévère.

Dans la France de bientôt, et donc de toujours, les seuls être humains qui auront le droit de travailler « sur les enfants » seront des vermineux qui n'y toucheront pas, ce qu'on vérifie, exactement comme, dans les mines de diamant, on brosse la plante des pieds des ouvriers pour qu'ils n'emportent pas un milligramme du précieux minerai qu'ils ont extrait. Par contre, ceux qui aiment les enfants, et qui rêvent bêtement d'une société où les pouvoirs d'amour, de caprice, d'invention, de liberté, de générosité, que nous avons tous eus pendant six ou douze ans de notre vie, ne seraient pas écrasés, ces pédagogues-là, qui auront forcément des relations plus ou moins « sexuelles » avec les amants infinis qu'ils voient dans l'enfance, ceux-là seront mis en prison.

Où, à tout le moins, éjectés de l'EducNat.

Les enseignants, animateurs, moniteurs, etc., que nos tribunaux, depuis un an que le Socialisme doit prouver qu'il est « normal » et qu'il respecte les valeurs poujadistes-droite-famille de son propre électorat, flanquent en prison, oui, ces enseignants que la Justice a punis nous donne une admirable leçon, comme les chrétiens martyrs d'avant Constantin.

Et cette leçon est la suivante. J'ai fait l'amour avec des gamins parce qu'ils voulaient bien ; ça ne les embêtait pas ; je n'ai pas d'illusions ; ils m'aimaient bien, parce que je ne suis pas méchant ; je les ai beaucoup moins emmerdés que si j'avais été leur papa ou leur maman ; on a joué à ça ; c'était pas grand-chose pour eux, c'était immense pour moi ; je leur ai chipé, chapardé, un rien du tout, comme si j'avais respiré le vent qui passe ; oui, j'ai volé, mais je n'ai pas moi. On me punit comme un criminel. D'accord. Mais je dis qu'à cette même mesure, et pour des abus aussi humbles, cinquante millions de Français devraient être en prison. Bébés y compris.

Tuez les bébés, monsieur Badinter anti-peine-de-mort, et tuez les autres enfants, mesdames les dames-de-gauche : y aura plus aucun être humain pour déranger votre idée du monde tel-qu'il-doit-être-beau. Sinon, ne vous contentez pas de vos bons sentiments : nos « crimes » inoffensifs et nos « délits » imaginaires, à nous pédophiles, sont là pour vous montrer que cette fameuse espèce humaine sur quoi on vous a donné droit de cuissage est moins simple, et moins sale, et moins criminelle, que vos médiocrités, et que vos rêves.

Le coin de Tony Duvert

SINCE May 1981, there have been many trials of homosexuals in France. Homosexuals who had attacked "minors". And never before has the national or regional press devoted so much prose to trials of this kind.

It's probably because the electoral victory of a pro-Peddish Left has terribly embarrassed a lot of left-wing voters who didn't want "progress" to reach us at all. (Remember those magnificent anti-nuclear shrews from Plogoff who naively explained (in *Libé*) that the reason they didn't want the famous plant was because it would bring thousands of earth-moving and concrete-moving people to live just a stone's throw from their home sweet home: rats, melons and gypsies. The same goes for the atomic plant: Arabs. The risks of irradiation, at a pinch, fine. But 'immigrants', no, really no: it's too polluting). (The grannies were told that the construction of the atomic plant would put 3 or 4,000 Algerians in jobs for several years).

Yes, the same. The "left" who voted for the left wants to get rich, let's all become bourgeois, but they balk if, in their ecstasies of progress, they are forced to include gays. What's that got to do with anything? We voted for the rich to be less rich, and for the gay to be more gay. good people, good people, are less poor. Are they good people, the queers, madame?... No, madame,

no. No they're not. Because what they're asking for isn't even money (that, at least, is clean): no, they want OUR CHILDREN.

And me, madam, I've been packing sardines for the factory in Saint-Ducon-Dulong, Finistère, for thirty-five years. The bosses have taken all my sardines, all my life! I swear they're not going to take my children too, with all their gay stories! Madam, I made my kids outside working hours, so I hope they're mine, mine, mine, mine, them at least, if the state takes even that away from us.

No, madam, the state will not take your children away from you, especially not for the benefit of fags. They'll destroy your kids, but only for the right reasons. They'll be bullied at school (and you'll heel them if they dare resist the teacher); they'll be crushed at the CET (and you'll call the cops if they've had enough and run away); they'll be manhandled at the barracks (mothers have to have crushed a boy for almost twenty years before he can be manhandled) : and then your superb sons will have become scum, cretinous, despotic sub-humans just like the husbands you have and complain about every day.

The feminists should explain a few things to you, I think: but they don't have time for that. They too prefer to bash fags. Fags are so comfortable! They're the only guys you can hit. Right, girls? Because

some of them actually pick on children. What we call children. What parents call children. What the Ministry of Education calls children.

Have you ever talked to a kid? If you've ever seen one who wanted to stay a child, tell me. They don't often complain about their condition, especially when opinion polls ask them. They STILL (according to the opinion polls) love their family, their dad, their school, and especially their mum. But talk to them, ask them if they wouldn't rather be adults than children, and you'll understand. They have no realistic idea of what it's like to be an adult: but they all want to grow up, and as quickly as possible. Quickly, quickly, quickly escape the misfortune of being a minor. Unfortunately, we don't begin to love our childhood until we've lost it. Thanks to you, families, childhood is nothing more than the purgatory that will raise your kids to the hell of adulthood. In other words, nothing.

All this is just to remind you, once again (but I'll say it again sometime), that you are not alone. million times, I'm stubborn), that child protectors only protect the institutional misfortune that parents and teachers have the right to inflict on the youngest of human beings.

And the absurd trials that our society, whether socialist or not, brings against paedophiles would seem more credible to me if the families, the teachers and the DASS

were not, when faced with children, genuine criminals who are never punished - whereas the unfortunate paedophiles who are taken to court and liquidated in prison are not, in any way, MURDERERS.

I recognise, however, that they are thieves. In each of the high-profile trials, the accused had committed more or less the same acts: he had taken advantage of the sexual laxity of certain minors to have sex with them. He had also taken advantage of his profession or position as a teacher, supervisor, youth worker, etc. to have sex with minors.

And there's a statistical quirk here that deserves some explanation.

Let's take the null state. You're single, you don't know any family, or the one(s) you do know only have kids who are awful or very resistant to your presence, and you're not even a teacher. So if you want to meet anyone under the age of fifteen, you'll have to do it on the street. A

A daunting chance, a frightening risk, a strangling anxiety. You won't dare.

On the other hand, if you teach Latin, maths, gymnastics, or if you 'animate' Wednesday afternoons, Sundays, or if you teach catechism (reserved for priests for the time being, or for barred women), or if you lead scouts, etc., etc., then you've got a bunch of kids on hand. Holiday camps are also

useful, as are all the summers we spent when we were this high and there was this weird guy who we remember really well.

The new laws are very sensitive to this problem. In fact, they increase the punishment for paedophiles if they have paedosed while working as a teacher - whether in or out of working hours. These laws are magnificent. They make it clear that the French education system is perfectly happy for a teacher to be queer, as long as he or she is strictly platonic, including in his or her private life. We've already written it a hundred times: paedophiles have a wonderful 'contact' with kids, they only live for kids, they're people unlike families, there are no better pedagogues than those who have to do with the thing we're talking about.

Child trainers who would be wonderful, wonderful.

Unfortunately, they have a wandering hand, and that spoils everything. It spoils the training. In fact, Latin and maths teachers use the universal prestige of Latin and maths to stick their gnarled fingers into the pretty elasticated zips of toddlers who are dazzled by Cicero or Euclid and who still have a pecker. Pooch.

Kochons-zranzai-douchourlamour (as they say in the comics). But the problem is clear: either we teach with aseptic adults who, out of modesty, decency, doltishness and 'respect for

Hanphan', refuse to have any kind of relationship with their pupils, or we'll have guys and gals who live only for the kids (the kids there are, you understand : not the ones you make yourself at home in your dishwasher): and these guys and gals won't know how to measure their relationships with 'minors' against the pedagogical-castrated standards demanded by the State and parents. Normal' teachers don't do enough; 'abnormal' teachers do 'too much', and end up in jail. What a shame! What a shame, but for whom? Of course, paedos cannot and never will be able to be used as a con-trap to train kids ideally; as for heterosexuals, their ability to have good relations with those (much) younger than themselves is really not obvious. Despite *Parents* magazine's efforts to teach them to be loved-adulated by their little prisoners.

In the light of the brief but equivocal comments I have just made, the solution is a harsh one.

In the France of soon, and therefore of always, the only human beings who will have the right to work "*on children*" will be virtuous people who will not touch them, which will be *checked*, exactly as, in the diamond mines, the soles of the workers' feet are brushed so that they do not carry away a milligram of the precious ore they have extracted. On the other hand, those who love children, and who foolishly

dream of a society where the powers of love, caprice, invention, freedom and generosity that we have all had for six or twelve years of our lives would not be crushed, those educationalists, who will inevitably have more or less 'sexual' relationships with the infinite lovers they see in childhood, will be put in prison.

Or, at the very least, ejected from the EducNat.

The teachers, youth workers, monitors, etc. that our courts have been sending to prison for a year now, when Socialism has had to prove that it is "normal" and that it respects the Poujadist-right-family values of its own electorate.

the Christians martyred before Constantine.

And that lesson is this. I've made love with kids because they wanted to; it didn't bother them; I have no illusions; they liked me, because I'm not mean; I bothered them a lot less than if I'd been their mum or dad; We played this game; it wasn't a big deal for them, it was a huge deal for me; I stole from them, pilfered, nothing at all, as if I'd breathed in the passing wind; yes, I stole, but I didn't do any harm. I'm being punished like a criminal. That's fair enough. But I say that by the same measure, and for abuses as humble as these, fifty million French people should be in prison. Babies included.

Kill the babies, Mr Badinter,

anti-death penalty, and kill the other children, ladies of the left: there won't be a single human being left to disturb your idea of the world as it should be. Otherwise, don't be content with your good feelings: our harmless "crimes" and our imaginary "offences", as paedophiles, are there to show you that this famous human species over which you've been given leeway is less simple, less dirty and less criminal than your mediocrities and your dreams.

Les Autres

L'INCESTE OU LA PRISON

DONC les familles, la police, les juges, les tribunaux, les journalistes, les éducateurs, les politiciens, et les psyconnasses ont engagé une lutte sans précédent contre la ci-devant « pédophilie ». (Foutez, dans quels beaux draps on nous roule).

Les relations amoureuses entre adultes et enfants seraient désormais, et pour la première fois depuis que le monde est monde, le Crime par excellence ? Tous les transgressions seraient punies et pardonnées, sauf la seule qui soit innocente ?...

Mais non, vous n'avez rien compris, pédos.

Ce qu'on vous demande, en réalité, c'est simplement de faire l'amour avec vos propres enfants, et non avec ceux d'autrui.

Oh, bien sûr, ce n'est pas encore aussi clair que je viens de le dire. Mais si l'on est attentif non seulement aux coups que nous recevons, mais aussi aux caresses qu'il se donnent dans leur presse et leurs livres, à ces gens-là, on découvre l'évidence. Tout le discours actuel sur la famille, l'éducation, les relations parents-enfants, est une incitation à l'inceste.

Je ne vais pas m'amuser à recopier ici des documents. Achetez quel numéro, n'importe quel, n'importe quel magazine destiné aux pères, aux mères — qu'il s'agisse de *Elle* ou du *Monde de l'Éducation*, de *Parents* ou de *Marie-Claire*, de *Télérama* ou d'*Enfants*, vous lirez la même chose. Pour qu'une relation entre des gens et les adultes qui les ont commis soit réussie, il faut et il suffit que cette relation atteigne le degré d'intimité qui est celui même de l'amour. Ce que nous appelons l'amour — et qui nous veut, à nous, le tribunal et la prison. Vous avez un problème, madame Maman, monsieur Papa, avec votre bambin ? C'est que vous ne l'avez pas approché d'assez près. Vous ne l'embrassez pas assez, n'êtes pas assez complaisant, n'êtes pas assez sudicieusement, n'êtes pas assez profond dans son âme assuée, ne glissez pas la main assez loin sous les jolies culottes que vous lui avez payées et où un sexe en détresse attend qu'un Papa, une Maman, le cherche, le révèle et l'enfante sans péché.

Faite de cette pédagogie parentale d'un nouveau genre, votre fils ira quémander ailleurs ce qu'il n'a pas chez lui. Il lui faudra bien un amant quel que part, si son père ou sa mère se refuse bêtement à lui rendre un service aussi tendre.

Ce raisonnement du discours néo-familial est admissible. On pourrait le traduire ainsi : les sales pédophiles séduisent nos gosses en leur offrant des bonbons (car les pédos, célibataires, ont plein de fric à gaspiller en confiances : on voit qu'ils ne sont pas, eux, obligés d'assumer un énorme budget de yaourts, de mariages et de cartables !). Mais aucun enfant ne suivrait un monsieur s'il avait, cet enfant, un tas de bonbons à la maison.

— Quoi, tu m'donnes une pastille Vichy si tu m'rites ma rigipoliceouquimbiambizabiquoisillotte ? Ça va pas la tête mec ? Ma même, elle en a, des pastilles Vichy. Et elle pique pas plus

que toi, eh pas beau. T'as qu'à m'acheter un 22 L.R. en caresses apès.

Oui, selon ce principe (et en laissant de côté les cadeaux d'armes à feu), pour qu'un enfant reste chez vous, parents, il suffit qu'il y trouve tout ce qu'il pourrait avoir l'idée de chercher autre part. Et, puisque les gosses du mercredi entre petits camarades de sexes soigneusement complémentaires ne semblent pas lui suffire, la Famille, ses pères, ses pèressees et son papa vous ordonnent un sacrifice ultime : pour le garder chez vous, cochez avec lui.

Ce n'est certes pas encore aussi explicite, je le répète : mais aucun lecteur ne peut s'y tromper. Quand je lis ces magazines, je m'amuse à transposer leurs jolis bons conseils, je les imagine recopiés tels quels dans une revue qui serait consacrée à la pédophilie, et où quelque Mémie Grégoire de nos amours spéciales nous expliquerait ce qu'il faut faire si nous voulons nous attacher le petit écolier que nous avons dragué dans la rue. Ah vraiment, c'est les mêmes recettes.

Et pas très propres, franchement. A la rigueur, un pédos qui aurait recours à ces méthodes d'engouement, de viol visqueux, de « compréhension de l'enfant » avec un livre de Dosto dans une main, une trique dans l'autre main et une cramouille en folie qui attend son heure, ce pédos aurait au moins l'excuse d'avoir été choisi par sa victime. Qu'un amant fasse tout ce qu'il peut pour plaire à celui qu'il aime, voilà une pratique universelle que les « aimés » ne désapprouvent jamais.

Les innocents !

L'ennui, hélas, dans l'amour incestueux, c'est que les gosses et les parents qui sont censés cimenter de foudre la fameuse « cellule », base de la société, dont ils sont les membres et les murs, ces adultes et ces enfants ne se sont pas choisis et qu'ailleurs ne sauraient, en aucune situation au monde, se suffire les uns aux autres.

L'idée d'ajouter l'inceste à la famille pour consolider ce blockhaus en péril n'est pas neuve. Je me rappelle avoir lu une coupure du *Quotidien du médois*, en 1976, qui signalait que le Parti communiste suédois avait présenté, au parlement de son pays, un projet de loi selon quoi l'inceste (entre autres amusements) devait être autorisé. Motif : les travaux scientifiques prouvaient que, à l'inverse de certaines idées reçues, l'accouplement entre partenaires consanguins ne produisait pas d'individus dégénérés. Les enfants de l'inceste étaient aussi bons que les autres ! (J'ignore sur quelles recherches le PC suédois appuyait ses affirmations. Néanmoins, un écolo-anarchiste amoureux de notre mère Nature, je sais que dans les nids de

Le coin de Tony Duvert

souris, de rats, les femelles d'un premier couple à procréées sont souvent fécondées par leur propre papa, et avant même leur puberté (car le foutre ratier reste, paraît-il, au chaud jusqu'au moment où la petite rate devient apte à pondre les ovules adéquats : et cet inceste du père est d'autant plus affreux que, s'il peut féconder avec succès ses filles immatures, ça coupe l'herbe sous les pieds de ses fils, lesquels, immatures aussi, ne peuvent pas, eux, engraisser leurs petites sœurs. Le temps qu'ils commencent à juter, les ratons, leurs frangines auront déjà été foutues en cloque par papa. Que fait Gaston Defferre ? Il serait temps que l'ordre règne dans les souricettes et dans les ratonnades, non ?) Et donc, en dépit de ces incestes répétés, la gent rate et souris est la plus prospère et la plus saine de notre planète menacée. Marx avait donc raison !

En tout cas, vous voyez que le PC suédois envisageait l'inceste sans contrepartir (quand ça a lieu au-delà de la puberté, évidemment). On savait que les communistes vénèrent la famille, mais à ce point là.

La proposition du PC suédois ne fut pas débattue au Parlement : il y eut des élections législatives entre-temps, la droite gagna et la famille tuyau de poêle ne fut donc pas nécessaire au maintien de l'ordre moral.

Il n'en va pas de même chez nous, vous l'avez compris. Notre PC ne réclame certes pas qu'enfants et parents s'accouplent et que demain les mioches soient le petit-fils de leur papa et le frangin de leur maman : néanmoins, la morale actuelle de la protection — indispensable — du doux foyer passe par une intimité vraiment très poussée entre les pauvres gosses et leurs sinistres fabricants.

Bien sûr, il est impossible de trouver quelque chose d'immoral dans l'inceste. Du moment que le petit et le grand (mettre à ces deux-là les sexes que vous voulez, peu importe) se plaisent, s'excitent, ont envie de se frotter, ben quoi. Ça coûte moins cher que les petites annonces de *Libé* (moi, à 70 F les *Chéri(e)s*, j'aime mieux faire les sorties d'école !). (Une pièce de 10 F suffit largement à un écolier de format courant : les malheureux, je me demande ce que les institutrices leur apprennent !) (Mais je me dépêche d'en profiter : quand ils sauront vraiment ce qu'ils valent, faudra que j'écrive des best-sellers). (Fin des parenthèses).

L'inceste n'est pas immorale, disais-je. Oui, mais aucune condition n'est remplie pour que l'inceste soit choisi librement par l'enfant. Par exemple (restons homos) il n'a pas le choix entre



Photo Robert Mannon extraite de *Boys will be boys*, Ed. Book Abandonnés.

papa et un autre monsieur, non : c'est papa ou rien. — En outre, les parents ont mille moyens de pressions matériels et psychologiques pour inciter leurs enfants à les « aimer », de gré ou de force. Que ce soit par l'âme ou par le cul.

Dans le contexte actuel — la famille ou la mort — ces jolies tendresses sont donc ignobles. Même pitoyables.

Ce qui éclipse du plus beau jour le nouveau jeu familial. L'incitation à l'inceste (qu'il soit filé ou accompli : toute la presse que j'ai citée patage dedans) équivaut à une extension inévitable du droit des parents sur les mineurs. Après le père foutard, voici le père questeur ; après la mère à gifles, voici la mère à cuisses. Les enfants vont adorer ça.

En dépit des apparences, il y a donc aujourd'hui une énorme propagande en faveur de la pédophilie. Mais seulement si elle s'exerce en famille. Les « autres » pédophiles seront donc d'autant plus pourchassés et punis qu'ils deviendront ainsi les rivaux amoureux des parents. L'enfant qui « va » avec un pédos commet un véritable adultère : il a « trompé » son mari, son épouse (traduisez : son papa, sa maman) avec une tierce personne.

L'exagère un rien, puisqu'on n'en est pas tout à fait là ou niveau des trous et autres organes spécialisés : mais pour le reste, c'est fait. Le « cœur » est déjà incestueux. Les mains sont baladeuses.

Le cul suivra.

Et on comprendra mieux que jamais pourquoi les pédophiles sont baladables. Car leur amour pour les gosses implique et exige la liberté, l'autonomie, le droit de jugement et de refus, l'information, la dignité des enfants eux-mêmes. Au contraire, l'amour parental incestueux que la presse familiale et pédagogique préche de plus en plus crûment, cet amour — ultime et sale moyen de maintenir fermée une famille invivable — inflige simplement aux enfants une contrainte, un devoir, une assommoir et une humiliation de plus.

Jadis, pour avoir le pain, il fallait d'obéir à nos mœurs de parents. Désormais, il faudra en tomber amoureux. Sinon, gare au psychologue ! Au fait, chère néo-maman qui suce ton bambin chaque soir avant de lui enfiler son pyjama Prénatal, dis-moi un peu : s'il veut que je le suce ou que je lui baise le cul, t'appelles les flics ?...

SO the families, the police, judges, doctors,

journalists, educationalists politicians and psyconnasses have

th e

766

do, which is a shame. Why don't you buy me a 22 LR, then we'll talk.

Yes, according to this principle (and leaving aside the gifts of firearms), for a child to stay with you, parents, all he has to do is find everything there that he might have the idea of looking for elsewhere. And, since Wednesday snacks with friends of carefully complementary sexes don't seem to be enough, the Family, its priests, its priestesses and its Pope order you to make the ultimate sacrifice: to keep him at home, sleep with him.

It's not quite as explicit as that yet, I repeat: but no reader can be mistaken. When I read these magazines, I have fun transposing their pretty good advice, I imagine them copied as they are in a magazine devoted to paedophilia, where some M^{énie} Grégoire of our special loves would explain to us what to do if we want to tie down the little schoolboy we've picked up in the street. Oh really, it's the same recipes.

And not very clean, frankly. At the very least, a paedo who resorted to these methods of entrapment, slimy rape and 'child-understanding' with a Dolto book in one hand, a hard-on in the other and a crazed cramp biding his time, would at least have the excuse of having been chosen by his victim. For a lover to do everything he can to please the one he loves is a universal practice that the 'loved ones' never

disapprove of. The unconscious!

The trouble with incestuous love, alas, is that the children and parents who are supposed to cement together the famous 'cell', the basis of society, of which they are the members and the walls, these adults and children have not chosen each other and cannot, in any situation in the world, be sufficient for each other.

The idea of adding incest to the family to consolidate this endangered blockhouse is not new. I remember reading a clipping from *Physician's Daily* in 1976, which reported that the Swedish Communist Party had presented a bill to the country's parliament to the effect that incest (among other amusements) should be authorised. The reason for this was that scientific research had shown that, contrary to certain preconceived ideas, mating between consanguineous partners did not produce individuals who were...

degenerate. Children of incest were just as good as the others! (I don't know what research the Swedish PC was basing its claims on. Nevertheless, as an ecologist and anarchist who loves Mother Nature, I know that in the nests of mice and rats, the females of the first couple to procreate are often impregnated by their own father, even before they reach puberty (because, it seems, the rat's sperm stays warm until the little spleen is ready to lay

the right eggs): And this incest on the part of the father is all the more dreadful because, if he can successfully impregnate his immature daughters, it takes the wind out of the sails of his sons, who, also immature, cannot impregnate their little sisters. By the time they start jetting off, their sisters will already have been knocked up by daddy. What is Gaston Deferre doing? It's about time there was some order in the mousetraps and the ratonnades, isn't it?) And so, despite these repeated incestuous acts, the spleen and mouse gentry are the most prosperous and healthiest on our threatened planet. So Marx was right!)

In any case, you can see that the Swedish Communist Party envisaged incest without contraception (when it takes place after puberty, of course). We knew that Communists venerate the family, but at this point...

The Swedish CP's proposal was not debated in Parliament: there were general elections in the meantime, the Right won and the stovepipe family was therefore not necessary to maintain moral order.

The same is not true of us, as you will have gathered by now. Our PC certainly doesn't demand that children and parents mate and that tomorrow's brats will be daddy's grandson and mummy's brother: nevertheless, the current moral of

the - indispensable - protection of the sweet home requires a really high degree of intimacy between the poor kids and their sinister manufacturers.

Of course, it's impossible to find anything immoral in incest. As long as the little one and the big one (call them whatever sex you like, it doesn't matter) like each other, get excited, want to make out, well, whatever. It costs less than the classified ads in *Libé* (me, at 70 F les *Chéri(e)s*, I'd rather do school outings!). (A 10-franc coin is more than enough for a normal-sized schoolboy: I wonder what their teachers are teaching them!) (But I'm hurrying to make the most of it: when they really know what they're worth, I'll have to write some bestsellers). (End of brackets).

Incest is not immoral, I said. Yes, but no conditions is filled so that incest is freely chosen by the child. For example (let's stay gay), they don't have the choice between daddy and another man, no: it's daddy or nothing. - What's more, parents have a thousand ways of exerting material and psychological pressure on their children to 'love' them, willingly or by force. Whether it's through the soul or through the arse.

In today's context - family or death - these pretty endearments are despicable. Even platonic.

This sheds a bright light on the new family game. Incitement to

incest (whether near or actual: all the press I've quoted is mired in it) is tantamount to an incredible extension of parental rights over minors. After the whipping father, here comes the queutard father; after the slapping mother, here comes the thigh mother. Children will love it.

Despite appearances, there is a huge amount of propaganda in favour of paedophilia today. But only if it takes place within the family. Other" paedophiles will be hunted down and punished all the more because they become the parents' rivals in love. A child who 'goes with' a paedophile is committing adultery: he or she has 'cheated' on his or her husband or wife (in other words, his or her father or mother) with a woman who is not a paedophile.

third party. I'm exaggerating a little, since we're not quite there yet as far as holes and other specialised organs are concerned: but as for the rest, it's done. The 'heart' is already incestuous. The hands are wandering. The arse will follow. And we'll understand better than ever why paedophiles are hated. Because their love for children implies and demands freedom, autonomy, the right of judgement and refusal, information and the dignity of the children themselves. On the contrary, the incestuous parental love that the family and educational press increasingly crudely advocates - the ultimate, dirty way of keeping

an unbearable family closed - simply inflicts yet another constraint, duty, submission and humiliation on children.

In the old days, all we had to do to keep the peace was obey our shitty parents. From now on, you have to fall in love with them. If you don't, watch out for the psychologist!

By the way, dear neo-mum who sucks your toddler's dick every night before putting on his pre-natal pyjamas, tell me this: if he wants me to suck his dick or fuck his arse, do you call the cops?...

LETTER TO JEAN-PIERRE JOECKER - 5 February 1982 *Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.*

Tours, 5 February

[handwritten note from Alain Sanzio: 82 ?]

Dear Jean-Pierre,

I always reply so quickly... You mustn't blame me too much. Between money, work, health and intimacy problems, I'm like a piece of (bad) meat in a freezer: it's not easy to survive. And my availability suffers. You were very kind to ask me for something for the issue *Masques* was preparing on paedophilia. Initially, I would have preferred not to intervene (the same people always talk, you know the reproach, and it's justified, after all). I hate holding the spittoon so much that I even refused (politely) an interview that *Le Matin* asked me to do for its feature on the Family. That's how virtuous I am, in the not-obtrusive kind of way (hmm).

Now - and while I have so many little sorrows that I can't even manage to provide *Gai Pied* with my monthly column - I think I could have suggested a text for this *Masques*. An anti... Well, it was anti a lot of things! Anti-pedophile, in particular.

Because there's a lot of cleaning up to do.

But I think it's too late for this issue. If I'm wrong, would you be so kind as to let me know as soon as possible (example: a three-word telegram), and this text will be done immediately.

Changing the subject, I'm delighted with what Personna (1) has published. And I'm just as pleased about the projects you've announced. Is the case of the trans. woman in Marseille the same as the admirable one where, I think, 500 mothers (real, biological ones!) signed a petition so that she could keep her 'stolen' kid? - But if you have to have your willy cut off to get mothers to sign for you... Big sigh.

My major misfortunes mean that I'm still just as incapable of finding the freedom, the minimum level of well-being, that would allow me to take a trip to Paris, for example. I haven't seen Chirac's city for over two years. It's not that Jean Royer's town is a paradise: but at least I can hole up there until things get a bit better. Long live the holes! (Yes, they are!)

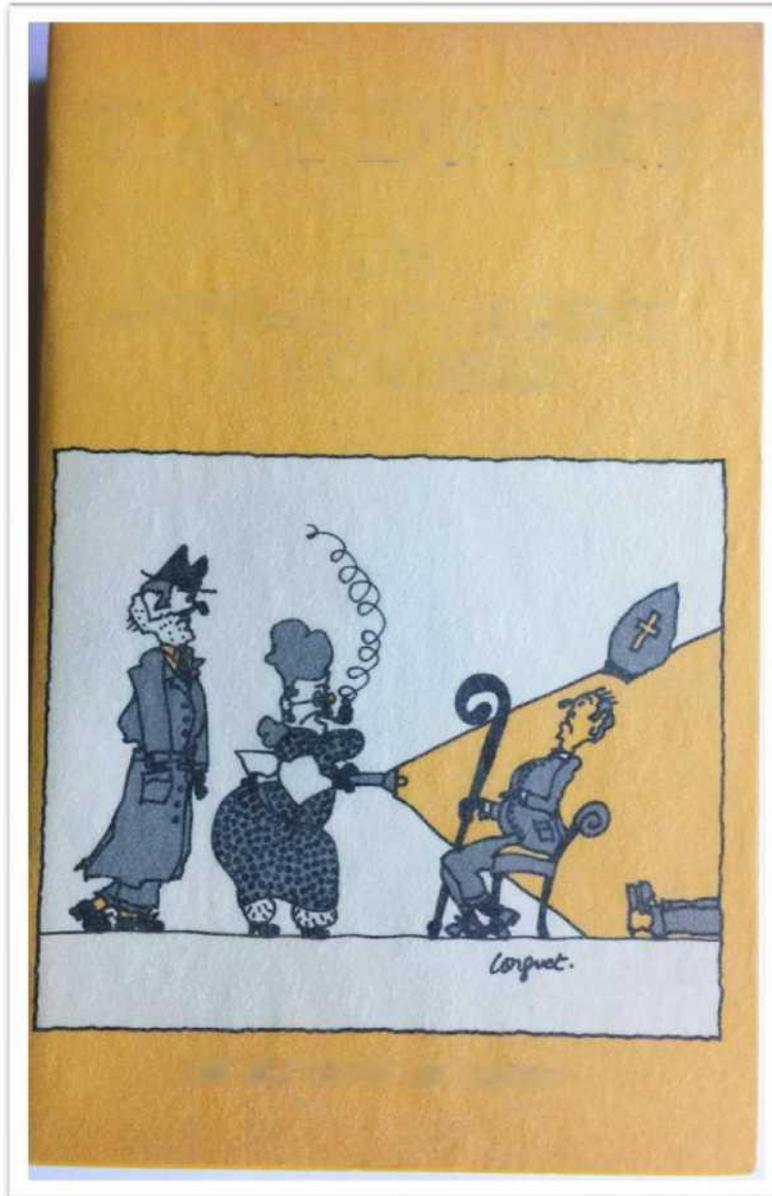
Best wishes to you

Tony

— 1) The second n is crossed out. Handwritten note in the margin to justify crossing out the extra n: *oh, sorry*

A SILVER RING IN THE EAR - February 1982

That same year, in August, homosexuality was decriminalised, effectively separating the homosexual cause from the paedophile cause. October 1982 saw the Coral affair. Duvert remained silent. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan,



2015.

FOCUS - 12 February 1983

TONY OPEN
AROUND THE EAR

Source: Original numbered edition.

Excited by a post by Renaud Camus, who had replaced him in Gai Pied's monthly column, Duvert had a murderous right of reply published in the magazine. Source: Gai Pied Hebdo, No. 56, page 57 and Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

Dear all,

In his column in issue 53, Mr Camus saw fit to tell you about a dispute that our publishers had settled in 1982. He was wrong: his version of events is so preposterous that I must set the record straight. It is not to his credit, as you will see.

For years, a literary cretin has been pestering me with his madness. He quotes me, imitates me, publishes by-products of my books, plays with my name, thinks he's me without being able to be. A dingy, sneaky, ass-kissing, laughable, tiny fool: but a fool.

Of course it annoyed me, but it was too derisory for me to react: we knew what the poor bugger was worth, I would have wasted my time. It's one of life's little misfortunes, like flies, crabs, mosquitoes, boils, fleas, bedbugs, splinters in the wood, turds on the pavement, that a 'well Parisian' nullasse (these authors are as Parisian as condoms are English), that some 'Renaud Camus' favours me with his sticky assiduity. It sticks to your soles, it's soft, it stinks, it makes you sad. You forget. But last year, Monsieur Camus' monomania for me really got out of hand. For one thing, he published an essay (*Notes achriennes*) that was a digest of my *Enfant au masculin*, drowned in his lavasse. And secondly, he published an unspeakably lousy *Été*, which was entirely his own work, but which he had co-signed by an imaginary 'Denis Duvert'. Stealing a text is called plagiarism; copying a well-known name is called forgery.

Such things are obviously contrary to custom and the law. So Mr Camus's publisher, Hachette, immediately upheld my publisher's protests. The double offence was remedied amicably. Mr Camus, who was simply risking the seizure of his two books, not to mention a good beating, came out of it all to the benefit of his finances and his bottom. We didn't even threaten him with asylum. I think he'd be grateful.

But no: now (in his column of 22 January) he's playing the victim! What an incredible stomach! According to him, the massive loans he has made from me are not plunder, but a 'tribute of admiration': and you have to be, he says, a 'foolish critic' to dare suppose that the name 'Denis Duvert' resembles mine.

And I am incredibly greedy to have demanded 'a small fortune' as punishment for plagiarism.

First of all, if Mr Camus thinks it's too expensive to make his books with mine, let him copy others! There's no shortage of cheap authors. Secondly, I don't have the good fortune to be this greedy writer, ferociously jealous of his literary property and his name, that Mr Camus invents. Another false 'Duvert' (or 'Duparc'?) we owe him, the poor clown. Because Mr Camus, in his desire to inform you fairly, forgets only one vulgar and menial detail. He stole my texts and my name without asking my permission, without telling me, without even sending me the books he had produced. Did he hope that I would never find out? He acted without my knowledge, and, you can see how modest this little man is, he carefully avoided my discovering the famous 'admiring tributes' he paid me... What a shy lover I had!

And such enormous shamelessness revolted me. I'm quite happy to let people reproduce, adapt and use what I write: and I don't ask for a penny (similarly, my *Gai Pied* columns were, of course, voluntary). But here's the thing: it's free because it's given to people whose personality and talent I value. And all of them, of course, let me know in advance and let me know the results of their work. This is the simplest form of honesty and courtesy. Mr Camus did nothing of the sort, and with good reason. He guessed that I would have refused him any permission to use my writings and my name. And he had no honest use for them. So he preferred to act without ever consulting me, and then he presented me and my publisher with a *fait accompli*. Stolen from my work, ridiculed and humiliated in my signature, would my self-esteem be too ticklish?

Mr Camus, for his part, has such acute vanity that, he says, being on first-name terms with a reader hurts him like an attack. He is far less delicate when he claims to be taking over my writings and mating me to his scribblings. There, the worst violence no longer embarrasses him. You will also admire the noble elegance with which our author calls a fool the only critic (Gilles Pudlowsky) who has praised him. Admittedly, Pudlowsky was very light-hearted to praise Camus on two occasions

(*Nouvelles Littéraires, Paris-Match*): but no one is infallible, and I bet that's a mistake he'll never make again...

And if G. Pudlowsky thought that 'Denis Duvert' was me, he was only kicking down a door that M. Camus had opened wide. He was the one who created this misunderstanding, this imposture; he was the one who did

everything possible to make people think that I might have been involved in his miserable colic. If tomorrow a noodle manufacturer sells them in a yellow packet with a blue chequered pattern and the brand name Lustuglu in red letters, they'll be mistaken for the real Lustucru. And Mr Lustucru will take Lustuglu to court. And if the Lustuglu pasta is bad, the damage will be all the more serious: Mr Lustucru will be judged to have seriously damaged the excellent reputation that families have built up for him. Mr Camus, who 'admires' me so much that he makes me sign his inedible pile of paper pulp, has inflicted a similar injury on me.

And this moral prejudice is above all unbearable in this way: it could have been thought that I was the accomplice, the collaborator, the friend, the rascal, of one of the flattest of the scribbling toads that languish in our literary ponds. People thought so, yes: and I was terribly ashamed of it in the eyes of my friends: how could I love them and know a Camus at the same time? What an insult, what a smear. It then became essential for me to issue a forceful denial that I had nothing in common with Mr Camus. Which - need I say it again? - only just escaped far more muscular reprisals, and not at all legal. I leave it to him to guess what they will be; I warn him that they will come if he does it again.

I still feel the humiliation and hurt of a rape. The trials show that rapists, who leave such a deep and terrible mark on their victims, are not over-mature or strong: they are flabby, clueless, morons, bland, stupid, ugly and dull, doormats, poor people. Extraordinarily inferior to what they've done. I had to endure the same kind of despicable, petty cad in Mr Camus's filth.

In conclusion, I would point out that this affair has irreparably discredited Mr Camus in the eyes of anyone who can read, judge or think. That's a mistake worth committing suicide for. My condolences to his friends, if he had any.

THE WORD AND THE FICTION - About "Libera" - January 1984

Source: *Offprint* (8 pages), published in January 1984 by Editions de Minuit. This text, which first appeared in No. 252 of the review *Critique*, was rewritten and republished in January 1984, when Pinget's novel was reissued, in the form of a booklet offered with it - Editions de Minuit being the publisher of both Pinget and Duvert.



Most of Pinget's novels use overlapping material: the same characters, the same places - the same names of places and people. The stability of this material seems to bind the works together, suggesting a cyclical intention.

However, Robert Pinget has no intention of unifying a series of books by serving up an invariable and representative sampling of characters 'in the making', whose tribulations are set in the same land. The topo- and

Rather, for the author, the use of his patronymic is a possible form for future books. It's not surprising that there are distortions and contradictions in these retellings, because verisimilitude and continuity are not in question: the only things that matter are the words.

And what they designate will be all the more subject to variations, allusions, falsified quotations or not, as these novels do without an "objective narrator" - the ordinary pole of traditional narratives. Those who say 'I' in Pinget's novels are certainly attached to a series (more or less altered, fragmented, augmented) of pre-existing vocables: but this is to create a fixed point for themselves, by explicit reference to previous fictions. Narratively, this is the only advantage they can draw from them: to use them as supports for their discourse, as pretexts for speaking. Here, what is defined is a fine apophysis in the indeterminate, a foil for the I-don't-know.

Le Libéra is indeed a stand-alone book. In it, an anonymous narrator recounts an anecdote-gigogne in which words are recognisable: proper nouns, read in *Mahu*, in *Quelqu'un*, in *L'inquisiteur*, and so on. - These serve as clues and reference points for a series of words and gestures, various alluvia that swell and twist the narrative.

"Contradictory statements are reported by someone... who has not

revealed his identity to me", says Pinget of his *Libera*. In fact, the narrator is not explicitly responsible for the fiction: he reports what is said (which remains focused on a limited number of subjects) - he pretends to be an auditory witness. This is the most hypocritical role of all: on its own, it would encourage the multiplicity of narrative levels: by convention, it already justifies it. And, by chance of associations of ideas (the expressive power of a scene, a way of speaking, an oral rhythm...), the narrator evokes past events, imaginary perhaps; he is somewhat involved in them as an actor: but he does not have his own version of these events and seems to remain a stranger to a fiction with which he nevertheless maintains a troubling relationship.

As usual with Pinget, the discourse hesitates, twists, turns and questions its veracity. Of course, these doubts and about-faces have no sincerity, no psychological verisimilitude. The resources, failings and scruples of memory are stylistic devices which, by introducing disjunctive copulas into the discourse, link together versions of the same fact that are not so much contradictory as antagonistic - because they hardly ever destroy each other, they oppose each other and contribute to the tension of the book, to its "driving" unity.

To better situate the role played by this shifting discourse in the composition of the book, let's reiterate what such work presupposes. The old novel was also 'knotted' by successive contrasts - but with great care in the manoeuvre, and the subjection of these oppositions to the credibility of a plot; a given situation was 'painted' - then the opposite situation; behind the scenes there was a little box of fatal events and other bravely portrayed characters, thanks to which, by means of a 'coup de théâtre', the action was reversed; it was repeated two or three times, creating twists and turns and a progression. A puppet show that's out of fashion today, but that continues to amuse children.

With Pinget, the coup de théâtre is merely verbal: it is the appearance of the *or*, the *or else* - and, more generally, of a sensible, appreciable contradiction that preludes a new development. From then on, the plot is subject to the movements of the writing, rather than being the driving force behind it.

In both cases, the tension of the book, its entire composition, its way of being, continues to rest, schematically, on a system (prepared or abrupt, unusual or ritualistic) of clear, avowed oppositions, sequences

This implies *a priori* a stability of each term, a verisimilitude of the fiction - hence a certain form of realism, a romance of representation. The relationship between the written word and reality here remains one of relative subjection:

we are in a figurative literature, an instrument for evoking the "outside text".

Pinget accepts this system in order to fight it, on the terrain of the book itself; the fakes, falsifications and pulverisation of reality that we witness in *Le Libera* must constantly refer to an implicit mythical model (reality) that they pervert and thereby make feel more tyrannically necessary. The novel is the story of this conflict.

The exceptional interest of *Libera* is that it shows a writer who erases the novel by grappling with its demands, its arbitrariness, and even its journalistic, anecdotal aspect. A writer whose narrative effort destroys in minute detail the literary diktat on which the whole discourse is based. In short, a fiction that the spoken word constitutes, and, violently, that it erases; the appeal of the work lies in the perfection of this inspired, violent, controlled, tonic game.

For Pinget, the novel's anecdotal form is merely an unwelcome burden: "I'm not interested in everything that can be said or signified," he writes (Preface), "but in the way it is said. And once this way has been chosen (...), which is therefore a prerequisite, it will impose on me both the composition and the substance of the discourse. The function of the anecdote, of the story told and of its meaning are reversed; this reversal is played out and replayed, and even dramatised: but it is not taken for granted, we settle into the operation, we do not envisage a post-problematic work (within the "new novel", some of Beckett's works - *Comment c'est*, *Têtes-mortes* - seem to explore this beyond).

Of course, Pinget's realism is often parodic - but it is there. The humour belittles the representative function of the narrative; it discourages interpretation of the book in terms of meaning. The thread of speech cuts through a fiction made on purpose a thousand times over (all subservient to the need for these cuts), in two counter-intuitive movements that coincide and interact. The counterpoint of these movements remains fairly simple in principle; but in its execution, it is rich, prolix, tangled, meticulous, revolving - similar, in its circularity, to this engraving by C. Escher, which depicts one hand drawing another that draws the first. But we need

Imagine, in *Le Libera*, that one of the hands erases the hand that draws it; no possible predominance of the hand that draws what destroys it or of the hand that erases what creates it. The work will be the end and the place of this logical drama.

A lively technique of confusion, interference and slip of the tongue

organises this complex with great fluidity. It's a devious fluidity of speech that embarrasses itself with anecdotes in order to make itself appear, and becomes increasingly loaded until it is suffocated (think, by contrast, of *Bing's* "white voice"). The story we try to tell in *Le Libera* has the function of revealing the voice that carries it: we speak to be there, so that there *is a* voice.

To speak: because there is no question of "writing". For the novelist, the spoken word has all the characteristics and all the attractions of an infra-language, inconsistent, mobile, unaffected above all by a written, organised, received, legislating context. It has its own vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric; its essentially transductive logic allows for incoherence and continuity. Here too, Pinget's reason for choosing it is a concern for realism, coupled with expressive intentions (cf. Preface, pp. 3-4, *passim*).

But this language, whatever its origin, is well and truly written: and it does *its work*: a versatile narrative, unforeseen by the author, and which depicts familiar visions - banal situations, words, gestures seen a hundred times over. A narrative that, were it not for its irony, would border on populism, even miserabilism. It no longer masks anything; what it knows how to say and keep quiet cracks, swallows itself up. But a flow of safety and unreason takes its place, building, through its gaps, its weaknesses, its returns, the real novel that we will read. It is the growth of the continuous line of certain drawings by schizophrenics - such as those of a lady Laure Pigeon (1), a spiritualist, who would figure well in Pinget's material alongside the ladies Lorpailleur and Lozière - where we see, for example, a pretty human form made of a zigzag of bluish writing, undulating, amiable, which moves slowly, and which can be read, barely deformed letters, abstruse text. A double journey, a double whim, a familiar silhouette, a language of strangeness.

The Libera's discourse, determined in this way, commands the creation of a fiction made for him. Alone, heavy and airy, the word constructs; it springs forth in an architecture that ignores architecture, obeying the singularities that inform it, a diaphanous and meticulous Babel, whose pictorial example this time would be another engraving by Escher, which shows us a delirious system of

doors, staircases, corridors and terraces, laid out against the grain in a rationally unreasonable route, where blind silhouettes trace out a unique path, each fragment of which, in itself banal, is rigorously irreconcilable with the others. A labyrinth of interlocking impossibilities, *Le Libera* is nothing else.

I've already alluded to the convention that holds the whole thing

together: 'they' report things, 'they' make things up, 'they' sound uncertain about what they're saying. We revel in mistaking bladders for lanterns; we visit several dead ends in this way, and the book falls apart.

This journey into uncertainty is driven by a theme, a meaning. A simple, repeated, constant theme in Pinget's work: it's an indisputable "morality" of the kind that life begins badly, goes badly and ends badly - to which we can add "*nothing can be said with a clear conscience*". The interest of this theme is certainly not philosophical, but aesthetic: it contributes, with the bitterness it arouses, to the narrative 'tone'. It is a fundamental source of metaphorical speech, of bittersweet humour, of brief violence; it designates the *point of view* of the narrator, who is tossed about in the absurd: not an existentialist absurdity, but the aggressively funny absurdity, close to *nonsense*, that results from his own speech, which seeks him out, accuses him and ridicules him. So what I called a 'thesis' is not the core of the book, but its native soil: it commands a form, an organisation, a language *that erases it*. It is not the goal, the object of the book, but its axiom, which is only as good as what it generates. It is only in this sense that I speak of the 'meaning' of *Libera*: to go towards the book.

This relationship between the spoken word and its ideological 'undersignification' was more apparent and simpler in novels like *Quelqu'un* or *L'inquisiteur*, where the only reason for speaking was to digest oneself: you spent your life there, liquefying over and over again. It goes without saying that this disintegration is our order, this self-destruction our future: we eat ourselves to live. And *L'inquisiteur* showed this with superb clarity: in an interminable anamnesis, an X... (to whom the label valet-de-chambre-sourd-et-à-retraite applies) draws up a meticulous inventory of what he has done, an inventory that includes exasperating descriptions of the château de Broy, where he worked, and its furnishings; the whole is interspersed with incorporeal allusions to the masters of the place, about whom the *interviewee* remains almost mute, while, page after page, this silence that speaks volumes imposes itself on the reader,

in a few concierge deductions, the derisory and unverifiable anecdote of old fags with sex parties and millions. So this Château de Broy, with its miserable mystery, is like an empty safe. And it doesn't matter whether the discourse is a memory, a fantasy or the gradual creation of a lie to oneself. In *L'inquisiteur*, we discover his life made up of full nothingness and empty being, in a vast metaphor of destitution.

The old queers, or their ilk, are to be found in *Le Libera*: they lurk behind

the suspicious anecdote that governs the book: the rape and murder of children. They lurk behind the suspicious anecdote that governs the book: the rape and murder of children. That's why nothing is as funny as this book.

Pinget's humour is also a fact of language, as much as a witticism. A fact of spoken language: this language, which Pinget says is better suited to the demands of sensitivity, has the advantage, when written, of preventing any dramatisation of expression: it is conducive to lightness, flexibility and repetition; we have already mentioned its fine "structuring" virtues. In *Le Libera*, it constantly defuses the book's morbid theme by stating it. Or rather, this theme is perverted: we don't think about it any more than we are oppressed by it: we enjoy it literarily, that is to say selfishly. Like a stroller on the banks of the Seine who hears the cries of a drowning man: he sits on the parapet, listens, it's very beautiful, he listens until silence, until the drowning is consummated. Woe betide the unfortunate person who takes these cries seriously and interrupts the concert on the pretext of saving a life. A life, a tragedy, serves no purpose other than to give such pleasures to their witnesses. The thousand and one chatterboxes in *Libera*, all preoccupied with accidents, murders and rapes, know this. In other words, the narrator knows it; his voyeur-discourager mind never stops conjuring up tragedies, multiplying them ad infinitum on the basis of a suspicion, a rumour.

A voyeur who only sees what he tells. Who only tells what he has heard or could hear. Who has heard too much to fix his mind on a privileged image and not enough to be satisfied. To have satisfied this passion for what hurts.

This idea of a narrator whose personality would explain the nature of *Libera's* preoccupations is untenable. For this narrator (I will continue to use the word for convenience) is a pure fabrication of the reading.

When, in a book that says "I", we don't see any information that would allow us to classify this "I" as a fictional "they", we tend to attribute a genetic intention to the discourse; we say that it is the whole of it that is (that makes) the narrator; from then on, page after page, the reader tries to gather from this monologue the clues, however meagre they may be, with which to compose a character, a figure, a main character, who will take responsibility for the discourse.

But this archaeological mania is illegitimate, in *Le Libera* at least, because there is *no one*. Needless to say, if no one assumes the fiction, then "it's the author": because his word is specified in a foreign discourse that annihilates his

origin. As for the supposed narrator, he or she is merely the fake, illusory product of a fiction that borrows the "I" to constitute itself.

Le Libera shows the extent to which the first person, if it is denied an introspective, autobiographical implication, can, far better than the "he" (which always presupposes someone enunciating it), erase any human referent to the fiction, any pre-existing presence in the novel, a presence that would remain "alongside" the work to ensure its unfolding, guarantee its credibility, or allow itself to be drawn little by little by the narration. Instead, the "I" becomes the person of indeterminacy, of silence, of absence, and, curiously enough, it objectifies the book by abandoning it to itself. Accumulating "dead ends", *Le Libera* is a deserted novel.

I have indicated a few striking aspects of Pinget's novel. Having said that, all the interest is in the book itself. On the techniques of generation that establish fiction. A close examination of a few pages of the book will give an idea of these techniques. I apologise for the heaviness with which I am obliged to handle such a vivid text (p. 7-27).

The book opens with a statement that immediately calls for a context: "If Lorpailleur is mad, there's nothing I can do about it."

The proposition "la Lorpailleur est folle" would stand on its own; it would be a declarative like "la marquise est sortie à cinq heures". But its inclusion in a conditional shifts the assertion to "I can't help it", which means :

— that the person who says 'I' is not responsible for the utterance, which is an external, suffered fact;

— that Lorpailleur's madness is a hypothesis, deduced from something that has to be said. Add the fact that the word "Lorpailleur" is enough to send the reader back to a whole context of fictions, sites and characters, which weighs heavily from the outset on the book to come: everything is known in advance.

We can see that this single sentence constitutes a dynamic, generative element: and we can consider that the "exposition" of the novel ends here. The rest of the novel will flow from it, depending on the initial assertion.

First of all, tell us why "La Lorpailleur is mad". It's because the novelist-schoolteacher insinuated that the narrator was involved in a murder, that of the "little Ducreux". On the one hand, it shifts curiosity towards a new narrative

axis; on the other, it justifies the irritated tone of the first sentence: or rather, this irritated tone has inspired a development that exploits it.

The spoken pace of the beginning now gives rise to an interlocutor, in a simple repetition of the initial, give or take an incision: If Lorpailleur is mad," / *said to Verveine*, "there's nothing I can do about it.

Caller = conversation. And here it is. Here we find the narrator's obsession with having Lorpailleur locked up. The conversation also assimilates the response of the pharmacist Verveine. Allusions to Mlle Lorpailleur's family: "a sister in Argentina, the rest dead and buried".

The conversation creates its setting: the chemist's shop. This was inevitable, since until now the satellites of the first sentence have been associated by proximity. The centrifugal movement becomes more pronounced, the "I" takes up the Ducreux affair to give it more detail: the fact, the victim, the witnesses, the parents, etc. All these details, the privileged elements of the variations in the story, are the focus of the conversation. All these details, key elements in the variations to come, need to be noted: "the four-year-old Ducreux was found strangled in the Bois du Furet". This happened "a good ten years ago", in July, "a bad month for us"; a month in which another murder took place in 1873, "a man named Serinet shot dead by his brother-in-law". Witnesses (in the Ducreux case) saw "the boy coming out of the courtyard at around ten in the morning". Miss Cruze was there "cleaning her window panes". The dead boy's parents are bakers. They had "three children since then, little Laure, little Frédéric and little Alfred, all very nice".

An interesting link reintroduces Verveine, and the text Lorpailleur- folie: "It's all very well to say that they've had three children since (...) these things mark you for life / *said Verveine*". Often, an utterance that we think should be attributed to the narrator is assumed after the fact by a third person, who serves as a link between two themes, in a coupling of speaker *a* - utterance *a*, loc. *b* - utterance *b*, and so on.

So here we return to the first topic of conversation, the seed or root of the Libéra, Lorpailleur, who "lost her mother years ago" - a reprise and extension of the small nucleus of information that accompanies the entry of a proper name (here, on the name Lorpailleur, it was "everyone dead and buried"). The teacher is "still in mourning (...) on her bike on the way to school at half past eight".

The Lorpailleur on her bicycle, with her mourning crêpe that "a gust of wind will come and stick against her face at the bend just as a lorry passes", is immediately the subject of an aggressive affabulation: the narrator sees her "dead on the spot, there, lying on the pavement".

Each of the elements set out: Lorpailleur-folie, Lorpailleur-accident, the Ducreux affair, the Ducreux family, will henceforth form the core of developments that will alternate and influence each other.

We see the first example of these overlaps. Mademoiselle Cruze is doing her checks, as in the statement about the Ducreux case, but this time the lady sees not the child, but the Lorpailleur on her bicycle. The same sentence is another example of the series of metamorphoses that will be so important throughout *Libera*: as soon as she sees the Lorpailleur, Miss Cruze sees, as in the first version, a kid "coming out of the courtyard", but it's now "little Alfred" (we don't yet know the name of the dead child, but we do know that Alfred is one of the other three). These two examples are tiny, but they do mark the first 'slippage' in the discourse, from which fiction is created less by development than by distorted borrowings from one paragraph to the next.

The narration returns, still in the irritation-aggression tone, to the teacher falling off her bike. But here she falls without the help of the lorry: "she falls, she jerks and screams (...) she drools, you can see she was crazy / said Madame Monneau". Combination of the two statements: Lorpailleur is

crazy - I imagine Lorpailleur falling off her bike, in a single epileptic seizure scene, the whole thing assumed afterwards by a new character.

And immediately, by association, the same scene: "she lay on the pavement, the kids in a circle at a distance" - but in the version knocked down by a lorry. The lorry driver is there, and the narrative assault is entirely successful: "the doctor (...) bent over the dead woman, feeling her, examining her, and found that she was dead". In passing, the information "his sister lives in Argentina" reappears, augmented by : "... apparently with an actor". The couple of strangers, sister plus X..., born of gossip about an invented accident, plays an important role in what follows.

We had a clear-cut, continuous narrative episode: Mlle Lorpailleur's road accident. This scene, which is too clear-cut, leads to the first *or*, which reverses the scene and introduces its opposite: "Or if she hadn't died on the spot / Or if the lorry had simply passed her, she would have arrived at school at twenty

minutes to nine".

This leads to a new quote: "Madame Ducreux kept an eye on little Alfred playing in the courtyard". In the first version, Mademoiselle Cruze saw Alfred's brother at about ten in the morning; the second time, she saw little Alfred at about half past eight. This time Alfred was seen by Madame Ducreux at half past eleven; in all three cases, he left the courtyard.

It is impossible to say whether this kind of repetition is a simple variant of the primitive statement or a development by analogy; these banal, everyday scenes could well be repeated in this way in the "real" world, just as they are in the floating time of a word that fabricates the event through a few fixed ideas: but each of these repetitions is presented by the narrative as a unique phenomenon, independent of its counterparts.

In any case, Madame Ducreux sees her Alfred, then she sweeps up, "suddenly seeing little Louis ten years earlier as she sweeps behind the armchair". Louis is the dead boy.

Here, the first stage of a repeated scene: "Ducreux (her husband, the baker) called his wife to the shop, the employee wasn't enough, it was half past eleven, all the ladies were feeling for bread"; and the extension of another: "little Alfred was going away, the mother, like a madwoman, dumped the whole family.

She went to grab her child in the courtyard. He hadn't moved much, but was playing patty-cake by the fountain.

The next paragraph consists of a delicious quotation of five elements already stated: "While these ladies were feeling for bread / seeing Lorpailleur on her bike coming back from school / hasn't it been ten years since her mother died / dragging her grief around like this, dragging her dead everywhere / you won't tell me she's not a bit crazy."

Association, the Ducreux affair reappears, enriched: "we had assumed everything, a kidnapping, no more, no less" - to which is added a suspicious idea: "is it normal to have your child strangled, what was behind it, what sort of people were the Ducreuxes hanging around with, no, it's not normal". Note the change from indirect to direct style, as in other cases from the conditional to the indicative, changes that tip the narrative into a perpetual roll of the imagined, or reported, to the real, to the present: in a fog of words, a few words are

suddenly caught, retained, enlivened, to bend the course of a fiction that didn't seem to depend on them.

The process creates a new articulation: "Which would have meant that once the customer had gone out I would have been back at Verveine's. And Verveine seeing me coming back wanted to divert the conversation". And when Verveine saw me coming back, she wanted to divert the conversation...".

The "sister in Argentina" reappears: but it is now attributed to the speaker himself, who also gives himself as "an old cousin retired from the railways" - and specifies that he "would have invented others" (relatives to satisfy the pharmacist's curiosity). This assertion is enough to cast doubt on everything and to add the clue "*lie*" to what was already marked as *subjective speech*. The sister in Argentina remains unemployed; since two people claim her, she is no longer recognised as the legitimate owner. This is the charm of the process: by passing an attribute from one person to another, we detach that attribute from any possible subject: isolated, floating, it wanders through the text until someone recovers it; this will be the case later on, with this sister in Argentina.

Verveine is the common factor in the Lorpailleur-Ducreux affair. There is a shift from one to the other, starting with Lorpailleur and her madness. The speaker says that his mother remembered seeing La Lorpailleur's grandmother "fall one day and writhe around drooling". Right

Of course, she saw this because, earlier, the text "decided" that Mademoiselle Lorpailleur had had an epileptic seizure: heredity was established. But, according to Verveine, it was indeed an accident. Verveine's assertion shifts the discussion back to the initial fabrication: Lorpailleur run over by a lorry, "the kids in a circle around her" and "Mademoiselle Cruze washing her windows". However, the pharmacist said that the teacher had "a strong constitution". This statement weighs heavily on the new version of the scene: Lorpailleur will only have a "slight bruise on her shoulder" - since the narrative, unless it breaks off at an *or*, is modelled on its immediate context.

We have reached a state of the narrative which, while remaining linked to the expository sentence, is dependent on the creations deduced from the cells that this first sentence has generated, and on the interaction, subject to neighbourhood attractions, that these creations have either with each other, or with any of their formants.

Continuation of the conversation with Verveine, who has moved on to the Ducreux affair; "the little Ducreux boy was not kidnapped" - denial of an assumption made earlier; his brother, Frédéric, "looks a lot like him"; finally, the dead man is referred to as a "little boy with his throat cut" (on page 9, he was strangled).

Back to Lorpailleur. The contusion on page 14 (which concluded the last version of the accident) is now, according to "Madame Monneau", due to a fall: "falling from a chair to wash the windows, she dislocated her shoulder" - a combination of Verveine's assertion (dislocated shoulder) and the occupation in which Miss Cruze appeared each time. This doesn't stop the text from adding a contradiction: "I think she simply let herself fall off / her bike when she saw the lorry, either out of fear or out of calculation (...) she's so bad". The narrative, which revolves around the idea of a fall, could circumvent it with an indefinite number of possible variants; those that are adopted obey the text already written and, although contradictory, each refers to a known version of the event. Here the repetition is extended by a comment ("she's so bad"...) that actually reverses the origin of the statement. Let's remember that we started with a Lorpailleur on a bicycle and in mourning (this stubborn mourning was proof of her mania), a lady whom the narrator wished to be run over by a lorry; then he saw her dead - and finally only injured; but now she herself becomes responsible for the imaginary scene: it was she who, out of pure malice ("all that to get her arrested..."), made the narrator believe that the Lorpailleur had been run over by a lorry.

the driver"), that the lorry hit her. This is the final stage in the displacement of this fiction, which is now invented by the person who was originally the victim.

Lorpailleur certainly has nothing to fear from the lorries any more - though they are still there to cause any accidents the narrative might need.

We return to Madame Ducreux. The Lorpailleur-Ducreux organisation is regular, and this alternation justifies the fact that the text neglects any "logical" linking of one sequence to the next. That day, Madame Ducreux was "cleaning the window panes on a stool" (in the various versions of the window washing, only Lorpailleur was allowed a chair... but she fell off one). And she "saw little Alfred (...) go through the courtyard gate, she grabbed her little one, her husband was calling him to the shop, it was half past eleven".

Literal repetition of page 12. This is indeed a seated scene. So here is an *or*, which introduces a disturbed version. We see Ducreux calling his wife at half

past eleven, but at the same time Madame Monneau, coming out of the bakery, sees "Lorpilleur all stiff on her bike, she was on her way to school, half past eight".

That's the end of one paragraph. The beginning of the next one shows Lorpilleur "getting up, patting her dusty skirt, fiddling with the engine". The fall is the gap between the two paragraphs; neither the lorry nor the epilepsy seem to be involved. As usual, the children form a circle, but it's around "the driver of a lorry parked outside the Café du Cygne, completely drunk on the pavement". The Lorpilleur-turned-by-a-lorry scene sputters out: the fall is on one side, the victim on the other, the witnesses elsewhere, and it's the lorry driver who ends up on the ground... All the small components of a scene have become so many autonomous parts: only their simultaneous appearance in a paragraph reminds us that they once worked together in a single scene.

In keeping with the alternating themes, here we return to the Ducreux affair, with a short account of the picnic during which the tragedy is said to have occurred. At one point, little Louis leaves his parents and wanders off into the forest: "a peasant picking ceps" has seen him. "He was the only witness, but a witness to what, because he had only seen the little boy go (...) into the forest, but at the inquest he was the only witness.

there were a host of witnesses who had seen the boy in the morning, who had seen him the day before, who had seen him the week before at the bakery, who had seen him being born, who knew the parents, the grandparents, the cousins, the whole shebang, but the murderer is still at large".

So "we haven't seen little Louis again". At least his body has been found, since here is a "small grave with two geraniums, a small white cross to break your heart". A whining phrase that Madame Ducreux assumes afterwards: "she watered the geraniums, she removed a weed, she cried softly". Information on the cross: "Louis Ducreux, 1948-1952". Let's do the math: the scene takes place in 1962. The mother cries, then goes back to the bakery "where these ladies were feeling for bread". And these ladies talk behind her back: it's not normal to "have your child strangled", who are the Ducreux's friends, etc.; and the picnic version of the affair is denied: "it was a story spread by God knows who, the Ducreux have never picnicked anywhere...".

The story is set in the Ducreux estate, and its development will absorb several elements not previously associated with it. First of all, there is the pharmacist Verveine, who is brought into the presence of Madame Ducreux a

few days after the funeral (ten years before the above), and who tries to "get it out of her", "wanting to know whether or not her sister had not come on the Sunday of the crime with a stranger, a boy from out of town". Sister Ducreux, we are told (in the bakery this time), "is in Argentina", adding that "her mother died a while ago". And, as the Ducreux's family status is too similar to that of the Lorpailleur's, we are corrected (it's Madame Monneau speaking): "what am I saying, the mother, the mother-in-law, it was the mother-in-law". As for the stranger accompanying this sister from Argentina, he was "a boy of about twenty".

Continuation of the narration: "the weather was mild, it was *mid-May*" - a detail that applies just as well (as badly) to what follows as to what precedes. But we've known for a long time that the little details in the story are only meant to mislead the reader.

What's going on in mid-May? First, "we see the neighbour perched on a stepladder washing the tiles in her kitchen"; and also "the schoolmistress upright on her English-style bicycle, her mourning veil fluttering from behind". Note the nouns: neighbour, schoolmistress, who is

replace the mademoiselle Cruze and mademoiselle Lorpailleur of the previous versions; the passage is intended to be general: indefinite pronoun, present tense, etc.

Another everyday image ("is the little Ducreux Frédéric or Alfred playing in the courtyard while his mum looks on from the window") inspires gossip about the Ducreux couple.

The next paragraph tells us that "the weather has been so mild (...), June had been so hot and now suddenly this mild July...". This confusion was prepared for in the previous paragraph: (in mid-May) "we open our doors to the sun, which is already so hot that we say it's definitely summer" - and encouraged by a remark made by Madame Monneau to Madame Ducreux (in July): "do you believe what fine weather (...), it feels like May".

This change of month has a particular reason: we're going to talk about accidents. We know (page 9) that "all misfortunes happen in July, fires, car accidents, hailstorms, drownings"; so the narrative cannot tell of an accident that takes place in May: so the proximity of a description of an accident changes the month of the year in which the scene is supposed to take place.

A chain of tragedies. Little Alfred, who "the Sunday before", frightened by a thunderstorm, "slipped and fell, dislocating his shoulder slightly". Surely nothing similar would have happened to the child if, a few pages earlier, La Lorpailleur had not dislocated her shoulder (in keeping with Verveine's assertion that she had a "very strong constitution"). Accidents are contagious in *Le Libera*, and everyone named in the story is an accident victim.

Little Alfred comes out of the bakery, and the mother rushes to catch him, because "she's still looking at her little boy who was run over by that car ten years ago". Strangled, abducted, slit throat, run over, little Louis is the stable victim of any news item capable of stirring a mother's imagination.

However, the child who was run over was "little Bianle, his poor mother still has the lorry in front of her eyes as it rounded the bend (the "fatal" bend for Lorpailleur, blinded by her pancake), just as Lorpailleur was cycling past, the child waiting on the pavement didn't see the lorry and was killed instantly".

Since the little Ducreux was not run over by a car, but the little Bianle was run over by a lorry, Madame Ducreux could not "have had her little one run over by that car before her eyes"; and the scene is repeated, including the Lorpailleur in her posture of the Bianle accident: "just as the Lorpailleur, Madame Ducreux, with her sponge in her hand, was passing by (...) the son Bianle with a friend already in the river...". The dead don't hold still: and we don't know what to believe, unless... "To say that she was cycling past just then (...) was a trick of Lorpailleur's" - which is tantamount to saying that the whole Bianle story is null and void.

Hence a scene that repeats the one on page 12: "Madame Ducreux still in her household at the first daydreaming in front of the armchair where the child was hiding, identical circumstances at different intervals..." - but which is expanded by the immediately preceding statements - the son Bianle and his taste for fishing. Madame Ducreux is doing her housework when she spots "little Frédéric making pasties by the fountain". Frédéric looks "exactly like the strangled boy" - who we are very happy to find murdered, in accordance with the initial version: the aquatic context of the scene (fountain, angling) put him in great danger of being drowned! The strangled boy whose "white marble tomb" we see again, who has changed his two geraniums for "three pots of artificial cyclamen, which now make very pretty flowers, no need to water them, they look clean and decent all year round".

This tomb brings to light the conversation in which Verveine taunts

Madame Ducreux: "roundabout questions about her sister in Argentina, hadn't we talked about her return some ten years ago". (Note that the first part of this conversation took place a few days after the funeral). Moreover, "the son Pinson had also gone into exile at that time"; and La Lorpailleur assumes that something "must have been going on between the son Pinson and the sister from Argentina". It should be remembered that, on page 8, we have gone from one of Lorpailleur's sisters leaving (alone) for Argentina, to a sister (of Madame Ducreux) returning from Argentina; and forming a couple successively "with an actor it seems", with "a boy of about twenty", and finally with "the son Pinson".

Verveine is a pharmacist and a symbol of the scientific spirit, since here is a notebook in which he made precise notes of the two events that interest us: "in 1952, Saturday 12 July, disappearance of the little Ducreux, seen at the turn of the century".

des Casse-Tonnelles, Mademoiselle Lorpailleur narrowly avoids a lorry". Rue des Casse-Tonnelles is where the Ducreux bakery is located.

The narrative shifts again towards Lorpailleur. There is mention of his mother's death "in May 1952, two months before the tragedy", and of a tenderness that is purely the consequence of this closeness in the deaths: "Madame Aristide (the Lorpailleur's mother) was very fond of little Louis, who was therefore their neighbour; the courtyards adjoined". La Lorpailleur's spiteful character - that is, the narrator's aversion to the teacher - is amply illustrated. Then there are small allusions (children playing in the courtyards, an accident narrowly avoided, Madame Ducreux "grabbing" her child) - all the way to a reprise of the theme "la Lorpailleur est folle" ("la Lorpailleur is mad"). This reprise, which completes the passage studied, takes place in the conversation between the narrator and Verveine. This time, the idea of having Mademoiselle Lorpailleur interned is derailed to the point of aggressive fabrication in every detail: "No one went to see her in the asylum, in fact it was inadvisable, they gave her cold showers and put her in a straitjacket on certain days and gave her electric shocks and drugs...". This, of course, meant that Lorpailleur's "sister from Argentina" had to return: "her sister from Argentina or wherever came back to the country, she cleared out the flat (...), she found it in a state (...), filthy enough to vomit, she didn't bother to go to the place, I'm talking about the madwoman, doing her work on the floor, at the foot of the bed, and manuscripts everywhere, loose sheets covered in her illegible handwriting...".

To conclude, the narrative has no *a priori* "content". It is built up by successive manoeuvres around a few centres of interest, which themselves

derive from a fundamental statement chosen for its fruitfulness. The phenomena described are part of a realistic narrative, a "scene from provincial life", with regional events and conventional characters: a schoolteacher, a pharmacist, a baker - and all those gossipy ladies "feeling for bread".

Only oral or informative shots are given: names, professions, dates, places, gestures, ready-made expressions of spoken language, with which events and people are defined and commented on. It is on these series of clichés, which appear in strings (which are themselves macro-clichés), that the variations, permutations and combinations are established, gradually 'knitting together' a controlled fiction oriented according to a traditional project (aiming for a story, an anecdote, a scene 'given to see'). These ruptures and contradictions act as generative processes of

new stages in the fiction, which remain closely linked to the previous text. In fact, the result of these oppositions is a kind of *average truth* of the narrative: a truth defined by the maximum amplitude of the variations, and which is therefore formed by the factors common to all the statements; it is itself a referential fund subject to development, overlap and extension.

Thus, a *first* reading of the text gives an impression of coherence and continuity, which we owe to a blurred perception of the narrative, as well as to the limited transpositions that the initial assertions undergo - the negations, erasures and alterations only affect the qualities, not the narrative schemes; which, on the contrary, are so many formative elements of the fiction as a whole, insofar as they can receive attributes that can be switched, interchangeable, the progression being accomplished by immediate proximity, as on a checkerboard.

The technique of self-fertilisation of the text is exploited to create a "positive" narrative. This use of techniques capable of creating non-narrative ends for a novel perhaps marks the limit of *Libera at the same time as* it defines its circularity: if the privileged elements of variation are the traditional constituents of a narrative, the latter must be kept active to make possible the general movement of which they are the multiple poles. In this way, fighting the novel *within* the novel creates an insoluble conflict between the demands of necessary conventions and the disruptive processes that build on them.

Finally, the use of spoken language and the first person facilitates these processes, or rather prepares the most favourable ground for them, while at the same time allowing them a certain discretion, through the unification that

results from quoting the text itself, and from the presence of this unique 'narrator', whose "I" smoothes out the rough edges of a contradictory narrative, and models in a flow of "psychological speech" a fiction organised in such a way that the "he" would establish in it incessant lines of flight - while the "I" brings these centrifugal movements together by giving them an indeterminate yet exclusive place; *Libera's* own speech has the dialectical/genetic function of driving and destroying a fiction that is both its epiphenomenon and its materialisation.

(1) See *L'Art brut*, catalogue of the exhibition curated by Jean Dubuffet, Paris, 1967.

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE - 12 March 1985

Letter from Tony Duvert to his friend, the painter Claude Hislaire. Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.

12 March

My dear Claude,

You're too kind to ask me for permission that goes without saying - and I apologise for taking so long to reply. I'm overworked, and even in a panic (my slowness to work has really got me into trouble). I'm delighted that you're still in agreement with the modest proposals I submitted for public comment, it means a lot to me: and the wonders you're sharing with me (pinned to the wall to refresh my eyes) are making me want to go to Paris to see it in April, if my idiot traps let up in time - it's possible. Write something afterwards? You bet.

In any case, indecency compels me to tell you how happy it makes me to discover these new stages in your work and to learn that it's going so well (the guy's almost jealous: but I'll get even).

Thank you also for thinking of 'reconnecting'. Time doesn't pass at all for me, and I'm candidly shocked when someone says to me: "But it's been x years since etc.". You bet.

All my love, and big kisses guaranteed without AIDS

Tony

Provisional - and collected - silence on the s.d.b. (1): I'm there, I'm staying there. But I hope the originals are part of the exhibition. (Without the potbelly, ugh!)

(1) Series of paintings by HASTAIRE (Ed. note)

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE - March 1985

Letter from Tony Duvert to his friend the painter Claude Hilaire. Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.

Thurs

day Dear Claude,

Naturally, I deserve some bloody reproaches for replying so late. However, I assure you that a month's delay these days is very little on my part. Your letters and cards have left me in the state you seem to be in yourself; with the urge to go to bed and wait for better days. A desire that I listen to as much as possible, which complicates my life even more, since I have to work like thirty-six thousand idiots - given the total lack of money and colossal delays in my 'commitments', so I write with one hand and sleep with the other: but you can imagine the horror, the special nausea that the slightest blank sheet of paper inspires in me. Ah, what a lovely job.

You see, if we met, we could sing in unison. It's amazing how much that would cheer us up! So I'll stop all that nonsense and move on to what you were asking me about:

- your exhibition. I like the photos so much that they're always on my table; I've dismantled the catalogue, and if you think that your blackish doodles have replaced the very pretty pictures of very pretty boys (and in very good condition, too) that usually adorn my working hours, you can guess how impatient I am to see your life-size drawings. After that, I'll tell you (if there's a drink around) a thousand relevant and delightful things about them. The trouble is, there's very little chance I'll be available (freedom, money, mood) to go to Paris between now and the 31st, so I won't see the drawings hung. Where will they be, if there are any left?

- you seem very upset that I didn't even thank you for offering me a drawing. You're exaggerating. Do you thank someone for a gift? Secondly, framing is expensive and, while I'm waiting for the money to come in (it will, yes it will), I'll have to hide the drawing in a flat place with low humidity, a place that's almost impossible to find in my house. So, nothing urgent. Besides, I don't accept gifts like that, on order, without having seen or touched it, and without someone having done me a thousand kindnesses to make me swallow something so humiliating (that's my bit of the 'bougnoles': everything you're given, you have to give back twice: and I've got nothing, poor thing!) So a hundred billion thanks, but we'll talk about it later, and dry!

- dismayed by what you've told me about the Scenes (1); delighted with

this publishing project. As for the Cimaïse text, no problem, of course, it's all yours.

Minuit has no rights whatsoever over my freelance stuff. As for paying the author of the said text, you offend me horribly (to each his own). Obviously, if the gallery making the book can afford it, I'll forget about this wounded self-esteem and go along with it, given the misery I've already mentioned. But I don't want this to have any impact on the publisher's budget, or on the realisation of the project. That would be the last straw!

- And above all, I'd like to thank you for believing that this text is potable enough to be reused in this way; I'm not at all sure that it deserves it.

Enough chatting, blushing and turning pink. I hope we'll see each other sometime, and I'm giving you a big, big kiss (lucky you).

Tony

I don't know which name to write to you under (2). I'll put both on the envelope.

(1) A very high-ranking figure at the time reserved a painting, but never paid for it, hoping to have it offered to him... (Ed. note)

(2) Claude Hilaire, known as Hataire, had his surname legally changed.

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE - 19 April 1985

Letter from Tony Duvert to his friend, the painter Claude Hilaire. Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.

Tours, 19 April

My dear Claude,

Here's my diagnosis: not only do you have a big gut, but you drink. As a fastidious bodybuilder, I've inspected your anatomy on the photos, reconstructed the original from the remains, and it's shameful that you've damaged it. You can't give a real brain a dustbin to live in, and it's a dustbin that's telling you that. The other proof that you're drinking is that you've made orettocrave phantes. All that's missing is a few puns to make the syndrome complete, much to the delight of connoisseurs. And you date a letter dated the 17th to the 19th.

Enough reproaches. I owe you an apology because I didn't varnish your exhibition on Thursday 18th. Unfathomable misfortunes deprived me of that freedom. I haven't even been out cycling in the region since February. It's not that I work a lot, but I'm no good at anything else either. A little secret: money-wise, I couldn't have found the money for the trip to Paris yesterday. Just to see your paintings and the colour of spring on rue Saint-Georges (a corner I loved when I was a phantom schoolboy) I would have come pedalling (the function creates the organ) but my child demands my presence, and your motherly heart will understand.

You're being flippant if you tell me that five thousand francs isn't Peru. At the going rate, my month's work is worth a third of that - and that's not bad for the right to do what I want. What's more, to offer me, as if I were capable of it, the privilege of spreading your work over your shoulder, without enclosing a cheque with your letter, is a sign of mistrust that hurts me. Are you like those publishers who wait until they've seen before they believe?

The photographs you sent me of your canvases also made me pin up the photos of the ones before, go to the excellent municipal library in Tours (lovely and a great place for boyish glances, it helps to read) to look at Piranesi and - an error of judgement, but I wouldn't have corrected it without that - Vinci's perspective stuff for his *Magi*. Yep, I only work in luxury paintings. Ditto, licking unrelated stuff like Rembrandt and Turner, for a particular use of whites. All this, and thousands of other curiosities that my spare time hasn't allowed me to indulge, is more a matter of comparative zoology than aesthetics. But my skull is more Lamarck than Vigée-Lebrun.

Let me reassure you: there will be no trace of my personal explorations and my zintuitive comparisons in the text I'll be writing - except for Piranesi, which doesn't commit me to anything. As for this text, you have to tell me:

—/ Approximately how long, in typeface, so that I know how much space I have available ;

— / If, when you write "we hope to go to print in mid-May", this probably means that you received and approved my text on 15 May at the latest.

For my part, here's what I'm planning, provided you've sent me an ad hoc grant in the meantime:

— keep looking at things in books, to follow my ideas;

— come to Paris (I haven't been there for five years) between the Armistice and Joan of Arc (i.e. between 8 and 12 May): let me know if you'll be there at the same time - friendship aside, I'd love to meet the author (neither of us being too drunk) and give him a hard time (do you think we could squeeze a bit of that kind of conversation - edited by us - into my text?)

- go home quickly and work on it in the isolation I need, send you the bear by the deadline.

BUT there's a catch: I haven't seen the paintings as they are. The photos you sent me show four of them. Very small. If the gallery's space and lighting don't distort the works, and if they don't catch my eye the way the photos did, an insincere text would be too much for me to take. I don't think so, but since this money establishes a contract between us, I want this reservation to be said. And I'm sorry I made it.

My apologies for this typuscript: my m. dr., ravaged by masturbation, is of an indocility that explains why few painters were celibate.

A big kiss.

Tony

P.S. for my curiosities: you're the only "straight" man who has never, it seems to me, talked to me about little girls. Don't you like that? Or have I forgotten?

(Old adverts for advertising magazines; my paedophile proselytism is all over the place) (I hope you've got huge collections). (1)

(1) Tony pasted these advertisements on the letter (Ed. note)

LETTER TO CLAUDE HISLAIRE - 14 October 1985

Letter from Tony Duvert to his friend the painter Claude Hislaire. Source: Un Homme Parle, les Editions Bleues.

Tours, Mon. 14 Oct.

85 My dear Claude,

I'm delighted to be able to give you some sign of life at last. And, as you haven't written me any of the bitter reproaches that I deserve, I won't dwell on the feelings of shame and contrition that I should express. When I came back here at the beginning of June, I found myself back in 1 appalling situation (money, debts, cuts, bailiffs, ultimatums): obliged to obtain 1 large advance on rights and to commit to handing in my book by the end of July. Unfeasible and so paralysing that... I'm still here. Drunkenness and sports shared my summer, I didn't do a thing. It's only now that I've regained my morale and courage, and even my ability not to spread too much crap. In practical terms, I can get out of trouble (the brand new material glitches that this carefree (hum) summer has prepared for me need to be averted as a matter of urgency) if I hurry up and draw up and send the manuscript to my favourite pawnbroker; it takes a week. Only then will I write my text and send it to you. Yes, better late than never! I don't know where to put myself every time I think about the calamitous delay your project has taken because of me - and I don't have the professionalism to scribble anything that's not true but true in order to keep 1 date or 1 commitment that isn't quantitative. Awful situation! Unforgivable but commonplace. (I'm thinking of 1 American magazine that specialises in French authors and has asked me twice for a text: this wise editor takes the initiative... 3 years in advance - which means he can get the copy he wants, almost on time: and in the form of good unpublished copies. The usual turnaround time for French publications that ask you for something: 2 to 3 weeks; hence the misery and the backlog that fill their summaries).

- We missed each other stupidly (it's less serious than missing each other alone) when you were in Tours: I was in my brother's garden (sunbathing, piano, whisky) in St Cyr (3 km from here). Perhaps it's better that way: I had no idea where I was.

- I've got a thousand things to say and answer, but first of all I've got to keep to the marathon schedule I've set myself. There's nothing more serious than a lazy person getting down to work - as I'm sure you know. If you have the time, a reassuring note from you would tickle me all over.

A big kiss

Tony

And that's why little boys are reduced to being spiked by naughty men. What an ogress! You see, you've got your chances... (1)

(1) Tony comments on a photo he sent to Hastaire, probably taken from a 'Jeunes et Naturels' magazine, showing a naked little girl blowing into a huge recorder... (Ed. note)

LETTER TO MICHEL GUY - 20 April 1987

In 1987 Tony Duvert applied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a grant to write about Morocco. This letter, archived at the BNF, is addressed to Michel Guy, former Minister of Culture and, at the time of writing, "President of the Villa Médicis hors les murs" at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

Tours, Easter Monday 1987.

To Michel Guy.

Dear Minister,

My publisher, Jérôme Lindon, was kind enough to tell me that you had considered - as part of your mission to promote French culture at its most creative - helping a number of writers to succeed in a personal project that would absolutely depend on a stay abroad.

The idea appealed to me, of course. Unfortunately, I'm perhaps not a writer in the best sense of the word, and the only country that would interest me isn't very 'foreign' either.

It's Morocco, where I lived for two years (in Marrakech and its medina), twelve years ago now. My poverty prevented me from returning. Pity: all the great Moroccan writers are Berber, Marrakchi and French-speaking. And published in France.

My feelings remain in this sister country, and in all my work I am with them, as they are with us. Your project gives me hope that - if you see in me a credible Francophone - this invaluable cultural link can be renewed. Since we are poor people, the most united and the most separated, the richest in what cannot be sold, the poorest in everything else. But that's not a decent thing to say. Please forgive me.

This year I'm finishing a very long book, begun in 1979. Undertaking my new work in Marrakech - for example, around January 88 (the Marrakchi winter is overwhelmingly beautiful) - would seem to me like a gift from the Thousand and One Nights.

Are you the wish-fulfilling genie? I don't doubt it: but there are too many wishes for too few geniuses.

*Yours sincerely
Tony Duvert
29 rue Bretonneau
37000 tours*

LETTER TO JEROME LINDON - 30 April 1987

In 1987 Tony Duvert applied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a grant to write about Morocco. This letter follows on from the letter to Michel Guy. It is addressed to his publisher Jérôme Lindon. The name of the civil servant, who is still active and not a public figure, has been deliberately omitted. Source: Retour à Duvert, Gilles Sebhan, 2015.

Tours, 30 April 1987

Dear Jérôme Lindon,

I'd like to reassure you about the old rumour you mentioned. I know that it did indeed circulate in a certain Paris, in 1976. It was unfounded.

But I might as well be precise, in order to help Mr *** (1) - to whom I would be very grateful if you would pass on this letter - to assess the situation.

I left Morocco on 7 December 1975 of my own free will and on my own initiative. I wanted to stay in Paris for two or three months before returning to Marrakech, where I was legally resident. The French Consulate had registered me as a resident, and the Moroccan authorities - all enquiries having been made - had granted me a residence permit until July 76.

You may remember that I had just finished the manuscript of Diary of an Innocent and sent it to you in several instalments by post. I had decided to come to France to correct the proofs and be present at the book's release if possible. I also wanted - after a long absence - to see my Parisian friends again and get a taste of the French air. So I wasn't expelled, threatened or pressured in any way; my rare contacts with the Moroccan authorities were excellent.

And with good reason.

Because I was the wisest of the residents. I wasn't politically active in any way, and I didn't even meet any of the intellectuals there - the same abstention as in France: I worked in my corner, and that was that.

I didn't take drugs either - apart from an occasional taste for Moroccan wine.

As for my private life, it was so wise and natural that I never once had an 'encounter' with the police - something so commonplace in the lives of single people... in France. I lived in the medina, where I had rented a quarter of an old house where the owner's family also lived: three of them were women who were there all the time and who welcomed

my guests with the utmost courtesy. Not a shadow of a problem there either.

I lived off the royalties you paid me, and I certainly didn't do any trafficking to make ends meet!

In short, it was all quiet. And so I simply had to return home - to

Marrakech - after this interlude in Paris. Being a maniac, I had even done a scrupulous house-cleaning before leaving, put clean sheets on, killed the cockroaches, prepared a supply of food and drink, left the fridge plugged in, etc.! I was pampering myself (poor writers never give themselves enough pampering to soothe their genius-crucified brains, as everyone knows).

Of course, I had left all my personal papers, notes, manuscripts in progress, etc. in Marrakech - since I was going to find them soon - (a friend who was passing through recovered them intact the following year).

So why didn't I return to Morocco after my stay in Paris?

It's not a good question, it's too intimate. The difficulty, when you love two countries - and I feel very Moroccan (my father was even born in Meknes, where he lived until the age of twelve) - and in two countries, is to 'divide' yourself between them. If you're short of money, it's impossible and you have to choose. I stayed in France.

In early 1976, Journal d'un innocent was published. And Éditions de Minuit distributed the book in Morocco. Many Moroccan readers wrote to me saying that they thought they recognised Marrakech in my story (they were enthusiastic, by the way).

They were wrong, of course. There are no details in the book to help situate the action (except that the characters have Spanish names). And it is purely autobiographical, egotistical, licentious, devoid of political ideas or "humanist" considerations.

But then there was this rumour. The Moroccan censors had read my book, thought they had identified his country: and the book would have been banned there. The author was therefore deemed undesirable.

I never got confirmation of this rumour. I don't concern myself with the fate of my works: and I was paralysed in France, with no way of knowing whether I had become persona non grata in Morocco.

All this, then, in 1976. No news since.

You yourself, dear Jérôme Lindon, have the answer to Mr ***'s concerns. Has my book been banned in Morocco? If so, is it still banned? Does this mean that the author is also undesirable? Eleven years after its publication, which did nothing to shock the pride of Morocco? All this would surprise me enormously.

In any case, since you are suggesting that Mr Michel Guy and his colleagues have agreed to take into consideration my wish to renew my ties with Morocco and work on a book there, I would like to make two clarifications:

- I want to devote this book to Morocco itself, by name: the self-censorship I imposed on myself when writing Diary of an Innocent (a perfectly normal censorship, since I was indiscreetly painting private people) forced me to conceal a hundred thousand very chaste marvels that southern Morocco

inspired in me, in its way of life and its people (especially the Berbers), who seemed to me to be universal models of civilisation;

- Caught up in my current work, which is very much rooted here, where I have had to endure a thousand difficulties to hold on for so many years, I cannot envisage this stay in Morocco until January 1988.

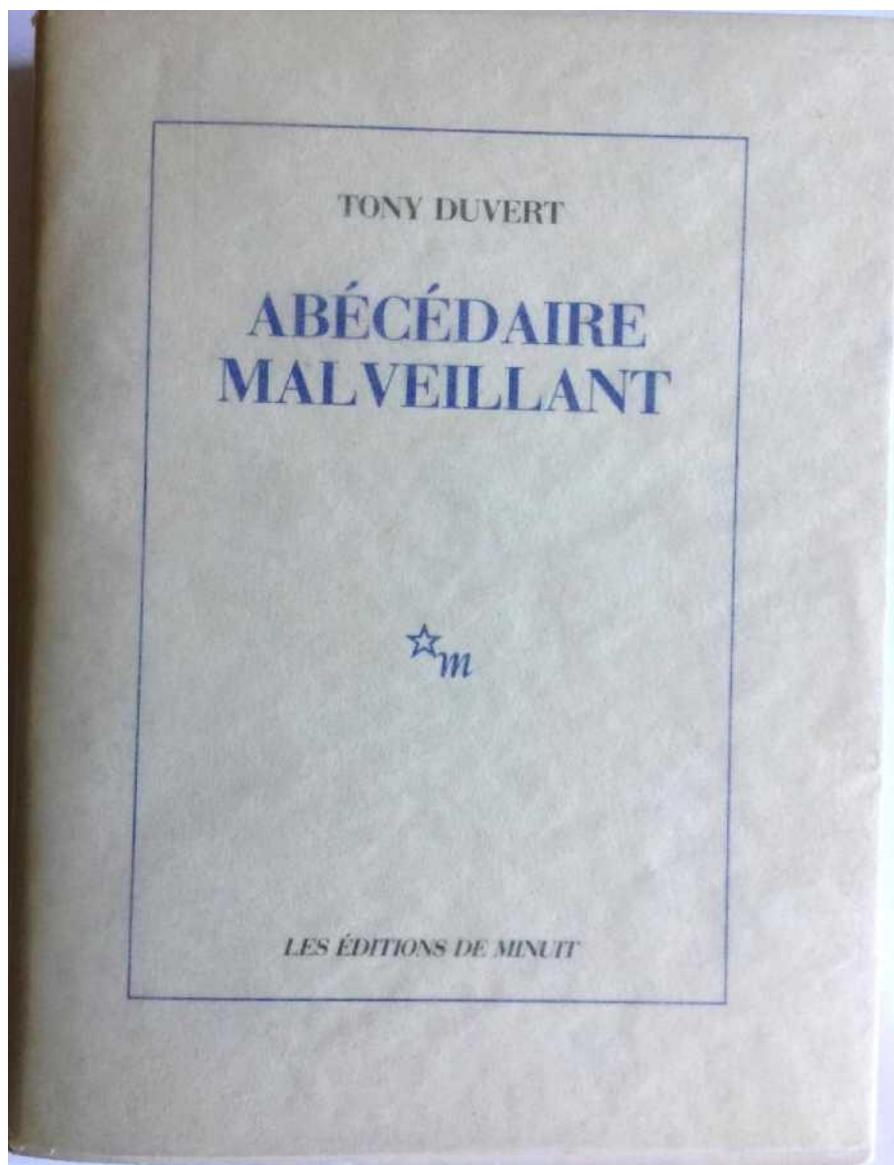
That's a long time away. I hope that this delay will allow the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to clarify my case in the light of the details I have just given. It remains for me to thank Mr.‡ sincerely for the solicitude with which he has agreed to study a case as "suspect" as mine. Would you please express my gratitude to him?

Kind regards.

Tony Duvert

‡

PUBLICATION OF ABECEDAIRE MALVEILLANT - October 1989 *Last text published during the author's lifetime.*



Source: Original numbered edition.

LES ÉDITIONS DE MINUITS, at his request, sent Tony Duvert photocopies and the original typescript of the first chapters of *La Passion de Thomas* on 8 and 13 September 1993. Source: *Retour à Duvert*, Gilles Sebhan, 2014.

LETTER FROM TONY DUVERT TO HIS BROTHER ALAIN - 5 July 1994

*In the summer of 1994, threatened by creditors and bailiffs, Duvert left his rented flat in Tours. At the beginning of August, he moved to Thoré-la-Rochette, to live with his mother at 64 rue du Maréchal-de-Rochambeau. According to his brother, "he hoped to finish a book there, which would enable him to leave again". In this letter sent from Tours on 5 July 1994, Tony once again finds himself having to beg for money, and he does so, not without humour, through a little bestiary of his own composition. Each sentence in the letter corresponds to a cut-out image of an animal, as if from a children's book, pasted on a black background, with the sentences in a white cartouche highlighted in pink. Source: Gilles Sebhan, *Retour à Duvert*, 2015, pages 171-172.*

Dear Alain,

Calm down (an animal at the bottom of the sea), can I ask you nicely (an orang-utan with an annoyed expression on his face) if you wouldn't mind too much (a yawning monkey) if I came to watch my documentary this Saturday 9/07 at around 12.45pm (three owls), I'll only be here for half an hour and could you give me a small allowance (a leech looking for a newt's wallet, (an otter), because in three weeks I've already eaten up all my money plus yours (a raccoon) and your promise of a second and final subsidy never leaves my mind (a snail). My executioners are still giving me no sign of life, the waiting is devouring me (a piranha) but I'm working, now I'm sure that within ten days I'll have a new foster mother (a publisher-broker or a friend from Paris), what a relief for us (a foal suckling its mother). I hope the philosophical pages are piling up happily on your table (a group of monkeys on branches).

I thank you immensely for everything and send you fraternal greetings (a sea lion),

Tony.

LETTER FROM TONY DUVERT TO HIS BROTHER ALAIN - 12 July 1994

*Letter adorned with the unique image of a camel. Source: Gilles Sebhan, *Retour à Duvert*, 2014, pages 171-172. Excerpt ?*

You're all the same, you Bactrian artiodactyls, the sheet says you're very hardy and sober and credits you with a fifty centimetre tail. In any case, I'd like to thank you very much for having inflicted on me the dreadful sweat of this scorching journey and the horrific bleeding of this tidy nest egg. You're right to

say that I'm now protected against our short-sightedness. From now on I'm sure I'll be able to make the connection with the good things that are to come, whatever misfortune may befall me in the meantime. I can't thank you enough. So now I'm leaving you in absolute peace. It was expensive but you've got it. Unless I'm evicted and have to look for somewhere to stay before I leave for Thoré. I suppose you'll be in Paris from the 14th to the 18th, so I'll drop by on Saturday 16th at noon to do my paperwork. If you need to feed the cats, please drop me a line. If you're staying at home, will you think about phoning me one of these noontimes in case, and only in case, this planned visit annoys you.

Thank you in advance.

Tony

LETTER FROM TONY DUVERT TO HIS BROTHER ALAIN - 12 August 1994

Letter written a few days after leaving Tours for Thoré la Rochette. Source: Gilles Sebhan, Retour à Duvert, 2015, page 176. Excerpt?

Dear Alain,

So here I am, at (prison) camp in the countryside for the last eight days. It's still a harsh punishment for all those months of laziness and apathy, but since it's the only way out... - So I'm gradually getting used to this new kind of horror, and as the heatwave subsides, I'm coming to my senses. I've even gone back to work, and at least that's good. The 'rest', after all, is just a matter of a few weeks, and I'll be done - forever - with this shack and the monster that infests it. By the way, last Friday's trip went admirably. What a smooth eviction! It's amazing what normal things I did that day. It made me feel at least ten years younger. Thanks again for organising everything so well. I was disembarked at Thoré, so to speak, without realising anything.

I'm so lucky I don't have contacts any more! The appalling mummy that awaited me, curled up like a foetus on her sofa, gave me an indescribable shock. Not only is not'mère an auschwitzique thinness, dreadful to see with her arms bare down to her shoulders, but she now has long hair, parted on one side, very ugly, white on top and covered with a remnant of blond dye on the sides, it looks like old poverty, it's copious, with big waves, she thinks she's a beautiful little girl, I suppose. The extreme heat meant that, from that evening onwards, I cut short the river of muddy drivel she was starting to jam into my head and went upstairs to sweat under my fan. It was 30°C. Same scenario for the next few days. So we haven't talked much so far. Which totally frustrated her (1), of course. Every time she heard me coming downstairs, she'd jump to her feet - she's perfectly ungambled and her abscess is all bogus - and join me in the

kitchen. She's as flabby as she is dry, and every time she saw me do something, she'd hang on me, in a dolorous, cottony voice (which she has, when you phone her, at the beginning: but here it's all the time...): When you talk to her, she listens with her mouth open, her jaw hanging, her face as lifeless as an old schizophrenic's, and her face as defeated as her voice), and she kept repeating the question: "What are you doing? What I do: wash a glass, cut a tomato, cook potatoes,

looking for a plate under her nose. So often did these mysterious acts call forth from her the question of a spoilt girl seeking contact (as you told me she used to grab your arm), that I had to tell her (politely) to stop. First on Saturday, and then I had to do it again - more violently - on Tuesday. Then she replied: "If that's the way it is, I'm not talking to you any more! Since then, oh marvellous, we've been estranged (2) and living separately. You can imagine my relief. I know, alas, that it won't last. In a little while I'll have to cross the road to go out and post this letter, and I have every reason to fear that when I get back, etc., I'll have to go back to my house.

(1) The word is highlighted in pink.

LETTER FROM TONY DUVERT TO HIS BROTHER ALAIN - 20 August 1994

Source: Gilles Sebhan, Retour à Duvert, 2015, pages 179-184. Extract

Not'mère (1) lives absolutely like a vegetable. From 9 or 10 in the morning, she sits down in front of her TV, and hardly leaves it until midnight. She eats on her lap in front of the television. Her meals are made up, once and for all, of ham, butter, sliced bread, yoghurt and fruit. There is absolutely nothing else in the house. Her only cooked dish in eight days: a small pan of boiled courgettes. Everything is regulated, mechanised, ritualised so that each day is the exact reproduction of the previous one. Her 'rambling' is no longer just verbal: the need to repeat the same narrow routine over and over again has taken over her entire behaviour, which is the slimmest programme you can give yourself before and except total paralysis. Her supposed infirmities are both pretexts for and effects of this dizzying abstention. She has perfect use of her right hand and the other; she walks as much as she feels like it; her foot had only one boo-boo, for which all she got from the doctor was some innocent

disinfectant lotion - but "that burns her to a crisp" (you think!).

As for her famous departure for hospital, here's what happened last Monday. She left by taxi for Vendôme at ten in the morning. She came back at 11:30 with a small x-ray of the front half of both feet: there's nothing there. But, as there has to be something, she told me that the doctor had told her that a second abscess was about to erupt. (Or abscess? damn, I've got a hole!) So everything's fine: nothing's bothering her, but it's still serious and she's legitimately a panting invalid. So much for 'hospitalisation'. She's such a monument to lies and denial that she'd lie about the colour of the dress she's wearing if you told her what colour it was first. - Oh no, it's not blue! In any case, it's not what I'd call blue! (etc., etc.) Fifty times a day is a killer.

The most spectacular aspect of this general flight from everything is the indescribable dirtiness of the house. The layers of concentrated, crusty, weathered limescale and grease that cover everything mean that I have to scrub and store only a minimum of clean objects (crockery, etc.) for my own use. She doesn't give a damn. The glass she drinks from is veiled in limescale; she barely rinses her dishes in the morning, and the cutlery retains its food-laden tongue marks. It's disgusting. She couldn't care less. She doesn't have a washing machine any more, she soaks her (tramp's) clothes in *Genie without rubbing* [sic]. She doesn't wash herself. When I went into the shower room for the first time, I disturbed a huge spider with skinny legs that had set up its web between the underside of the washbasin and the nearby bidet. The toothbrush is

crusty with old toothpaste that's hardened and cracked like cement; this aspect hasn't changed since I arrived (but that may be because of the dentures I assume she has, and whose existence I can't check, I'd have to look under her nose when she talks, given my myopia). There's not a cupboard or drawer that I don't open and find greasy grime, stale and sticky products, ten years of accumulated dirt and neglect.

So much for the essentials. There are still my little problems. You very kindly made me some offers of service, which, alas, I am obliged to think about in this situation. There are three things about which you can do EVERYTHING for me, happy brother (and benefactor nonetheless)!

1. I have no money left. Since I arrived, not only have I not received a single franc from the old monster, but the plan she and I talked about - to send you a cheque and get you to send me some cash in return - is still a dead letter, even though there isn't a penny in cash in the house. She doesn't care about that either. She only comes out of her permanent bath of television narcotics to do the bare minimum of things essential to her survival. Getting - and keeping - an initiative into her head is a long-term affair. - However, I don't despair of getting that cheque once his falling out with me is over. I'm also going to

contact my friend Tison again, who is on holiday from Monday, I believe, and who may be sympathetic. Would you be so kind as to anticipate this or these receipts of money as to send me a note of your choice (no, no, I have no preference!) and, if you find the money and the leisure, to compose for me, using one of those boxes sold at the post office, the following little parcel-for-colon:

2. - a Petit Robert dictionary, 1994 edition (the big revision recently published; your old one, which I left you, disappointed me so much that it's so old-fashioned); it sells for < 400 F. - medicines, of which my tiny supply has already run out:

SUPRADYN, 2 tubes

UPSA Aspirin, box of 2 tubes } (approx. 150 F.)

QUIES balls, 1 box

GELUSIL, 1 box of 50 tablets

If you don't want to, be so kind as to let me know as soon as possible so that I can take action, because I can't, in any case, remain a prisoner in this madhouse without a valid dictionary to work with, medicine for my minor ailments and a minimum of money to eat and drink - since Not'mère is -.

temporarily, dare we believe it - shamefully unfit to take charge of these poor things. What a nightmare, and what a wreck.

3. There's another thing I didn't do before I left Tours, and that you suggested I do, and that I have to ask you to do on top of everything else, and now I'm really ashamed: go to the central post office to change my address. It's a form you have to fill in, in which you give Thoré's address as my new address, of course. When I think," he finished by hand, "that you might actually do all this, I'm red with shame and pink with gratitude.

I'd like to thank you very much and give you a big hug too!

Tony.

I.) "Ferdinande Duvert is going to be seventy-four, and has two years to live. Gilles Sebhan, page 181.

LETTER FROM TONY DUVERT TO HIS BROTHER ALAIN - 4 July 1995

Tony Duvert sends a letter to his brother Alain, in which he looks back on a year of catastrophic cohabitation with his mother and announces his intention to settle permanently in Thoré-la-Rochette. Source: Gilles Sebhan, Retour à Duvert, 2015, pages 185-194.

Dear Alain,

I was already awake, or barely awake, when you phoned here yesterday. Not even six o'clock in the morning (mine)! The ceiling and walls are paper, you can hear everything. I understood that you had lost your identity card; I saw how long it took the old drug addict to find the family record book; and I weighed up the convenience of the arrangements that that dreadful dodderer made for you to get the thing to St-Cyr. I wanted - I had - to write to you: and as it was to ask you for money, I put it off until later and later. I was counting on the old lady to advance me, repayable 'without delay', the minimum I needed to eat in the meantime. She's done this, without any problem, several times in the 8 months since we stopped talking: when the money I'm hoping for is late, I write her a note during the night (the kitchen and her table serve as neutral territory, it's a Switzerland where diplomatic notes and cash are exchanged) and the next day I find the few notes I asked for. I returned them to him a few days later.

But this time it didn't work. Not a penny. As I watched her, month after month, sink into increasingly delusional behaviour (she had already told you on the phone: "He steals everything from me! - she started hiding her washing powder, sugar, tea, sliced bread and scissors in her room... frightening), I thought she was now at the point where she didn't even want to risk anything by lending me money. The idea sent me into a frenzy. Breaking this 8-month truce where we hadn't seen each other once, I jumped on her: I found her flabby, childish, incoherent. I found her flabby, infantile, incoherent. She said things to me that I couldn't put into words (unless I made a long literary effort) because they were so full of contradictions and lies that were crude, enormous and unheard-of. When she's embarrassed by 1 question, she'll answer you yes, and drown you in 1 muddy stream of headless assertions. Excellent strategy - that of the squid who drowns his escape in a flood of ink, or rather that of the skunk with stench gas: you beat a hasty retreat). In any case, she told me that there wasn't a franc left in the house, and that she no longer had a cheque, and that and that. I didn't believe a word of it and, breaking a major taboo, I invaded her room to search it. She followed me, passive and inexhaustible.

Everything on her floor smells incredible. She never airs or washes. Her

washing machine has been broken for years. She soaks

In 11 months, she 'washed' 2 nightgowns and 1 handkerchief. You can see the rhythm. As for her papers, they're just like her. I was immediately discouraged. The two wardrobes, the other pieces of furniture, all contain, piled on top of the cloths and clothes (she keeps tons of things and doesn't use any of them: she's nothing but abstentions and retentions, lets herself - really - starve so much she hates spending, she shits twice a week, she lives cut off from everything and everyone, mummified alive in front of her TV 16 hours a day) innumerable piles of paperwork, maniacally arranged... by size, format, calibre. "For her, 'order' means setting up little geometric blocks that embody what's right and what's wrong, keeping up appearances. But underneath, absolute disorder and confusion. I'd have had to clear everything off the floor and spend a day looking.

Now I understand why she never locks the house. What burglar would have the courage - suffocated by the sweet stench of crushed bedbugs - to go through that? As for torturing her to make her talk, it's no use: she talks. And she says absolutely nothing. Her torturer will soon be begging her to shut up, because she's driving him crazy. She drowns herself in her billions of tricks and pretence: and you can see why it took her so long to find that famous booklet. But if you asked her where her nose was, I think that would take an hour too. In her old age, this mythomaniac shrew who spent her life slapping everything that bothered her and running away from everything that slaps were powerless to eradicate, this monster of childishness and comedy has simply become a Lexomil (the best-selling benzodiazepine) and sleeping pill (Imovane) addict. She keeps her medicines (all fake, except for the shrinks) in the cupboard: I made a list of them when I arrived but waited months before looking at them more closely: so last year I didn't know that she was on tranquillisers and irresponsible. She has a prescription that her chemist in Le Gué-sur-Loir refills and automatically delivers to her home every month. "She has only seen her doctor once in the last year. This doctor knows, I suppose, how to recognise senile dementia, and as we can't commit everyone, she's quite right to offer our mother this chemical straitjacket, thanks to which she is - it's indisputable - completely at peace, and does no harm to anyone but herself.

Having said that, she's nothing but a waste of a being, she can't last much longer, dried out, atrophied, undernourished and drugged as she is. You'd really kill her if you blew on her. Every month she 'saves' something more - cuts out, simplifies, impoverishes. She's got to the point where she no longer buys gas for the cooker: she has an old, bare electric hob (the round cast-iron top is gone, and she puts her saucepan directly on the

She bends over it, her long white witch's hair in wisps of yellow that she's going to burn one of these days, and herself, and even the house, with it - and she

cooks her boiled rice or courgettes on the floor, the only cooking she does any more, every other day or three. She's lying to you when she says she can't walk: all last week, I saw her going to fetch the post at the street gate, early in the morning, without a cane, without dragging her feet, over all those treacherous stones. She has only one motor disability, in her legs as well as her hands: phenomenal laziness, a resignation from everything. She doesn't say a true word about her current state. She's 1 crazy abulic. That's all she is. Should we have her committed? It's very expensive - at least 14 or 15,000 francs a month. But she's really going to become a danger to herself, and this autumn, my own situation restored, I intend to see her doctor to discuss this. With her pension and her savings to supplement it, she can live for 4-5 years in an asylum at her own expense. So that's not possible, and we'll have to find 1 solution that will keep her here. And place her under legal guardianship... We have a mother who has reached the age of 2: we really need to think about taking care of this newborn baby.

Which will be all the easier because - and I hope this news will make you cry out in admiration! - I've decided to live here permanently. But here's where I stand. I had greatly underestimated the state of my nerves after all those years of physiological torture by noise, poverty, creditors and alcohol. What I needed was a few long months away from it all. Teachers, I believe, have excellent rest homes where the most exhausted of them can recover their nerves, nothing of the same kind for me, alas. But I got better all the same. - I'm sorry, by the way, for having tormented you with my accusations, insults and ranting: I was flayed alive and I was making everything too big. Seeing clearly what this house really was, this shrew (whose heaps of lies we all believed together: and the Thoré where we thought I was going was a long way from the truth, which I only began to see as it really was two or three months ago).

As for my situation, it's simple. The money you had the good idea of sending me in January and March was added to various friendly subsidies received from one or other of you: in total, I had an 'income' of twelve thousand francs for the last six months, and I took advantage of this loot - not far from 500 francs a week! - to do nothing and work (the only honest definition of a writer's job). A very good choice: when I look today at the state of my text as I intended to negotiate it in January, I'm frozen. I really couldn't see what I was doing. Thank God, with your money (this ws, I think, which associates you with my most faithful friends, will shock you less than the revolting one, whose I had mated you to our mother!) I was able to wait. And now I'm OK. I've given myself until the 15th to type up the manuscript: then, I say, I'll post it and sell it, even cheaply. So I'll finally be out of the woods by the end of this month: and the pathetic need for money that I'm expressing to you today is, in any case, the

last one I'll have the indecency to reveal to you.

There are two aspects to this: 1. as the mad old woman claims to be without one, and the house is unthinkable empty of everything, a parcel of noodles, milk and flour (or its equivalent in cash, at the very least) would save me from dying of starvation by the end of this week - or from strangling the mad woman, out of anger that she's hiding her money from me and telling me lie after lie. Thank you in advance for the speed with which you can save us from such tragedies. 2. I'm appallingly short of everything: chemist's, stationery, ribbons (I've become pretty again, and I'm dressing up), and a thousand various impedimenta, the variable-geometry list of which, plus the Thoré-Vendôme taxis and return, comes to a thousand/two thousand francs. Of course, I'll make do with what you can send me: but please let me know these days, so that I can plan ahead. As for the rest, I'm going to hand over my novel with a lighter heart because, as soon as I find it bearable to put down roots here - the old lady is just a ghost (I've warned her of my intention, by the way : and it's clear that she couldn't care less - she's on her Lexomil 'vap', the rest doesn't matter any more), Thoré, now much younger, is becoming more attractive, Vendôme appeals to me, the Loir valley once made me do a hundred crazy things on my bike because it's so seductive, and Paris- en-TGV is so close - I'll be able to live there, without rent or fear of any bailiff since nothing is, or will be deemed to be, mine, for very little money. The worst contract (let's say equivalent to 5,000 francs a month) will give me real luxury, compared with my life over the last few years. So no hesitation. Just this last 'little' job.

There's only one question mark: if I don't have much money, I'll convert the bedroom and, later, the neighbouring room; if I'm richer, I'll make the barn-storage habitable, which is very sound from a structural point of view and would make me 1 adorable cottage of 60 m² (on 2 levels) plus 1 dashing veranda that I can already see myself building on the front... (Here's an asterisk: I've carefully noted that, from 18 June 94 (the famous taxi that took my things to your house. Valued at 500 francs) to your succulent spontaneous dispatch (ah the beautiful green dollar of the Curies!) on 27 March last, you've already given me 7100 francs. (Details on request.) There's nothing impossible for me to give them back to you this year, and you're quite wrong to 'always' write to me that of course you don't count). I'm sorry for writing at such length. And thank you a thousand times over for helping me save my weight.

I'll shake your hand.

Tony

NOTES :

At the beginning of 1996, Tony Duvert's mother was hospitalised in Vendôme after a vascular accident and did not return to the house. She died in August 1996. Having received the money from his father's estate, Duvert went on a mail-order shopping spree. Relations with his brother Alain Duvert are definitively severed.

Source: Gilles Sebhan.

LETTER FROM TONY DUVERT TO JOSE-MANUEL CANO-LOPEZ - 8 October 1998

Source: *Retour à Duvert*, Gilles Sebhan, 2015, pages 205-208

Dear José

I've wanted to write to you for a long time, but illness has prevented me from doing so. My heart condition made it dangerous for me to continue living alone. I left Tours in July 1994, to live with my mother in a small village house we have near Vendôme. Absolute peace and quiet. My condition slowly improved, but my mother's became critical. She lost her brain, the small vessels of which became clogged one by one: and she could no longer do anything without my help or supervision. She died after a short stay in hospital, and now I'm trying to get back on track with everything I had to give up.

I really regretted the fact that my poor health and lack of mobility (I promise myself I'll finally learn to drive) meant I couldn't attend your shows, so much had I loved what I'd seen of you. For three years, the Post Office redirected the mail addressed to me on rue Bretonneau, and I did receive your programmes. The Post Office doesn't provide this service all the time, and when I wanted to renew a fourth time, I was told no. So I haven't heard from you since. So I have no more news from the Ostrich Theatre. I would be delighted if my new address could be included in your ad hoc file. This address is strictly confidential and I would ask you never to give it to anyone. Thank you very much.

About fifteen years ago, I gave you verbal permission to use the text of *Les Petits Métiers* on stage. At the time, you were starving, pitiful, miserable, lamentable, ravenous, starving beginners,

thirsty, alone in the world and all that. I was relatively prosperous (though a bit thirsty too). Then illness and its mind-numbing drugs (the kind you shouldn't take if you're driving, and for me that means: if you're writing) forbade me any creative activity: I haven't published anything for nine years. Now I'm not taking anything, and I'm working again. I'm even thinking of changing publishers,

because Minuit is so surly and decrepit. But chtt, it's in progress, and it's going to be a big one. On the other hand, I notice that your company is covered by subsidies, seems to have paid permanent staff and is successful. So I'm outraged that you've continued to use and abuse my *Petits Métiers* as you please, without consulting me once about these 'set-ups' and without paying me a single franc in adaptation and performance rights.

The publisher, Fata Morgana, is a not-for-profit association, to which I had only assigned the publishing rights: I am therefore the sole beneficiary of the other rights. And that's why, given my total lack of greed, I haven't yet sent you a bailiff or served you with a writ of summons. Because you're thieves. Damned rascals! You can't take advantage of a three-year-old oral permission to appropriate a text for years on end. It's indefensible. I don't understand how someone as upright, as chic and as pure as José Cano-Lopez could be guilty of such recklessness, especially towards such a wonderful writer. If you'd only pirated Marguerite Duras, that would be all right, but this? This goes beyond the bounds of sacrilege, villainy and pettiness. So it really is time, dear José, for you to pay your debt. It would be demeaning for both of us if I had to take legal action against your company. Let's remain amicable: and know that in this case I have no demands as to the amount. I leave it to you to decide what you think is fair and proportionate to your means.

If you think you only owe me a symbolic franc, let the shame fall on your head! I'll frame the cheque and donate it to the World Museum of Bloody Impudence. On the other hand, I can't stand you playing dead any longer, and I expect you to do something about it immediately. You don't have to give me that blah blah blah: I loathe it. No: to your chequebook, please. But don't let my fulminating improbation, and the present comminatory objurgation prevent me from telling you all of my truly friendly remembrance, and my hope of attending your new shows, perhaps as early as next spring, if my current book is finished. And now, act!

Best regards

Tony

NOTES :

Late 1990-early 2000: enthusiastic letter to Gérard Mordillat, responding to his wish to adapt *L'île atlantique*. Duvert received between 200,000 and 300,000 francs in royalties for the adaptation. The film was broadcast on Arte in 2003.

28 February 2008: last letter to Jean-Pierre Tison. Duvert writes of a heart attack he suffered during the night.

July: death of Tony Duvert.

J. August: his body was found in his bedroom by the fire brigade. He was

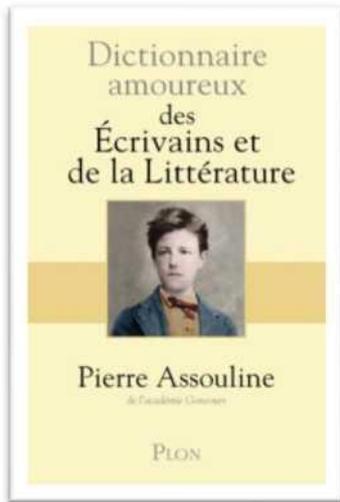
cremated and his ashes scattered in the garden of remembrance at Tours Sud cemetery in Escres. No inscription.

Source: Gilles Sebhan.

CHAPTER 03
Tony Duvert (1945-2008)
Press articles written after his death

PIERRE ASSOULINE

Source: Pierre Assouline's blog. The article can also be found in his *Dictionnaire amoureux des écrivains et de la littérature*, published by Plon in 2016.



DUVERT, TONY (1945-2008)

He stopped living as he had lived: alone, forgotten, abandoned. This indifference would not have displeased him. When his body was discovered at his home in Thoré-la-Rochette (Loir-et-Cher), the man who had not really been part of this world for a long time had been dead for over a month. The inquest is expected to confirm that he died of natural causes. At 63, he was said to be exhausted. No further details were given, as few people had been able to meet him, or even talk to him, since he had chosen internal exile and a form of many years ago. Since he hadn't published anything since 1989 (although he was still writing) and didn't appear, in every sense of the word, the literary world deduced that he had probably died at the end of the twentieth century. He was a true writer, in the classic French tradition of the great stylists. His work? An autobiographical account, *Journal d'un innocent* (1976), and a collection of aphorisms in his style, *Abécédaire malveillant* (1989), published by Minuit, as well as two collections of short texts that are models of lean sobriety and dense lightness, *Les Petits Métiers* (1978) and *District*, published the same year by Fata Morgana.

There were about ten of them in all, which he constantly revised to improve them, *L'île atlantique* (1979) and *Quand mourut Jonathan* (1978) being among the most famous, not forgetting of course *Paysage de fantaisie*, a novel that prompted his friend Roland Barthes to accept a place on the Médicis jury for the sole purpose of getting him the prize, which he did in 1973. Tony Duvert, who, to say the least, did not clutter up the television screens, would have even less chance of getting media coverage today if he had lent himself to this circus. For no one knew better than he did that some of his texts, if written at the beginning of the 21st century, would have little chance of being published. His freedom of tone, praised in the years of sexual liberation, would be intolerable. The leagues would immediately cry apology for paedophilia and get the books banned from sale. He was defending a principle - the right of adolescents to control their own sexuality - that would be unheard of today. Especially as he wanted to take children away from their mothers and, in general terms, he wanted to protect the rights of children,

He denied them exclusive rights over children. "The period of innocence that artists enjoyed in the 1970s is over: we can no longer speak freely about these things these days", said François Nourissier, who admired him. Forty years ago, he could be read as a moralist, something that has become unthinkable nowadays, where he would have been denounced as an immoralist if he had taken it upon himself to express himself. "The heterosexual and family press makes pederasts out to be aggressors that children have to fear. But the vast majority of child rapes are heterosexual and domestic. What's more, almost all of them go unpunished, hidden and covered up", he reminded us.

Tony Duvert was driven by the demon of purity. Absolute and uncompromising. That's why, when he was still living in society, he was frightening. People feared the brutality of his frankness, his total inability to hide behind lies, his harshness, his anger, his violence and his ability to provoke scandal in public over an error of taste in music, the wrong subjunctive tense or a manifest lack of literary judgement. With no work and little food, he lived in great poverty. In the end, isolated in his village where he didn't even speak to one of the 879 other villagers (his mother, with whom he had lived, had been dead for around ten years), he preferred nature to everything, and the trade of animals to that of men. As the misanthrope's letterbox overflowed, an intrigued neighbour informed the mayor, who alerted the Vendôme gendarmerie. The recluse, known among the villagers as 'the writer', had been dead for several weeks.

JACQUES DE BRETHMAS

Source: Jacques de Brethmas, <http://brethmas.blogspot.fr/2008/08/190-mort-dun-illustre-inconnu.html>. Document consulted on 24 August 2008

190TH DEATH OF AN ILLUSTRIOUS UNKNOWN

Tony Duvert died, alone and cursed, as he had lived, a few weeks ago in his house in the Loir et Cher region of France. Often seen as a scarecrow by critics who acknowledge his work without daring to talk about it, he nevertheless deserves some eulogy.

Tony Duvert's work revolves around paedophilia, the symbol that little boys were for him, and through which he has dismantled with lucid, objective precision the whole apparatus of social perception that has been attached to sexuality as a whole since it was taken over by the monotheistic religions.

This goes to show the controversy surrounding these sulphurous books and the precautions that need to be taken when talking about them today. And yet, in 1973, the chaste Figaro, which shortly afterwards appointed the very reactionary Louis Pauwels to head its magazine, wrote of "Paysage de fantaisie", which had just won the Prix Médicis: *"from the most vertiginous perversion, innocence is mysteriously born [...]"*...

In an interview with Libération, one of the very few Duvert has given, he says: *"There is no paedophile character in this book [...], not even any eroticism, no successful relationship. First I eliminated the paedophile, all those I have met so far have seemed to me unbearable people, [...] worse than the parents, [...], "I dissociate myself entirely from paedophilia as I see it. I remain in complete solidarity with the battles being waged against it"*.

If we take his career in order, we first see a great sculptor of the French language, who won his letters of nobility and a literary prize with "Paysage de fantaisie", written without syntax in a frantic search for conceptual and phonetic harmonies, He then became an astute sociologist, writing in academic language "Le bon sexe illustré", the culmination of his thinking in the form of a quasi-scientific treatise.

Unfortunately, his works are not published in the order in which he wrote them, which does not make it any easier to understand his path. From

In addition, this complicated, flayed character shunned the press and the city, seemed to lose the thread of his work somewhat in his personal problems, and finally produced a knife-edged final work, "Abécédaire malveillant", which came at a time when the "return of moral order" had already begun, and helped to

hasten his oblivion. Now a misanthrope, he ended his life in the conditions we know of.

So what remains of the work? The vision of a visionary who predicted, dissected and explained the prudish backlash that was to follow the sexual liberation of the 1970s and the near-hysteria we see today over the criminalisation of sexual acts. Reich's theories, as applied to the post-war period, developing the 'establishment's' recuperation of sexual activity and energy, the theory of 'workers and toy soldiers', find the culmination of their development and the quintessence of their clarity under his pen.

The theory of workers and toy soldiers shows that any diversion of energy from work to sexual activity is forbidden unless it repays society by procreating a toy worker or toy soldier. Hence the exclusion of abortion, contraception, homosexuality, masturbation, sodomy, any form of pleasure-seeking, etc...

Where have we got to? We have a criminal justice system that squints and looks at the same facts and the same people in two contradictory ways: on the one hand, the law considers any fifteen-year-old minor involved in sexual acts with an older partner to be automatically irresponsible and devoid of discernment, who becomes, regardless of the circumstances of the facts, "a guilty sexual aggressor", and on the other, a recent worsening of the security arsenal, which discovers that thirteen-year-olds are not always as irresponsible and lacking in discernment as they are made out to be, to the extent that, given the increase in the number of offences they commit, we now want to put them on file in the Edvige system, charge them, try them and incarcerate them like adults.

Logic would dictate that we should choose between the two systems - responsible and capable of discernment or not - but the systematically repressive nature of policing means that the two visions can coexist without discomfort in a legal arsenal that is no longer a contradiction in terms.

Most of Tony Duvert's works, which can be read for their documentary value as visionary analyses of the times in which we live, are currently out of print. Perhaps his death will prompt their reissue? Especially as it is rumoured that he never stopped writing... Let's wish him a posthumous career...

To be a recognised author, it is sometimes more important to die than to write good and beautiful things.

FLORENT GEORGESCO

Source: <http://leoscheer.com/blog/?2008/08/26/719-tony-duvert-est-mort>.

Document consulted on 26 August 2008.



TONY DUVERT'S LETTERBOX

I have just learned of the death of Tony Duvert, made public a few days ago, but which occurred at the end of July or beginning of August, in the village in the Loir-et-

Cher region where he was

It took a month before a passer-by saw his letterbox overflowing and alerted the police. When they came in through the windows, they found a corpse in an empty house.

I think back to the title of the book that Pierre Bottura and Oliver Rohé published in this house in 2002: *Le cadavre bouge encore*. Not always, dear friends. Sometimes a writer gives up, resigns himself, lets himself die. Sometimes a writer is defeated, destroyed by the forces unleashed within and against him. Sometimes the corpse lies motionless on the ground, waiting for the police.

Over a period of twenty years, from *Récidive* (1967) to *Abécédaire malveillant* (1989), Tony Duvert wrote a dazzling, savage, unacceptable body of work, reminiscent of Sade or Guyotat in terms of the density of its fantasies and the precision of its style. And then he stopped writing. He withdrew from everything, taking refuge in this 926

house where he was found last week, living with his mother. And then his mother died, and he was left more alone than you can imagine. I don't know of any example of silence as violent as his. This voice, suddenly extinguished, had been one of the loudest of our recent past, of a France still capable of experiment, of risk, which no more tolerated the scandal he embodied than our own, but which could admire certain scandalous writers, and therefore listen to them, whatever they might say, if they said it with the strength and light of masters.

Most of the articles I read about him earlier seemed to me to be tainted by a retrospective illusion: the importance given to Duvert's books testifies to a transitional state of sexual liberation, which allowed these aberrations (the word complacency hovers like a spectre); we rub our eyes when we see that his stories about little boys earned him the Prix Médicis and glowing articles in *Le Monde* (new spectre: blindness); today we would be mature, able to distinguish the wheat from the chaff (joyful spectre: salvation at the end of time): blindness); today we would be mature, able to distinguish the wheat from the chaff (joyful spectre: salvation at the end of time). But that's forgetting that Tony Duvert has been a nuisance ever since his first books, that he has constantly faced hatred from the virtuous, anathemas and rejection. He could have published *Le Bon Sexe illustré*, a hilarious parody of manuals on good sexual behaviour, or Gabriel Matzneff *Les moins de seize ans*, but both of them, as well as Guy Hocquenghem, René Scherer and a few other free spirits, who were necessarily deviant, were nonetheless recognised as such and hunted down.

What has happened since seems to me to be of a different order. Sexual conventions have essentially remained the same: solid boundaries and constant surveillance. But the belt has been tightened a notch, no escape, however imaginary, is acceptable any more, no other voice can be heard, and literature must align itself like everything else with the norms of everyday life. Tony Duvert was not (as he may have thought he was) the herald and prophet of a greater liberation, one that would render tolerable what was monstrous; he was not heralding the radiant time of universal love, he was writing books, a place where, as long as they know how to radiate, everything is permitted, because in them everything is recreated on a different plane from that which the watchers monitor, and they make beauty of everything.

This poor body abandoned in the Loir-et-Cher is not the residue of the wanderings of the past; it does not bear witness to the illusions it took to

achieve contemporary happiness.

Now it's a matter of rediscovering "whether this miserable tragedy can be of any use", the magic writer whose mailbox took a month to overflow, because magic, writers, this nonsense, and the freedom they will have represented, you know how little we care about that any more.

ANNE SIMONIN

Source : <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/anne-simonin/blog/260808/duvert-est-mort-vive-duvert>. Document consulted on 26 August 2008.



DUVERT IS DEAD, LONG LIVE DUVERT.

Tony Duvert was, or would have been, sixty-five this year. The press articles that carried the news of his death, which came to light under very strange circumstances - a letterbox overflowing with mail ended up worrying his neighbours - stated only that the writer had been dead for at least a month when his body was discovered.

Tony Duvert had, or would have had, this year sixty-five years old. The press articles that carried the news of his death, which came under very strange circumstances - a letterbox overflowing with mail worried his neighbours - and stated only that the writer had been dead for at least a month when his body was discovered. Tony Duvert was born on 2 July 1945, a symbolic date as he was fond of recalling:

"Strange predestination, a sign from heaven? The paragraph of Article 331 that makes love for children under the age of fifteen a crime dates from 2 July 1945. That's my date of birth. No one could have been born a paedophile under better auspices. That's as good as all the astrology". (L'Enfant au masculin, Minuit, 1980).

Joking about the lasting legacy of Vichy legislation in republican legislation, the reintroduction of the offence of homosexuality in 1942, validated in 1945, and only repealed in 1982 (thanks to Jack Lang), Duvert

unabashedly embraced what today would appear to be the worst form of infamy: paedophilia.

Tony Duvert may have been a paedophile - on this point we are obliged to believe him. What is certain is that Tony Duvert is the only writer in the French language who, far more than Gide, with his *Et nunc manet in te* post-Nobel that drove Mauriac mad, or the lolatilisable Matzneff, dared to make paedophilia the subject of a literary work. In times less obsessed with the search for "miserable little piles of secrets", it is the literary trace, not the author's biography, that should draw attention to a work that is a radical undertaking of moral subversion, certainly, but above all a political one.

"Were you a scout, Pierre? Then you must surely have read the novels in the 'Signes de piste' series [...]. For forty years, boys and girls on the verge of puberty have been dreaming of those ancestors of the 'Club des cinq', the Bracelet de vermeil and Prince Éric. An innocent dream? That's less certain. A few years ago, the magazine [Recherches] showed very clearly that the close friendships of the handsome Eric were nothing but a tissue and a mine of homosexual fantasies [...]. As someone who has known these people for a while [...] I can tell you that the honeyed scouting from which these images emerged was to homosexuality what its executive schools were to Vichy... If there was any doubt about this, an author of this tendency, but one who is open about it, has been proving it with a bang for a few books now. His name is Tony Duvert, published by Éditions de Minuit. Deep down, Duvert is a pure product of 'Signes de piste'. He has the perverse innocence, but not the hypocrisy. The result is some of the most savagely erotic literature we've read in a long time.

During Pierre Bouteiller's *Magazine* on France-Inter on 6 April 1978, Bertrand Poirot-Delpech offered the finest analysis of the literary roots of Duvert's work: not Genet, whose flowery style Duvert confessed to disliking, nor even Sade, whose *Les Cent Vingt Journées* he was to pastiche in *Paysage de fantaisie* (Minuit, 1973), but the popular literature for teenagers by Serge Dalens, a magistrate by profession, and the illustrator, Pierre Joubert. Antonio Gramsci, in his *Notes de prison*, wrote somewhere that the myth of the superman probably owes more to the *Count of Monte Cristo* than to Nietzsche. What if Duvert's first attack was an attack on literary decorum, on the unspoken rule that one should only find inspiration among one's peers, and not in middlebrow literature?

"Born in 1945, I cultivated the strange conviction that I belonged to the first generation of civilised men on earth: no more war, no more religion, no more

censorship, no more violence, no more tyranny, no more injustice, no more racism, no more misery and hunger. I'm looking for where, by whom, this atrocious illusion was instilled in me. Seriously, all I can find is... Le Journal de Mickey. (Abécédaire malveillant, Minuit, 1989).

The finest preface to Duvert's complete works would be the magnificently illustrated study entitled "Pines de Sylphe", which appeared in the famous special issue of the journal *Recherches, Trois Mille Milliards de Pervers* (1973)... In *1940-1945 Années érotiques. Vichy ou les infortunes de la vertu* (Albin Michel) that it provided not only the aesthetics but also the ethics of an entire generation enrolled in Marshalist scouting. By overthrowing it on the altar of literature, Duvert not only reveals its erotic charge, but also theorises, on the basis of this reversal, everything his literature is against, which he describes as heterocracy, In other words, not just the right of heterosexuals alone "to satisfy [their] personal desires" but "the need for the whole of society to teach and authorise only those desires", hence a public order "that adds to the persecution of homosexuals a love order harmful to heterosexuals themselves" (*L'Enfant au masculin*). This public order, conceived and implemented under Vichy, was founded on racist and gendered principles: the attribution to men and women of a differentiated sexual identity was the driving force behind the National Revolution. These are the conclusions reached today by historians of the period who have given the study of gender the place it was long denied by a national historiography.

Duvert's literature says fundamentally nothing else, except that it does not confine its denunciation of heterocracy to the dark years, but considers that the sexual repression inaugurated under Vichy was perpetuated by the Republic which, in the name of human rights, denies those of the Child. There is no need to follow or adhere to Duvert's conclusions, to arrive at a definitive resolution of the problems posed by his literature, as Pierre Macherey would say, in order to recognise his literature's right to think. "A philosophy would only be honest if it were contradictory, incoherent and indefensible" (*Abécédaire malveillant*): isn't that the very definition of "literary philosophy"?

Paedophile, paederast, faggot? Tony Duvert is first and foremost a writer:

"I saw how difficult it was, when composing imaginary dialogues between kids, with written language as the only creative medium, to infuse the simplest sentences, to suggest through them those turns, mimics and gestures without which they are nothing; it's nightmarish work on each letter chosen and the physical demands they will make, together, when read [...]. The alphabet must become both a scriptural system and musical, sensual and gestural notation. Disappointing work: [...]. Useless work? I wonder what, in literature, isn't" (L'Enfant au masculin).

Jean Paulhan learned of the still unexplained death of Armand Robin, a poet of Breton origin who spoke more than forty languages, from an issue of La NRF returned to the publisher with the note: *"No longer living at the address indicated"*. French literature is very lucky: France is a country where postmen still exist.

LAURENT

Source: <http://lesdiagonalesdutemps.over-blog.com/article-a-propos-de-tony-duvert-83287189.html>. Document consulted on 29 August 2008.



TONY DUVERT WAS A SHOOTING STAR

Wandering around the web, I came across the following very interesting text (...) I find it increasingly absurd to judge an art form, in this case literature, on the basis of

the following

or on moral criteria. Because then what would become of writers like Tony Duvert, but also like Genet, Aragon, Sade, Céline and a few others, for various reasons that it would take too long to explain here. Finally, this text shows a lack of knowledge of history, and in particular of the history of mentalities, which is unfortunately extremely widespread. As I was born in 1951, I could not help but notice the change of meaning

of a word and, above all, the modification of the resonance that this word can

have on the public.

Tony Duvert was a shooting star in the history of French literature and in the world of boy lovers. In the 1970s, he was hailed as one of the greatest writers in the French language - even winning the prestigious Prix Médicis in 1975 - but in the 1980s he suddenly disappeared without a trace. Some anti-pedophile associations still mentioned his name at the beginning of the media wave of the 90s, to denounce him as public enemy no. 1; his name circulated once again on the occasion of the release of the television adaptation of *L'Île Atlantique*, for which the critics carefully avoided the subject of Duvert's love of young boys. Apart from these two occasions, complete silence.

When the news of the writer's death was announced, his biography had to be brought out here and there. On the whole, the French press was very quiet - though the few newspapers to mention it were not the least, since they were mainly the three biggest French dailies, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Libération*. Even newspapers specialising in literature don't seem to have made much of it (Duvert is not mentioned in any of the articles they have online, I haven't checked the paper). As for the gay press, it's hard to find the three lines that *Têtu* devotes to him... In fact, it's in the blogosphere that we should be looking for more reactions.

Unsurprisingly, most of the authors of the articles are embarrassed. Not wanting to leave the slightest doubt about their absolute adherence to compulsory anti-pedophilia, even those who pay tribute to the writer contort themselves as best they can to accommodate this contradiction. The strategies are varied.

Firstly, there is the total failure to mention the artist's paedophilia, as in *Le Monde*, which, under the pen of Jean-Noël Pancrazi, manages the feat of never mentioning the word. It even manages to describe Duvert as "a man who loved men", perhaps trying to reduce the issue to a simple question of homosexuality, which is infinitely healthier and more conventional these days. Even in *Quand Mourut Jonathan (Jonathan Died)*, Duvert's most paedophilic novel in that it tells of a positive relationship between a man and an eight-year-old boy in a realistic mode, quite different from his fantasies

The journalist contented himself with an evasive "love of a man and a child".

Other strategies consist of making Duvert out to be a paedophile 'apart', corresponding to a different definition of the word, and who would be very

different from the 'other' perverts, you know those who abuse children every three metres and jerk off to photos of babies torn apart between two rapes. Many people jump at the salvific extract from an interview given to the artist by *Libération* 30 years ago, in which Duvert distances himself from certain paedophiles. *Libération* comes first, of course, in Éric Loret's article:

"His favourite subject remains the impossible relationship between adult and child of the male sex (transparency, as with Rousseau, is lost), but he declared in the same interview with Libé: "I dissociate myself entirely from paedophilia as I see it. I remain entirely united in the fight against it".

There is also the extreme strategy of distorting the truth, even risking misinterpretation, to make it fit in better with one's ideas. Pierre Assouline, one of today's most famous writers and columnists, goes so far as to use a false quotation in his otherwise highly complimentary article on his blog. In fact, when he wanted to write the above quote, he discreetly added four words that completely changed the meaning of the sentence - judge for yourself, here in bold:

*"I completely disassociate myself from paedophilia as I see it.
I remain in complete solidarity with those **who are fighting against this.**"*

He thus presents Duvert as an unaware anti-pedophile, or one who uses the wrong vocabulary: phew, everything's fine, the demon is in fact an angel, just like everyone else! In context, however, it is clear that Duvert simply wanted to express his repulsion for causes and other communities, and to make it clear that he was and always would be fighting 'against' them. There is no doubt that he was against anti-paedophilia as he saw it before his death, even if he said nothing about it - unless we find works intended for posthumous publication. The serious thing is that this initial 'error' is repeated in many other blogs!

Another strategy is to insist on the fantastical nature of Duvert's writings, and use every means possible to ensure that the troublemaker

would never, ever have put those horrible ideas into practice. You can see this most clearly in the comments on blogs, where sometimes great discussions arise following articles about the writer. Take, for example, the comments below Assouline's article. But it's also what you can read, in a more nuanced way, in the writings of Bernard Alapetite, who is hardly to be suspected of complacency towards extreme anti-paedophilia, given that he himself has

suffered the consequences in the past:

"We can see here a perversion of the (literary) judgements of the time, so bathed in autofiction that it goes without saying for the average writer that an author must have practised the sexuality described in his novels. Perhaps we should remember that Sade wrote almost all of his work in prison, where erotic possibilities were limited, and that his work can also be considered (among many other things) as compensatory. Why shouldn't the same be true of Tony Duvert's work?"

Lastly, a final strategy consists of playing with words and definitions, asserting that the term 'paedophilia' did not have the same meaning in the past as it does today, in a confused attempt to place Duvert's provocations in the context of the sexual liberation of the 1970s, perhaps seeking in the process to dilute his 'fault' in a collective responsibility. Assouline is not to be outdone:

"He did indeed claim to be a paedophile, but to illustrate the gap between the resonance of the word in the 1970s and his own today, all you have to do is read the long interview Tony Duvert gave to Guy Hocquenghem and Marc Voline for Libération, which published it very 'normally' on 11 April 1979".

On the contrary, other bloggers like Léo Scheer, who are less cautious than most authors, criticise this shortcoming:

"Most of the articles I read about him earlier seemed to me to be tainted by a retrospective illusion: the importance given to Duvert's books testifies to a transitional state of sexual liberation, which allowed these aberrations (the word complacency hovers like a spectre); we rub our eyes when we see that his stories about little boys won him the Prix Médicis and rave reviews in Le Monde (new spectre :

Today we would be ripe, able to distinguish the wheat from the chaff (joyful spectre: the salvation at the end of time)".

But let's not be too picky. Apart from a few vindictive articles on very biased sites (E-deo, a site claiming to be of the 'liberal right', even has its paedo-Nazi verse...), the articles as a whole are, on average, very complimentary. If Jean-Noël Pancrazi, in *Le Monde*, glosses over the paedophile aspect of Duvert's work, it is perhaps because he feels more comfortable with the literary tribute paid to his novels. Here, for example, is what he wrote about *Paysages de Fantaisie*:

"In an orphanage-run brothel, the boarders can indulge in every whim for a moment, with no taboos, no scrutiny, no reproaches. There is a kind of amoral jubilation and ferocious joy in this book. And in the jostling of grammar, gestures and scenes, in the frenzy of the single sentence, there is a challenge to all literary and ethical conventions. In his almost childlike joy, it's as if Duvert forgot that he was an adult, perhaps even that he was a writer". And on Quand mourut Jonathan: "Tony Duvert had a genuine fervour for nature, which is at the heart of Quand mourut Jonathan (1978), which recounts the love between a man and a child. This relationship takes on the aspect and rhythm of a biological association, as if, by dint of understanding and harmony, they both became plants mutually eliminating the poisons harmful to each other until they are destroyed and separated by society".

Le Figaro is more factual, refraining from any enthusiasm, but it does quote, perhaps as penance, a very fine phrase from its own columns 30 years earlier about *Paysages de Fantaisie* :

"The miracle of this scandalous book, in which innocence is mysteriously born out of the most vertiginous perversion".

Many authors take the opportunity to criticise the sexual repression, not of paedophiles in particular - they are careful not to do that - but of society as a whole, which followed the liberation of the 1970s. They see Duvert as a provocative and purist pamphleteer, who criticises the hypocrisy and absurdity of the education given to children, because he himself was a pedophile.

even undergo social formatting. *La Nouvelle République* ends its article with a quotation from Duvert, taken from *L'Enfant au Masculin* :

"I dedicate this memory to the bastards who today preach 'respect' for minors. One-eyed moralists, I was that miner, and I suffered that respect."

Pierre Assouline, for his part, nicely emphasises his intractable thirst for purity:

"(...) Tony Duvert was driven by the demon of purity. Absolute and uncompromising. That's why, when he was still living in society, he was frightening. People feared the brutality of his frankness, his total inability to hide behind lies, his harshness, his anger, his violence, and his ability to provoke public scandal over a musical lapse of taste, an incorrect subjunctive tense or a manifest lack of literary judgement."

Only one blogger dares to go a little further and agree with some of Duvert's ideas about young boys: Jacques de Brethmas, a libertarian homosexual and probably a Freemason, who declares:

"On the one hand, the law considers as automatically irresponsible and devoid of discernment any minor of fifteen involved in sexual acts with an older partner, who becomes, whatever the circumstances of the facts, "a guilty sexual aggressor", and on the other hand, a recent increase in the security arsenal (...), to the point where, in view of the observed increase in the number of offences committed by them, we want (...) to incarcerate them as adults. Logic would dictate that we should choose between the two systems, responsible and capable of discernment or not (...)".

But writers and journalists often defend their own shop. Through Duvert's work, they roundly criticise the anti-paedophilia outburst which, these days, is resurrecting censorship reflexes that we thought had been forgotten. They all mention the fact that Duvert would probably not be publishable today, as Assouline does:

"No one knew better than him that some of his texts, if written at the beginning of the 21st century, would have little chance of being published. His freedom of tone, praised in the years of liberation

would be intolerable. The leagues would immediately scream that it was an apology for paedophilia and get the books banned from sale.

Éric Loret in *Libération* criticises the current mindset, which equates the imaginary with the real:

"His texts (...) come from a time when people didn't believe that a novel was exactly the same as rape, a time when adults remembered having had sexual desires at the age of 7 or 8". In this he joins Léo Scheer, who is frightened by the normalisation of literature: "What has happened since seems to me to be of a different order. Sexual conventions have essentially remained the same: solid boundaries and constant surveillance. But the belt has been tightened a notch, no escape, however imaginary, is acceptable any more, no other voice can be heard, and literature must align itself like everything else with the norms of everyday life".

Another theme often touched on in the articles is the terribly tragic aspect of Duvert's death: an artist who was adulated 30 years ago, he now dies

alone and so forgotten by everyone that you have to wait a month for someone to realise that he is no longer there, not even a passionate reader or an old friend, no, just a simple neighbour. Of course, no one is really to blame, at least not directly: he had chosen this reclusion himself, refusing all contact, isolating himself from a society so far removed from what he believed in, from what he had so passionately defended and from which all hope of seeing realised had left him. "Tony Duvert, burnt and charred, had undoubtedly chosen his executioner: solitude, isolation and silence," says blogger and writer Ygor Yanka. Assouline even presents him as having died publicly a few years earlier:

"At 63, he was said to be exhausted. No further details were given, as few people had been able to meet him, or even talk to him, since he had chosen internal exile and a form of reclusion many years ago. Since he hadn't published anything since 1989 (although he was still writing) and didn't appear, in every sense of the word, the literary world deduced that he had probably died at the end of the 20th century.

Bernard Alapetite, for his part, does not believe in a truly voluntary silence:

"It's amusing, if I may say so, to read how the local regional press portrays the writer as 'silent', when it seems to me that what should be said is 'forced into silence', on the occasion of his death".

Even Gérard Mordillat, when he adapted *L'Ile Atlantique* for television, says in a radio interview for *Télérama* that he was unable to meet him: all communication was by letter. Like Assouline, however, he hints that Duvert was still writing, and that one of the things he wanted to do was rewrite *L'Ile Atlantique*. We can only hope that posthumous manuscripts will one day be published...

Before I finish, I'd like to mention an original article that I really enjoyed on the blogosphere: this one by Anne Simonin, a historian at the CNRS. In it, she makes a very pertinent point about a source of inspiration that Duvert himself half-heartedly mentioned, namely certain publications for young people from the 1960s, especially the 'Signes de pistes' collection and the famous Prince Éric series by Serge Dalens, illustrated in a very sensual way by a particularly inspired Pierre Joubert. During Pierre Bouteiller's Magazine on France-Inter on 6 April 1978, Bertrand Poirot-Delpech offered the finest analysis of the literary roots of Duvert's work:

"Not Genet, whose flowery style Duvert confessed to disliking, nor even Sade, whose Les Cent Vingt Journées he was to pastiche in Paysage de Fantaisie (Minuit, 1973), but the popular literature for teenagers by Serge Dalens, a magistrate by trade, and the illustrator, Pierre Joubert. Antonio Gramsci, in his Notes de Prison, wrote somewhere that the myth of the superman probably owes more to the Count of Monte Cristo than to Nietzsche. And what if Duvert's first attack was an attack on literary decorum, on that unspoken rule which consists of finding inspiration only among one's peers, and not in average, middlebrow literature?"

SOURCES FOR THIS ARTICLE

Jean-noël Pancrazi, article in *Le Monde*, 23/08/08 // Eric Loret, article in *Libération*, 23/08/08 // Dépêche du *Figaro*, 21/08/08 // Dépêche de *Têtu*, 22/08/08 // Gérard Mordillat, Interview for *Télérama* // Article in *Livre Hebdo*, signed "ca", 22/08/08 // Rémy Maucourt, article in *La Nouvelle*

République, 21/08/08 // Jacques de Brethmas, blog article, 24/08/08 // Article by E-deo, signed "Thibaud". 23/08/08 // Pierre Assouline, blog article, 23/08/08 // Léo Scheer, blog article, 26/08/08 // Anne Simonin, blog article, 26/08/08

MICHEL LONGUET

Source: Michel Longuet, <http://michel.longuet.free.fr/biobis/ptony.html>.

Document consulted in 2016.

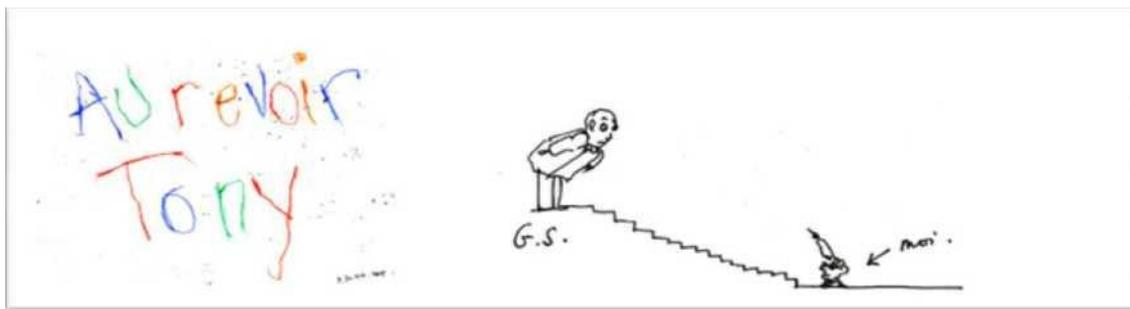
The writing case.

It was on this beige writing table, which in the past was a hairdresser, that Gilles Sebhan wrote his book on Tony Duvert. But let's go back a few months. I was in Porto, in the Place Batalha, when I came across an article in *Le Monde* announcing Tony's death.





JL - It was August 2008. *Le Monde* said that Tony had been dead for more than a month. The gendarmes who discovered him at home thought he had died of natural causes. I reread the article twice while the record shop *Radio Batalha* was playing Fado behind my back. Suddenly I felt dizzy.



2 - His funeral was held in secret. I drew 53 *Au revoir Tony* in my notebook. In the same childlike handwriting that he used to imitate on his postcards. Back in Paris, an email from Gilles Sebhan suggested we meet for a tribute to Tony.

3 - I found myself face to

face with a young, mischievous man. And as we left for the underground, his interest in Tony's work and the fact that he himself was a writer made me hope for a book. Having read the above, you know it's done.



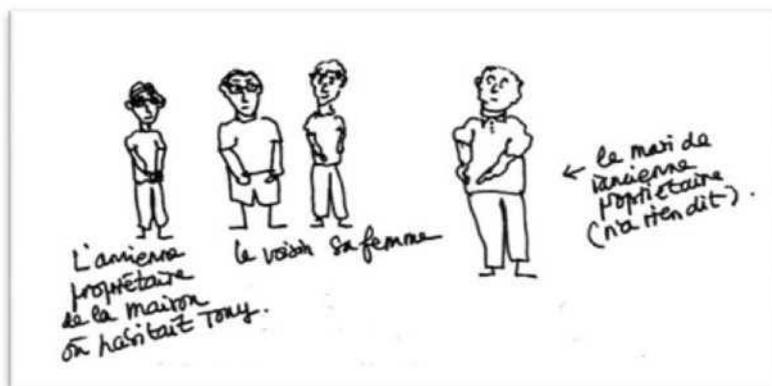
4 - This is Tony's home in Thoré-la-Rochette. Where he lived away from the world for 20 years with his mother. The neighbour showed me how to get into the garden through a hole in the fence. The ladder on the right led to Tony's bedroom (the attic), which he continued to live in after his mother died. The ground floor was for cats, says the neighbour.



5 - On the rue du Maréchal de Rochambeau side, there's this letterbox that's said to be overflowing with mail, which ends up worrying people. When I opened it, I discovered a pile of damp leaflets.

6 - I'm the one who raised the alarm," said his neighbour. And pointing to the attic window, "Do you know why it's open? Because of the smell. So it wasn't the letterbox that worried me. It was the smell.

8 - The next day, I made this other sketch. In the foreground, wrecked cars, the neighbour's vegetable garden and, on the right, the fence through which Tony's house could be entered. You could hardly see him, he was hiding, his neighbour told me. He once called me an old fart. It stuck in the neighbour's craw.



9 - The next day, I showed the neighbour my drawings and they invited me to have coffee with the family. It was funny to see Monsieur Duvert shot by the gendarmes in a plastic bag," said his wife. I then asked what Tony was shouting at night. He was shouting, but as if he was reading something," said his neighbour. So Tony was writing. And every night he read his manuscript, shouting like Flaubert in his *gueuloir*. What happened to that manuscript?



10 - Oh!" replied the lady who rented me my room, "it's the image of Saint Theresa. The parish priest gave it to us. And because I didn't want to put it in the bin, I pinned it up in the toilet. While shitting in front of Saint Theresa, I thought about Tony. Who lived out his last days in solitude. And as if that wasn't enough, when he died he was accused of stinking.

MICHEL LONGUET REMEMBERS TONY DUVERT *Interview with Gilles Sebhan, 2010.*



Copyright Béatrice Heyligers

*From left to right:
Michel Longuet, Tony Duvert and Jérôme
Death through the newspaper*

I was in Portugal and read a small article in *Le Monde* saying that Tony Duvert had been found dead in his home. What struck me was that he had been dead for a month. It took me back to a lot of things, particularly the period when we were close, between 1970 and 1985. When I got back to Paris, I asked Irène Lindon if she knew when and where his funeral would be, but she didn't have any information. Tony had withdrawn from the world, even if it didn't happen overnight. In 82, after the publication of *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille* for which I had done the cover, he began to withdraw. He was a bit disappointed with the reception the book had had, wrongly I think. He thought that his publisher Jérôme Lindon didn't like his Lindon was never one to publish anything he didn't like. From that moment on, relations began to sour. We'd agree to meet up and he'd cancel. Jean-Pierre Tison, to whom he was very close, told me that he had the same problems with Tony. He withdrew from the world. A gradual withdrawal. From 85 onwards, he lived in Tours and then in this little village, Thoré-la-Rochette. I went to see him

in Tours, but he was no longer there, in the flat. I wrote to him in Thoré but he never replied. He'd gone to the village because he could no longer afford the rent on his little flat, but also to be closer to his mother, which might seem surprising, given what he's written about hating mothers. But I still remember this line from *L'Enfant au masculin*: "I, a paedophile, am reproached for being jealous of the wombs of women". As we know, jealousy is never without love.

This withdrawal, this silence

After *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille* he started writing a novel, which he often talked to me about, but the novel was clearly Penelope's tapestry, and he systematically destroyed everything he did. There was already a tension there, a difficulty in writing. If we put things back in time, there was a turning point in '68, a sort of liberalisation for homosexuals who for the first time no longer had to shave the walls, no longer had to meet in public gardens or toilets with a 100% chance of being assaulted. It's true that '68, with the birth of the FHAR, gave us an openness and a freedom that had never existed before. It may seem old-fashioned today, but it was a liberalisation of morals. Paedophilia had the illusion that it was going to have its place, a certain recognition, the right to exist. But then the house of cards collapsed and there was a witch-hunt. I imagine Tony had a lot of faith in his writing, he thought it could change things. He was very militant. In fact, from the moment he stated his paedophilia more clearly in his books, his writing became more classic. He used to say that his ambition was to write like Guy des Cars - not that he admired the work of that writer - but because for him Guy des Cars knew how to make himself understood, and that's what he wanted to achieve with classic writing: to make himself understood. This very French style is to be found in *Journal d'un innocent* and in *L'île Atlantique*, which was probably his favourite book. Tony wanted his writing to have an impact on society. I compare him to the German painter Georges Grosz who was a press cartoonist and who was very militant at the time of the rise of Nazism.

did some honourable work, but it was over, finished, he had nothing to do there. After a period when he thought his writing could have an impact on the world, he felt gagged, he had nothing more to say to society. Tony was a whole person, he wasn't into half measures. From the moment he was no longer satisfied with what he was saying, no longer felt the need to say it, he preferred to remain silent. That's more than honourable.

Midnight period

When I joined Editions de Minuit - I'd just published *Chassés- Croisés* - I read *Interdit de séjour*, which I really liked, and Jérôme Lindon introduced us. We really hit it off straight away. Tony wrote a long piece about my book, a very fine piece that I still have but which was never published. Then there was the *Minuit* review, which we both worked on. The first text of his that I illustrated was *La Lecture introuvable* in issue 1 of the magazine. The second cover was that of *Bon sexe illustré*, which didn't really appeal to Tony or the booksellers, who were afraid it would offend. On the other hand, the third cover, which he really liked, was for *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille*. I remember a photo taken by a journalist at *Le Nouvel Observateur*: Lindon, Tony and I in front of the entrance to Editions de Minuit, Tony smoking a cigarette. It was a reference to the mythical Nouveau Roman photo. I used to make fun of Tony, I'd say look at Beckett's photo, how beautiful it is, you realise that Jérôme got Cartier-Bresson to come and for you he got an unknown photographer, and of course Tony would walk up and climb the curtain. At the time, I lived on Rue du Dragon and he lived a block away, and we saw each other very often. To tell the truth, we talked about all sorts of things, but not necessarily about writing. I wasn't considered a writer, but he liked my childlike side and my drawings. Writing was for big boys. I remember very well writing *Bon sexe illustré*. Jérôme kept pestering him because he wanted the book to come out at the same time as a Robbe-Grillet book, which exasperated Tony, who said: no, writing a book isn't like repainting a room, you can't time it. I remember once he had the flu. I'd done some shopping for him, yoghurts, fruit, things you eat when you're not hungry, and I arrived at his flat: he had a three-day beard, rotten jeans, a T-shirt, he was in an incredible state of nervousness. There was a huge quantity of crumpled paper in the fireplace. He said to me: I've worked but I've done no good. When he was writing, I think there was a very strong tension inside him. I also remember writing *Journal d'un innocent*, the title of which, incidentally, was found by Jérôme Lindon. The

The book was originally called *Journal d'un pornographe* (Diary of a Pornographer). Tony was in Marrakech for more than a year, and wrote the book on the spot, sending it to Editions de Minuit in handwritten letters as he went along, like a real diary. It was a far cry from the new novel of the early days. With this book, Tony was convinced he was going to win a prize. He was a firm believer. In fact, his books were very well received at the time. You should remember that his 1973 book *Paysage de fantaisie* won the Prix Médicis.

Tony Portrait

We were exactly the same age, born in 1945. In fact, his name - which is

not a pseudonym as is often believed - bears witness to this. His American first name was a tribute from his family to the liberators just after the war. He was a brilliant man. He wrote very early on. As a young man, he was already a great music lover, and he hesitated between a career as a pianist and writing. I know that in Tours he still enjoyed playing at his brother's house. His first book, *Récidive*, was published when he was twenty-two, and he started writing it at home, in the family house. I don't remember where they lived, Tony didn't talk much about his family, but I do remember that he had lost his father quite young. So he wrote his first text very early on, in his late teens. On the physical side, Tony was a very mobile person. I tried several times to do a portrait of him, but it was impossible. His eyes never stopped moving, he was always on the move, his gait was very jerky, he was anything but calm. Tony had a slightly gruff charm. He was a bit country. I remember having lunch at Jérôme's when Jérôme said to him: "Remember when you first joined Editions de Minuit, you looked like an apprentice butcher. He wasn't a refined homosexual who lifted his little finger while drinking his coffee. He didn't dress fancy, hated social occasions, didn't like taking photos and never did book signings. Very soon after his prize, he left Paris. But he was really someone who liked to laugh. When he came to my house, it was playtime. I remember that I didn't want him to look at my drawings in class, so I would hide them, but he would try to look at them anyway, it was a game between us. I don't remember him as being at all withdrawn. I knew him for fifteen years and I can say that he was anything but deconstructed. We're a long way from the image of this solitary man who doesn't talk to anyone in the village of Thoré. Sexually speaking, he had a very, very active life. Today we only remember Tony's paedophilia, but that was part of a whole, and I knew him to have many relationships with boys his own age. I read Jules Vernes when

When I was a kid, I never cared whether he went to the North Pole or not. I think the paedophilia Tony talks about in his books is a totally sublimated paedophilia. Lewis Carroll, whom he writes about in *L'Enfant au masculin*, could totally sublimate his paedophilia. Paradoxically, Lewis Carroll was protected by Puritanism. There was no possibility of having a relationship with a child in those days. You might think that Lewis Carroll had a crush on mothers, but not at all, he was himself steeped in Puritanism, he had a mad love for these little girls, to act on it seemed unthinkable to him. Tony, on the other hand, had experienced the liberalisation of morals, he saw it as an opening, a kind of hope that the desire for children would be accepted. And then, with the return of a certain order, all that collapsed. This is my explanation, but there are undoubtedly other reasons for his withdrawal. Probably material difficulties, and then perhaps something we have no idea about.

Forgetting Tony

So there was a rupture, a collapse in Tony's life. All of a sudden, a kind of social suicide. And all of a sudden, his writing was no longer playing its role, it was no longer relevant. Tony was a writer, and his writing collapsed and he collapsed with it. There's no doubt that before he went to Morocco, he had a sort of rejection of Western life, he didn't fit in. And now he was very angry, a bit like Gauguin leaving for the Marquesas Islands. He had the hope of finally finding a real life in Morocco, and I think he had his pleasures and disappointments there. He didn't travel elsewhere, he came back. After Marrakech, he wanted to move to the countryside. He was very fond of the countryside, and had a rather bucolic vision of it, which is reflected in his books. He often evoked Rousseau, a writer to whom he readily referred. He went to Tours, so it wasn't primarily a retreat. There was something deliberate about his departure. Tours meant being close to his mother, but it also meant going to a place where the language was simple and 'pure' in a way, that was an idea he had. So first there was the move to the country, and then the collapse. He stopped answering letters, including from his publisher. He was silent, and of course you can't help but think of Rimbaud. We shouldn't forget that Tony was rejected by many publishers. He was rejected for pornography. Nobody wanted his work. He was dragged through the mud by the professionals. And not just for his first book. Minuit was the only publisher willing to publish his work. Jérôme Lindon loved his work and always supported him. And then the company fired him. Now is

I don't know whether his work will go down in history. I think there's a kind of myth around Tony that's being created. His work is back in bookshops. Tony's books are there and all you have to do is open them.

BERNARD DESPORTE

Source: <http://www.t-pas-net.com/libr-critique>. Document consulted on 4 May 2010.

NO ENTRY (TRIBUTE TO TONY DUVERT)

To mark the publication of Gilles Sebhan's book *Tony Duvert. L'Enfant silencieux* (Denoël, 2010), Bernard Desportes paid tribute to a major writer who

died in 2008 to near indifference at the age of 63.

for Tuan

And the mother, closing the book of duty, went away satisfied and very proud, without seeing, in the blue eyes and under the forehead full of eminence, the soul of her child given over to repugnances. Arthur Rimbaud, Les poètes de sept ans.

After almost thirty years of absence, of silence, of flight, of withdrawal, of confinement, of burial in the depths of a country that rejected him to the point of not even daring to pronounce his name, in the unsuspected village of Thoré-la-Rochette, Tony Duvert was found dead on 20 August 2008, his body having been decomposing for more than a month, "in the middle of the countryside" like "an island in the sea, an islet overlooked by the walker when he reaches the church and its stone steps overgrown with weeds". This despicable society, which thirty-four years earlier, after having wiped him off the face of the earth, had thrown Pierre Herbart's body into a mass grave, had at last taken its revenge on the man it had long since banned from its midst.

Alone against writing, against the horrible work, alone against the good thought, veiled and submissive and grovelling and always rewarded, alone against this stifling world, cynical, censorious and joyless, Tony Duvert has broken his poor moorings of fantasy, madness and wind - *O that my keel would burst! May I go to sea!*

There was total silence during the fine Sarkosian season of summer 2008. Those who had acclaimed him, praised him, even adulated him during the seventies, the horde of cautiously amnesiac literati, all the decorated and pontificating casés now well in place and playing the Rimbaud apprentice for a few springs when it was fashionable - they of course remained silent, not even one of these hypocritical tributes of which they have the infused and, as it were, atavistic science: the mere mention of Tony Duvert, even in death, remains far too risky and dangerous, far too compromising.

Gilles Sebhan's fine book, *Tony Duvert - L'Enfant silencieux* (Denoël, 2010), is to be commended for being - against the tide of the times, against the inquisitorial consensus, disclosing and ravaging the hunt for the sexuality of minors - the first to have finally paid tribute to the great writer Tony Duvert, one of the greatest in the French language over the last four decades, but whose name has been remarkably erased from the painstakingly applied shelves of those academics who try as best they can to make a name for themselves out of names already known by all and consecrated by sales. Much more than a simple tribute, Gilles Sebhan's book is first and foremost the free and noble text of a man who conceals neither his affection for the man Tony Duvert was nor his

admiration for the writer of *Récidive* and *Journal d'un innocent*.

In his book *Tony Duvert. L'enfant silencieux*, Sebhan takes us back to Duvert's childhood, adolescence and literary beginnings: the limited-edition publication of *Récidive* in 1967, which was not exhibited in bookshops and was sold by subscription; the outright banning of *Interdit de séjour* in 1969; and finally, thanks in particular to the decisive support of Roland Barthes, the Médicis prize in 1973 for *Paysage de fantaisie*. You have to realise that such a literary prize for such a book - so new, so scandalous, so strong, so 'good' in a word - is unimaginable today, and shows the extent of the intellectual, literary and liberticidal regression that has taken place since the 1980s... all in the name of commerce, of course, but also in the name of morality.

Tony Duvert - L'enfant silencieux is a portrait of the man who, in just a dozen years (from 1967 to 1979 for his main books), in a dazzling body of work, was able both to denounce an inhuman society shrouded in hypocrisy and lies, and to open up a new world through a new language.

of beauty and exemplary singularity. But will this book be enough to put Tony Duvert's demanding work back on the map? I doubt it. Intelligence is not the strong point of the current period.

A song of violence, solitude and freedom, the work of the man who was the first director of the magazine *Minuit* is, through his novels, stories, essays and short texts, a demythification of childhood. In the abyss and the mud, in gaiety, fantasy and the total absence of guilt, in desire, pleasure, suffering and cruelty, Tony Duvert, in a magnificently inventive and totally new language with as yet unknown rhythms and sounds, Over and above his hatred and horror of adulthood, he develops a lucid and pitiless vision of the hidden follies of childhood, where innocent and greedy animality mingle with wounded nostalgia for a purity lost in the unbridled and uninhibited search for pleasure, where the fascinating duality of love and death is played out.

*The lightning cracks I can see it under the black plastic The storm won't stop here
it will go out to sea The liners the freighters the trawlers the tugs the sailing
boats I know them There will be a storm The passengers take shelter in their
cabins We stand at the railings we are brave we say it's a squall don't be afraid
and we laugh so we don't throw up
it's because of the sails that I've come because on the rivers the other boys walk
boats I made one too with a red plank and a stick and some strings the current
carried it away I'll find it again maybe we'll both travel and the river pushed it to*

*the ocean it's very far away now elsewhere in the bright sun very far out to sea
towards the islands*

Tony Duvert, *Paysage de fantaisie*, Minuit, 1973.

ALAIN JAMOT

Source: www.surlering.com/article/redacteur.php/redacteur/alain-jamot/page/1. Document consulted on 3 May 2010.

TONY DUVERT: IS THIS HOW MEN DIE?

Tony Duvert's career is emblematic of everything that is said and fantasised about writing. A former prodigy of the Minuit publishing house, protégé of Jérôme Lindon, winner of the Prix Médicis by the grace of Roland Barthes, he died in July 2008, alone as a dog, in an indescribable mess, a beggar of literature, the homeless of writing. He had literally disappeared from the literary map of France, his works gradually becoming impossible to find. By virtue of his morals, his style and his character, he had chosen from the outset to break with his society. But the day came when you had to pay, and in his case, at a high price.

Drunk with literature, he no doubt thought that talent, youth and writing would be forgiven everything... According to Gilles Sebhan, he had already programmed himself for success: the Médicis in his pocket, followed by the Goncourt, and then one day the Nobel Prize for Literature... like Beckett the great silent bird of misfortune. Was this the dream of a lost and egotistical child, or the fantasy of an adult intoxicated by the small milieu of official French literature, these false rebels monthly paid by the publishing houses and regulars of bourgeois gazettes and Left Bank gambling dens? We don't know, but his chaotic and calamitous career takes us back to the way we perceive literature and writers.

Throughout the twentieth century, right up to the 1950s, writers in France played the role of the bogeyman, the director of conscience, the know-it-all who, from the heights of Parnassus, distilled his knowledge to the masses: It's Barrès hallucinating his dead, Montherlant playing the great man, Camus asking himself questions in his final year of philosophy, Sartre talking nonsense to try and forget his congenital weakness and his singular self-effacement during the

Occupation... It's also Drieu, who doesn't see that between fascism and communism, there is perhaps something called democracy... All these fine people dissemble like crazy and spend their afternoons in the bunkers of Gallimard, laughing at the princes.

The writer is a teacher, a pythia, and it works as long as information is rationed, under control, as long as the institution is willing to let it. There are

Fortunately, there are some truly free men, writing far from the Vème arrondissement and still going strong: Céline, MacOrlan, Cendrars, even Malraux. And there are also some irredeemable turn-of-the-century writers: Rimbaud, Allain-Fournier...

And then 1968 arrived. Yippee, long live the revolution. We threw everything overboard and had a blast. There was a new lease of life, especially in philosophy and sociology, everything was called into question, and real, light, liberating thinking opened the windows: people could breathe at last, they could express themselves, and it was a relief for Gaullist France, encysted in the Resistance myth and Auntie Yvonne's slippers.

Writers jumped on the bandwagon, and Duvert was one of them. But he didn't understand that with the barricades came a blow to the figure of the French hustler-writer. Young people really started to read Americans, and for the next two decades they didn't pull any punches: recent works or late translations, they exploded all the French bullshit, all the phoney representations, the unreadable experiments, the constant references to Joyce or Surrealism, the avant-garde that was already sixty years old: Kerouac, Burroughs, Bukowski don't give a damn about the establishment and come up with fabulous volumes, stories as gripping as an adventure novel and as profound as a philosophy textbook: this is real life, and literature should help us to share, to live differently, not to parade around Boulevard Saint-Germain!

But Duvert didn't understand that, he belched out his hatred of the family, of the mother, he threw out anguished, dark, dirty stuff, and it didn't interest many people. So he decided to simplify his style, to do some Guy-Des-Cars to get in touch with the masses, and that gave him *L'île atlantique*, a wonderful book, but to his great surprise, it didn't make it to the top of the sales list.

The poor man is living through the passage from one era to another without being able to control anything. Born twenty years earlier, he could have

shown off and ended up in the Académie française despite all his turpitudes. But the scribbler who explains the world to you from the depths of his backward countryside just doesn't work any more. Soon the new model of the writer was established, one for which he was no match either: the best-selling writer, the big seller, the guy you see on TV, who talks well, makes money, has sex with blondes and drives a sports car.

That's where we are now: you have to sell to be taken seriously, to have the right to exist. You have to be published by a major publisher and earn a lot of money, otherwise you're just a poor bastard, a perpetual subscriber to the Rue Poliveau, a has-been who's never been anything. If you don't sell, you're no good! And the journalists and press officers are forever trotting out this lament from the mouthpieces of the big paper merchants.

No one cares whether writing plays a social, political, symbolic or artistic role. The fact that you write to participate in the community, to contribute your thoughts and ideas, that you want to give, to surprise, to help without wanting to appear on the news or make millions in royalties, is of no interest to anyone. You sell less than fifty thousand copies? You're an idiot, that's all. And then we hear the list of the inter-ideal geniuses of our time, those knights of the written word who sell by the wagonload a prose soaked in navel-gazing and insignificance: the BHLs, the Gavalas, the Eric-Emmanuel Schmitts, who of course won't end up like their illustrious predecessors, the Conrad Detrezs, the Yves Navarres, the Weyergans or the Henry Bordeauxs in the sales, their complete and faded works for a euro a kilo.

So Duvert, with his small arms and illusions, was obviously no match. Others like him, fragile and weak, were able to resist the circus: Pierre Michon comes to mind, but what state are they in? How many years have they endured scorn without collapsing, subsisting on subsidies, public begging and the rumours of the corridors of sinister ministerial bodies? Gilles Sehban's book recounts all this, the painful lament of a man who believed that he could change his life and the lives of others through his writing, who believed that he was the only one expected to change the world... the calamitous and above all sad, dismal story of a man who didn't want to grow up. What a waste, what sadness. As Manset said, "*That's how men die, and their perfume remains in the distance...*".

FLORENT GEORGESCO

Interview with Gilles Sebhan in *La Revue Littéraire*, monthly, issue 46, May 2010.



IN SEARCH OF TONY DUVERT

Florent Georgesco: Tony Duvert died in the summer of 2008, on a date we'll never know, because he was so alone that when he was found his body was in an advanced state of decomposition. I'm sorry to start in such brutal terms, but such is the reality, such is this life. Duvert was 63 at the time. He had disappeared from the literary scene for two decades. In a way, this was the long silence into which he had fallen.

that led you to write this book (1), in which you search it, turn it upside down and turn it inside out.

in every direction to discover the truth about this perfectly singular man.

You write that a few years ago you wanted to find him in his retirement. That's what you're doing today, even though it's too late.

Gilles Sebhan: I was in my twenties when I discovered Tony Duvert's work. I was immediately struck by the sheer scandal of his writing. *Récidive*, *Journal d'un innocent* and *Quand mourut Jonathan* had for me the force of great texts and an uncommon freedom of tone. But of course, another scandal struck me straight away: Tony Duvert was no longer publishing. At the time, people still thought it was a temporary silence. Little by little, the silence grew. Sometimes I would talk to someone about the mystery that was developing around this author, and we would say that we could go and visit him, just as Burroughs and Kerouac went to see Céline in his retreat in Meudon. We said it but never did it. We didn't know where he might be. The only legend that circulated was that he was a recluse in the provinces. Today, I tell myself that the idea of going to see Tony Duvert was madness. He didn't need us, having cut himself off from his closest friends. Time went by and I started publishing books. And then, in the summer of 2008, the news of his death and the conditions of his death hit me like a new and more terrible scandal. Not so much his death, of course, but the silence surrounding it from the outset. I had always thought that at least his death would spark an interest in his work. But I realised that Tony Duvert's death was completing his disappearance as a writer. That's what made me want to organise a tribute. So I didn't immediately think of writing a book, but the idea came to me.

came a few months later. I'd met people, I'd learnt things about Tony Duvert,

and suddenly the book came along. I can't put it any other way. In two months, it was done.

F. G. G.: At regular intervals in the book, you mention a literary evening during which you try, between glasses of champagne and social chatter, to talk about Tony Duvert, his death and the need to pay tribute to him. I'll come back to the reactions your attempts provoke, but first I wanted to know what reality these passages cover. What made it impossible to organise a tribute to Duvert?

G. S. : This evening did exist and at the same time it became a symbolic evening. I tried to organise a tribute by contacting various personalities from the literary world and also by tracking down a few people close to Tony Duvert. Some responded very positively, others preferred to keep quiet. The first thing that made the tribute difficult was the inertia. It's always the same thing: you want to be involved, eventually, one day, if something happens. But we are no longer at a point, in France, where there would be any kind of overall movement, even if only of writers who are close to each other in terms of themes or aesthetics. Everyone, I suppose, wants to get their own way. As for me, I don't think I had the capacity to do it all on my own either. I probably lacked a structure. I conceived the book as a means of advancing the tribute. So it's not a renunciation, on the contrary. In fact, a literary magazine has just offered me a special issue devoted to Tony Duvert and I tell myself that something is in the process of happening thanks to the book.

Another thing that made the tribute difficult, of course, was Tony Duvert's work itself. Today, to talk about children's sexuality, and even more so with children, is a scandal, one that cannot be forgiven. Yet Duvert's entire work is based on questioning this desire for children and childhood. So some people got scared, didn't want their name to be associated with this new plague called paedophilia. At least I suppose so. No one has ever told me the reasons for their silence. We can't even say today that we're afraid, or of what. So silence. Both in the private sphere and in the media. There weren't many articles on his death, and most of them presented Tony Duvert as a news item, not as the great writer he had been. It was the blogs that really reacted and tried to convey the extent of the loss. But for the rest, I repeat, it was silence that prevailed, and it is indeed that silence that

prompted me to write. Because for me, in the face of Tony Duvert's death, this silence, the silence of indifference or the silence of fear, was the real scandal.

F. G.: In these inserts about the literary evening, you portray a casualness about

the memory of Tony Duvert that goes as far as a form of hostility. You're told "you'd better give up", "the past belongs to the past", "if a guy is silent, it's because he has his reasons", and finally: "to hell with this bird of misfortune". I see in this litany a figure of destiny for Duvert's work, from the Prix Médicis (1973) to its almost total disappearance. In the meantime, the absolute freedom of his imagination, the sexual and social provocation, the scandalous force of desire that runs through his books seem to have become unacceptable. Do you think this had any influence on his decision to remain silent? And do you think he can emerge from this purgatory, or rather this hell, this repudiation? In other words, do you expect anything to come of the publication of your book, in terms of the rehabilitation of this work?

G. S. : The silence of a writer is one of the most mysterious things there is. In *L'Enfant silencieux*, I tried to explore this mystery. It's more a book of questions than answers. Nevertheless, I think I can say that there was a terrible coincidence in the case of Tony Duvert between a social anathema and an inner, intimate, family curse. In the 1970s, as you will recall, sexuality became the means by which people wanted to reflect on the workings of society and the family, and it also became a radical means of asserting their freedom. In this context, children's bodies were not as taboo as they are today, and it was not considered that talking about children or their sexuality was tantamount to attacking them. We took the liberty, no doubt to the point of excess but how could we do otherwise, of not excluding anything from the field of reflection. It was in this context that Duvert wrote his great essays such as *Le Bon Sexe illustré* and *L'Enfant au masculin*. And then society changed quite abruptly in the early 80s. And the paedophile was transformed into a sort of medieval monster who comes in the night to steal children. There were criminal cases at the time that helped to reinforce this idea in the collective mind. From then on, of course, it became impossible for Tony Duvert to write as he had done until now, without hindrance. Society rejected his work as unacceptable, and for the same reasons that he had been awarded the Prix Médicis, he could now be sent to prison. It is understandable that this danger should lead a writer to remain silent. At the same time, I think that this hostility from the outside world weighed on a structure that was fragile and just waiting to collapse. According to

Tony Duvert was a sensitive man. He was convinced early on that he was a monster. As a child, he was taken to Dr Eck to be "cured" of his homosexuality. He then ran away and attempted suicide. Tony was, and remained all his life, an unhappy child, and undoubtedly too lucid. It was this excessive clarity about the world and about himself, about the irreparable loss that comes with leaving childhood behind, that precipitated his downfall.

After that, it's hard to say whether he will be honoured or forgotten by posterity. In any case, I think something has changed in our perception of writers. What was legendary in the 19th century - a certain mystery, an absence, a silence - Rimbaud comes to mind - no longer inspires anything today. Nowadays, you have to be constantly visible, present, talkative. You have to occupy the world's screens. It's possible that posterity will still play its part, but in literature that's not an absolute certainty. So I've written this book to remember Tony Duvert and so that others will remember him after me. The reactions to the publication of my book have been encouraging. Journalists are interested in Tony Duvert, writers have told me they are interested in the book, and a student has contacted me as part of a thesis he is going to write on the writer. So things are happening. His name is in the papers. I hope this is just the beginning.

F. G.: Your investigation led you to meet some of those who witnessed Duvert's life, some of his close friends, such as Michel Longuet, one of the two dedicatees of the book, to whom you give a key role. But there are also those who did not want to speak, or who spoke very little, such as the journalist Jean- Pierre Tison or Alain Duvert, his brother. These silences also play a key role, haunting your pages, or piercing them if you like: at the centre is everything that cannot be said, everything that remains enigmatic for the reader. They already know, for example, that this has nothing to do with any fear of scandal, since everything that is scandalous about Duvert is well known, both in his books and in yours. So what do you think the nature of this silence is? What do you think it reveals about Duvert?

G. S. S. : It's a very difficult question and one that touches on the intimate in several ways. There's Tony Duvert's truth and then there's that of his friends and relatives who are still alive. With Duvert, I could afford to reveal certain truths. With those close to him, I tried to preserve their obvious right to privacy. There are things I didn't say because I didn't know, and things I didn't say out of tact or caution. And then there's Tony

Duvert was not an easy man. He was brilliant, endearing no doubt, but also unbearable and unfair. He often flew into fits of rage. He also became increasingly desperate. He ended up cutting himself off from everyone. And when faced with the violence of such a mystery, it's easy to be left speechless. Alain Duvert had not seen him for seventeen years, even though the small house where Tony lived was his. Jean- Pierre Tison only received a handful of letters and no doubt felt it was too early to reveal their content. To be honest, I thought at first that the book would not be possible without these testimonies,

but now I think that it is from these gaps, from this emptiness, that the book draws its strength. The silence surrounding Tony Duvert seems to me to speak volumes, both because it indicates the current reluctance to contemplate the Duvert scandal, which is indeed there in his books, but books that are no longer read, and because it is a silence that is that of breathlessness in the face of a terrible life, a final vision: the fall of a body, its decomposition, its horrified discovery by the forces of law and order. A man's entire life becomes a legend, and those who knew him may find it hard to believe that they were ever really close to him. Is it possible to be close to such a lonely man?

F. G.: Your book is much more than a biography: a tribute, a portrait, an investigation, it is also a meditation on the work and the person of Duvert, on the strangeness of his life, its irreducible singularity. Your title, *L'Enfant silencieux (The Silent Child)*, clearly defines the axis around which your interpretation revolves, or rather the person who is the subject of it, the child who for you was always present in Duvert, the source and also the culmination of the obsession he never ceased to nourish for the childhood of others.

G. S. : A biography was impossible. We don't have enough information at the moment. I hope it will happen one day. I hope to have contributed to it. But I very quickly wanted to salvage what could be salvaged, to gather information. There was the initial idea that the house might contain manuscripts, that people could testify, and that's what prompted me to undertake the work. But really, I envisaged this text as a book in its own right, just like my novels. For me, it was a matter of telling the story of a life, of describing in a short text that could be read from beginning to end, in one go, a meteoric rise and a fall. The essential difficulty in my work was to deal with Duvert's paedophilia, both within and outside his work, without the book immediately closing in on the reader. I chose precisely not to use the word, to bypass it, not out of cowardice, but because it functions as a signal that cancels out all thought,

because it triggers a kind of moral revulsion. I wanted the reader to suspend judgement for a while and look at a life and a person in all their complexity. I wanted the reader to think, to understand, to consider before judging. I wanted to take up the challenge of thought against the challenge of morality. As for my own judgement, I wanted it to start with the work itself, to see Tony Duvert from the inside, to try to understand how he might have felt about the world and about people. It seemed to me that Tony Duvert's truth lay, as it does for other great writers, in this painful nostalgia for childhood. I said to myself that his desire for a child was a desire for childhood, and I recognised in the solitary man the child he had been and also the child he had never been able to be. In

his last published book, *Abécédaire malveillant*, Duvert evokes Harpokratès, a child god who puts his finger over his mouth to impose silence, a silent child who, according to him, would be the patron saint of writers. My title comes from there, from his work.

F. G. : Since Duvert's death, a number of us have been hoping that unpublished works had been discovered, that something had emerged from the twenty years of silence. What you write on this subject doesn't give us much hope. One of the few things his brother said to you was: "Those who want manuscripts will have nothing to eat. But you mention rumours heard in the village of Thoré, where he died, about papers that were found with his body and which had disappeared. Is it possible that the texts were destroyed? Do you think there's still a chance that some will be discovered? And what about *La Ronde de nuit*, his last known literary project, the first chapters of which he sent to Jérôme Lindon in the early 1980s?

G. S. : I think that's the question everyone's been asking, the question of the manuscript. We imagine ourselves on a treasure hunt. Like children, we want to find the chest full of jewels. To tell you the truth, I'm still not sure. What I do know is that Tony Duvert was still interested in the world, in a way, that he hadn't completely given up. And I'm convinced that he hadn't completely given up writing, at least until the 90s. But those who knew him remember his habit of immediately destroying anything he didn't like. Michel Longuet remembers Duvert crumpling up tonnes of paper and throwing them down the chimney in pellets. We can imagine Duvert destroying things as he wrote. It's possible. It's also possible that he really gave up, because according to him the lucid man, the man still worthy of the name, doesn't write, doesn't read, frozen as he is in 'the salt of his

tears". Despite everything, I think we can still wait for important documents to come to light: his correspondence, particularly with his publisher Jérôme Lindon, his personal papers, if they have not been destroyed, and in particular the precious scrapbooks in which he collected pornographic photos, the importance of which seems to me to go beyond mere testimony. And then, of course, the beginning of *La Ronde de nuit*, which must be in the archives of Éditions de Minuit and which has not yet been published, even if only as a review. I hope that my book will also be an opportunity to bring new documents out of the shadows, just as it may be the trigger for new testimonies. Yes, I do hope that with Duvert we are not at the end of our surprises.

F. G.: On a more personal level, how important is Tony Duvert's work in your life

and in your work as a writer? You briefly mention the fact that you discovered him through a friend, to whose memory, incidentally, you dedicate the book.

G. S. : This book is a tomb, and it's true that I dedicated it to a dead man. Tony Duvert touches me in the most intimate way. I feel close to him like a brother. And at the same time he's a madman. He scares me and he is me. Through his life I am, of course, questioning my own. I believe that there is a chain between people and I believe that I have inherited, through this dead friend, who was also a writer, a certain truth - or what should I call it? - that still guides me today. I was immediately struck by Tony Duvert's writing. It is extraordinarily clear and wildly free. In his work there is a transgression that is often funny, pleasurable and at the same time terrible. It's a literature that doesn't compromise, that doesn't pull any punches when it comes to the beauty, suffering and filth of the world. And then, and this is undoubtedly what touched me most about it, it raises the very voice of childhood in a way that, I must insist, no one in the history of literature has done before it. Finally, Tony Duvert is the 70s. That incredible historical moment that we tend to reduce to a caricature. I loved the 70s, which I knew as a child and later rediscovered in books. I liked that era more than I do today, because it was harsher perhaps, but it was also more fun and truer. Tony Duvert is a bit of that era. And in a way, unfortunately, he died with it.

(Interview by e-mail on 9 April 2010)

(1) Gilles Sebhan, *Tony Duvert. L'Enfant silencieux*, Denoël, 2010.

PEGGY SASTRE

Source : <http://leplus.nouvelobs.com/contribution/895754-pedophilie-partout-liberte-de-penser-nulle-part.html>. Document consulted on 02 July 2013.



PEDOPHILIA EVERYWHERE, FREEDOM OF THOUGHT NOWHERE

One of my favourite writers is Tony Duvert. In my opinion, he's one of the greatest French-language writers in the history of literature.

In 2008, in a village in the Loir-et-Cher region where I had recently been a neighbour, Tony Duvert died in a car accident. house where he had lived, alone, for the last two decades of his life. So lonely that the gendarmes found his body in an advanced state of decomposition. So hated by everyone that the mayor of the commune in question refused to allow the writer, winner of the Prix Médicis in 1973, to have a grave on 'his' land - a bit like one might do with a Hitler or a Bin Laden, just so that the burial does not become a place of sordid pilgrimage.

Sordid, because Tony Duvert never hid his paedophile tendencies. They can be found in his work and in his interviews from the time, where he also developed a (very) interesting point of view on the omnipotence of families - and mothers in particular - over the education and development of children.

Writing about paedophilia is already too much

Tony Duvert's era often gives me flashes of fictitious nostalgia. That longing, that bluesy desire for a time that was never known, but which we tell ourselves was much better than the one we live in today. I owe my fictional nostalgia to the almost absolute freedom I read in Tony Duvert's books. To elements that make me resigned, the cream pie of "we couldn't do that now". Resignation is not pleasant.

As well as reading it, I often think about Tony Duvert. What it must be like to live as a recluse, knowing that the slightest bit of information about your life, your experience, your 'journey' will earn you a lynching, that collective hysteria

so special where no argument matters any more, where you just have to wait (at

best) for the swell to pass, even if it means dying alone and being found pampered because your letterbox is overflowing and it's bothering the neighbour. How do you 'pass the time' in these situations? How do you wait for death?

To my knowledge, Tony Duvert has never been prosecuted or convicted for paedophilia. He has simply written about them and portrayed them. And that's already too much for our age of rampant criminalisation of opinion.

Over the last few days, I've been thinking about Tony Duvert again. Yesterday I heard the news that the writer had officially been stripped of his tombstone, and also the firestorm surrounding an article in 'Causette', rehashing facts previously (and clumsily) exposed in 'Le Nouvel Observateur'. The story was about a teacher who - depending on the angle - was alleged to have had a love affair with a pupil or to have committed despicable acts punishable by law.

Sanctimonious obstacles

Two things deeply sadden me about this umpteenth 'paedo-polemic'. The first is that I feel even more acutely the extent to which the flow of our thoughts and opinions, all the more so when they focus on issues closely or remotely related to sexuality, is now stemmed by a whole host of little roadblocks. Obstacles to the flow that are not only moralising (after all, why not), but perfectly hermetic.

There's no getting around it: there are things that are thought out and said, and things that the common people (in the most neutral sense of "belonging to a large number or majority of people or things") find repugnant, abject, intolerable and deserving of nothing more than silence. Non-existence. A kind of intellectual limbo where, at best, your ideas will circulate under the cloak.

Here, newspapers and magazines will be asked to delete articles, to apologise - which they will sometimes do, partially or totally - even if, at the outset, the articles in question were only there to bring facts to the attention of the public.

The container becomes the content

Reports of allegedly filthy facts are turned into filthy ideas and opinions. The container becomes the content and vice versa. It's impossible, unbearable

to debate, and if necessary we'll get out the baseball bat.

people are arguing in my tl about whether a twelve year old girl consents. IRL I think I would have pulled out the baseball bat - CrêpeGeorgette (@valerieCG)
June 28, 2013

The debate is closed, locked, we plant little senses prohibited just about everywhere and we do it with all the more vigour, conviction, rage, that we are convinced to have common sense (common sense) with us.

And how can you not be when a paedophile suffers the same *post-mortem* fate as a genocidal dictator or a terrorist leader responsible for one of the worst atrocities of the 21st century?

Confusion between reported facts and recommended facts

A friend of mine who lived through the transition from the 'post-Sixties' to the present day recently told me how appalled she was at the way censorship works today. That in the 1960s, things were clear and the sides were drawn: there was State censorship and there were intellectuals (journalists, artists, etc.) who did everything they could to circumvent or even fight it.

Today, the state censors virtually nothing, but everyone has become everyone else's little watchdog. There's the fear of lawsuits, the fear of vindictiveness, and the result: heads that are even slightly filled with something different avoid pouring out what's inside them. Or they take enormous precautions, like the ones I'm trying to take as I write these lines, which are, prosaically speaking, making me sweat a lot.

But the result is the same: ideas die, or worse, never see the light of day. And with them all the lines of ideas they could have spawned.

I don't think I've ever known a more unpleasant feeling than that, the catalogue of all the ideas that have been aborted because of the social majority's prohibition. Because of confusion between ideas and facts, between reported facts and recommended facts.

Sexuality, a terrain of individuality

The second reason for my despondency: why should sexuality be considered an immediately and absolutely harmful activity when it takes place

between an adult and a child? That this view should be so generalised that there can be no exceptions, apart from those that earn you a volley of insults and banishment into the (so reassuring) realm of the pathological?

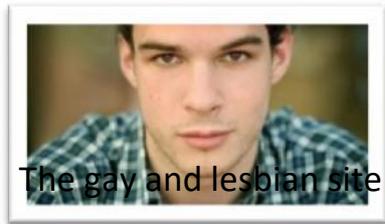
Paedophilia is illegal, I'm not questioning that. The basis of my argument is quite simple. It comes from my past as a little girl who experienced this kind of sexuality long before puberty.

Today, I've inherited no sexual attraction for children (in fact, it's quite the opposite: they tend to disgust me), nor do I have excellent memories of it (they oscillate between the neutral and the entertaining, all wrapped up in a blur), but I remain convinced that part of my present personality and the fact, mainly, that I'm totally ignorant of the dramatically serious side of sexuality comes from this experience. That, without it, I would have known the solemnity of sexuality, the seriousness of 'intimacy' and all the rites of passage between non-sexual life and sexual life that, personally at the level of myself, I consider to be a great big pile of shit.

Unlike some people, there's no desire to generalise in what I say. I'm not saying: "Yippee, let's all have sex with kids, it'll do them a world of good! I'm just saying what I've been trying to say, more or less, for as long as I've been expressing myself on these subjects: sexuality is not a domain of the general, the common, the obligatory and the absolute. It's a field of diversity, complexity and individuality. And if magazines, newspapers and, *a fortiori*, writers want to write about it, I wish them all the best.

ARTHUR DREYFUS

Source: Romain Vallet, interview with Arthur Dreyfus, <http://www.heteroclite.org/2013/10>. Photo © Catherine Hélie / Gallimard. Document consulted on 10 October 2013.



The gay and lesbian site but not

HETEROCLITE

Arthur Dreyfus is a journalist, novelist and radio presenter on France Inter, and a great admirer of the work of writer Tony Duvert (1945-2008).

How did you discover Tony Duvert?

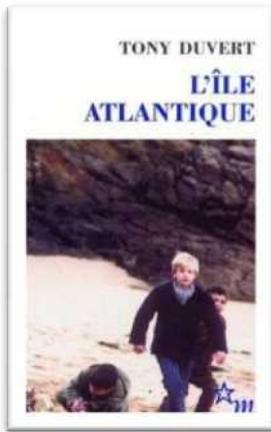
A bit by chance, when I bought one of his books in paperback, from Minuit, with a beautiful cover: *L'Île atlantique (The Atlantic Island)*. It was his biggest public success, for which he had somewhat toned down the violence of his writing and his message in order to make the novel more accessible. This book struck me, not because of what it said about sexuality and childhood, but because of its writing, and in particular its ability to capture languages, particularly the language of childhood.

Nothing is more difficult for me in literature than this task, because we very often fall into pastiche, parody and reproduction. It seemed to me that Tony Duvert had succeeded in totally absorbing the language of children, but also that of the Breton countryside, where the plot is set. Then I read other of his novels, in particular *Quand mourut Jonathan*, which fascinated me not so much by the love story between a child and a man as by its powerful degree of reality. So what I remember most about Duvert, beyond his relationship with

childhood, is his talent as a writer, which is immense.

Later, I discovered his theoretical writings, such as *L'Enfant au masculin* and *Le Bon Sexe illustré*, in which he defended his cause, calling for sexual freedom for minors and responding to criticism from Françoise Dolto, for example, who wanted to protect them. It may seem mind-boggling today, but at the time it was a real social debate! What struck me

in these essays is their unprecedented violence against society, and against mothers in particular. Whether or not we are shocked by her words, whether or not we share her points of view, we can only admire their literary quality.



Some of the people I've talked to about this have said to me: "*Why not praise Céline's anti-Semitic pamphlets?* But as I see it, there's a big difference between these two authors: even if Duvert was a paedophile and had many sexual relationships with children and teenagers, he never sought to harm, exterminate or wipe out anyone simply because of their birth, and as far as I know he never used violence in the physical sense of the term.

Do you still feel that his criticism of what we call 'childhood' or the family unit is relevant?

Of course it is. You always have to remember that childhood is a relatively new notion, a Freudian concept that emerged in the 20th century. From a literary point of view, I'm fascinated by the childhood aspect of adults and the adult aspect of children. For me, it's an inexhaustible source of inspiration to try to 'de-fancize' the child and 'de-adultize' the adult.

Childhood is also a very vague concept, covering different stages of life. Having sex with an eight-year-old boy or a fifteen-year-old boy are two very different things, yet society and the media consider both to be paedophilia. I'm neither a paedophile nor in favour of paedophilia, but I find that thinking about children's sexuality is completely hysterical.

Your next novel, to be published in January by Gallimard, deals with precisely these themes...

It's called *Histoire de ma sexualité*, in a nod to Michel Foucault. It's an account of all the sexual memories I have from my childhood. I started from the premise that childhood sexuality was taboo, even though it's a very sexual period of life. It's also a book about my relationship with the truth, in which I ask myself the question of autofiction and what it means to be an autobiographer.

to write about myself and my relationship with writing. It will be called a novel, because it contains a lot of made-up stuff.

Arthur Dreyfus

1986 - born in Lyon

2010 - first novel, *La Synthèse du camphre* (Gallimard)

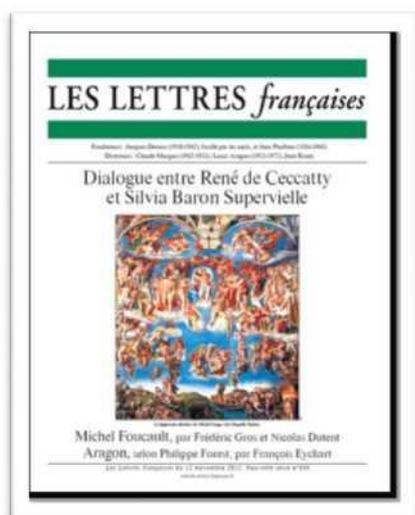
2011 - *Le Livre qui rend heureux*, essay (Flammarion)

2012 - *Belle Famille* (Gallimard), a second novel inspired by the disappearance in 2007 of little Madeleine McCann

since September 2013 - hosts the programme *Encore heureux*, Monday to Thursday from 5pm to 6pm on *France Inter*

RENE DE CECCATY

Source: *Les lettres françaises*, supplement to *l'Humanité* dated 12 November 2015, new series, no. 131.



THE CASE OF TONY DUVERT, THE LAST MISANTHROPE

The appalling circumstances surrounding Tony Duvert's death in July 2008, at the age of sixty-three, inspired a few distressing articles in the press, more akin to news reports than the obituary of a great writer. Gilles Sebhan, author of disturbing, offbeat novels that owe much to the world of his elder, and of a very fine essay on Jean Genet (*Domodossola, le suicide de Jean Genet*,

Denoël, 2010), published, shortly afterwards, a sort of cri du coeur, *Tony Duvert, l'enfant silencieux* (ibid., 2010). It was a fine analysis of the work and life of this unclassifiable, insolent writer, an admirable stylist, caustic, misanthropic and lyrical at the same time. But what was missing was a proper biographical investigation: this has now been done with this second book, *Retour à Duvert*, an echo of Pauline Réage's famous novel, *Retour à Roissy*.

The allusive reference is not without importance. What is an erotic work when it reaches this dimension? We know that *Histoire d'O* went beyond the usual boundaries of pornographic literature, and of course Tony Duvert's books cannot be reduced to an apology for paedophilia. Unfortunately, that's probably how his novels, from *Récidive* to *Quand mourut Jonathan* and *Journal d'un innocent*, would be read today if they were published for the first time. But written in the 1970s and 1980s, they were part of a whole movement of reflection on the family, sexual conditioning and identity, expressed in militant associations and philosophical essays (by René Schérer, Guy Hocquenghem and Félix Guattari).

Tony Duvert, for his part, was not very community-minded. He was a profoundly solitary poet. When Jérôme Lindon, who published him with Minuit, appointed him director of the review *Minuit*, the novelist did not really feel at home. The major publisher was concerned to integrate Duvert into a somewhat socialised life. Aware of the scope of his work, however irredeemable it might be, he wanted to establish him as a real thinker, a unifying force. But Tony Duvert's misanthropy, pride and singularity got the better of him, and little by little his sexual reveries, cynical aphorisms and criticism of the family and sex education seemed out of step with the militant actions of homosexuals and feminists on the one hand, and with a kind of moralising, self-righteous ascendancy on the other.

With hindsight, it seemed absurd to some narrow-minded observers that a major literary prize (the Prix Médicis) should have been awarded to *Paysage de fantaisie*. The year was 1973. Roland Barthes had just joined the jury and managed to impose his candidate. What would it be like now? It's true that there are hardly any Roland Barthes on the jury any more. We've moved on to completely different criteria...

Gilles Sebhan's book, which is both empathetic and distant, and rigorously documented, allows us to revisit the case of Tony Duvert, who, like so many other writers, was a flash in the pan of French literary history. He was not a cursed writer (in the sense that Nicolas Genka, another disturbing writer, was). For Tony Duvert enjoyed genuine recognition from the literary world and was published by a publisher who was well established and gave him visibility in a certain literary society that was dominant at the time, that of the successors of the New Novel. But this was without taking into account the temperament of the writer, who cared little about consensus and recognition. He wanted to pursue his work with freedom. He

could also have become an emblem of provocative creation, like Pierre Guyotat,

with whom he can be compared. But Tony Duvert had yet another position. His essays, *Le Bon sexe illustré* and *L'enfant au masculin*, show that he was trying to develop a genuine critique of education, teaching, the very representation of childhood in society, sexuality and the family.

No publisher would now dare publish his work, for fear not only of a violent reaction from more or less moralistic associations, but also of the critics.

How did Tony Duvert's death, which occurred in July, come to be discovered only at the end of August? Did he have so few friends? Had he become so isolated? He lived in the house of his mother, who had herself been dead for a dozen years. In 1994, for want of any other refuge or means of survival, he moved in with her, while she was still alive, in Thoré-la-Rochette, in the Loir-et-Cher region, near Vendôme. She died in 1996 and he remained alone in this house, living in increasingly poverty, the only light in this last sad stage of his life, the television adaptation of his more 'readable' (i.e. acceptable to a general audience) novel, *L'île atlantique*, his last published work of fiction (in 1979).

Like Pasolini and Genet, Tony Duvert did not accept the revolution in morality, even though he, like them, had prepared for it. Curiously, the 1980s, which saw the development in France and much of the rest of the world of a different way of looking at society and sexuality - a way made possible by courageous poetic and artistic works - no longer suited these innovative and radical minds.

For his investigation, Gilles Sebhan did not have access to the archives of Editions de Minuit, but he did have access to Tony Duvert's letters: first to his brother Alain, a philosophy teacher who was himself gay, and who was very close to the writer until they broke up in 1997, the year after their mother died. These letters are fascinating and sometimes unbearable. Particularly those in which Tony pours out his heart about their mother and the disgust he feels for her. Gilles Sebhan also heard from writer Jean-Pierre Tison and cartoonist Michel Longuet (who illustrated the magazine Minuit and several of Duvert's books). Some of the writer's former friends also came forward and shared their correspondence. These are friends of study, benevolent and friendly, who give a completely different view of the misanthrope.

There is a double movement in this biography. One of poetic sympathy, of human admiration for an authentic, uncompromising writer, and the other of shared fear in the face of a destructive destiny. The strength of the style is

further demonstrated by the quotations. I am not a policeman," says the biographer from the outset, "any more than I am a priest, and nothing I have been entrusted with is criminal. It's up to me to read, between the lines, the tastes, the disappointed hopes, the occasional baseness, and above all a lot of rather mawkish idealism that would no doubt have irritated Duvert himself. I have to get used to the idea that a book can fall into anyone's hands and provoke hopes and enmities alike". This is a salutary and lucid clarification, and any biographer or autobiographer could put it as an exergue to his books.

Born at the end of the war, Tony was the third son of Georges Duvert and Fernande Maury. His father was an insurance agent, his mother a housewife, well-educated and passionate about literature. According to Alain Duvert, she had a great influence on his brother's education, and not only a negative one. In 1970, his father committed suicide, one month after the publication of *Le Voyageur*, his son's fourth novel. The family background is therefore dark, and the correspondence that has been found (in particular with Claude Navarro, a friend from school) reveals a subtle and interior analytical temperament reminiscent of Pasolini's youthful letters to Silvana Mauri and even Genet's letters to Ibis, alias Andrée Plainemaison (published a few years ago by L'Arbalète). The autobiographical aspect of the novels published by Lindon, starting with *Récidive* (1967), is not negligible. *Journal d'un innocent* (1976) is an account of his sojourns in Morocco (the Arab names are changed to Spanish to disguise the real situation), and his masterpiece, *Quand mourut Jonathan* (1978), has precise models in life.

The case of Tony Duvert is highly representative of the history of French publishing, of criticism and, of course, of morals. It was undoubtedly because of his difficult character that Duvert, after attempting to participate in the journalistic experiments of *Gai Pied* and *Masques* and thus in a certain militancy (soon won over by the commercialisation of the gay world), withdrew to Tours, first among friends, then, little by little, in increasing solitude.

Gilles Sebhan quotes almost verbatim a magnificent text by Duvert on homosexual desire, which appeared in the magazine *Masques* under the title 'Idée du Narcisse' (Idea of the Narcissus), a text not unlike 'Ce qui est restant d'un Rembrandt' (What Remains of a Rembrandt).

déchiré et jeté aux chiottes", Genet's famous prose. According to the biographer, it gives us an idea of what Duvert's last book, *La Passion de thomas*, would have been like. In 1993, he sent the beginning of this book to Jérôme Lindon, before taking it back. It was neither finished nor published. Silence remained the final gesture.

Back to Duvert Gilles Sebhan.
Le Dilettante, 288 p., 21 euros.

ERYCK DE RUBERCY

Eryck de Rubercy, essayist, critic, author with Dominique Le Buhan of Douze questions à Jean Beaufret à propos de Martin Heidegger (Aubier, 1983; Pocket, 2011), is a translator, notably of Max Kommerell, Stefan George and August von Platen, and is the author of the anthology Des poètes et des arbres (La Différence, 2005). His article on Duvert was published in the February-March 2016 issue of the Revue des Deux Mondes.



HARO SUR DUVERT

When, at the end of November 1973, Tony Duvert won the Prix Médicis for *Paysage de fantaisie* - a book that could modestly be described as a children's love story - he became an overnight celebrity. Although this award revealed a personality totally distraught by fame, it nonetheless marked the real beginning of his career as a writer, considered by critics to be one of the best of his generation, if not "the greatest" for Josyane Savigneau. In 1979, when he was just 33, his work was already impressive. Most of it consists of eight novels or long stories, from *Récidive* (1967) to *L'île Atlantique* (1979), including *Journal d'un innocent* (1976), plus a major essay, *Bon Sexe illustré* (1973), which was followed by *L'Enfant au masculin* (1980). Then, in 1982, after the publication of *Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille*, which disappointed some critics, he began to withdraw into a silence that would last until the end of his career.

publication, eight years later, of his *Abécédaire malveillant*, a collection of aphorisms, which some critics still welcomed. And then nothing more until the

discreet announcement of his death in 2008, which occurred in infinitely dramatic circumstances: his body had waited a long month before it was discovered in putrefaction in a house in the village of Thoré-la-Rochette in Loir-et-Cher, where he had retreated into extreme destitution.

Withdrawal from the world? The oblivion of a writer who had already died twenty years earlier? Or a rejection of a work as if it had never existed? A work which, for the vast majority of people, will probably continue for a long time to represent nothing more than a justification for paedophilia by a sex maniac. Yet *Minuit*, which has always been his publishing house (1), is a serious publisher no less than prestigious. His mythical boss, Jérôme Lindon, was genuinely attached to him and even appointed him director of his review, starting with its first issue in 1972. Foucault and Barthes subsequently sponsored him, and he was hailed by enthusiastic critics such as Madeleine Chapsal, André Dalmas, Matthieu Galey, Patrick Granville, Roland Jaccard, Jean-François Josselin, François Nourissier, Michel Nuridsany and Bertrand Poirot-Delpech. But other times, other customs, to the extent that his work, now sidelined, would be unpublishable today. Not even the ban on sales to minors, advertising and display in bookshops, imposed on *Interdit de séjour* in 1969, makes it possible to compare it with that of other writers crowned by the glory of the ban. In fact, today, the mere mention of Tony Duvert's name is as frightening as spelling the name of the devil.

This was not the case for novelist and essayist Gilles Sebhan, who, having remembered his youthful revelation of his books, devoted a sensitive little work to him in 2010, *Tony Duvert. L'enfant silencieux* (2). Little did he know at the time that he would be writing a second book, after gathering previously unpublished documents and rare accounts of Duvert's life from those who knew him: his brother Alain, an old and faithful friend, Michel Longuet, and the singular journalist Jean-Pierre Tison, his close friend until his death. This second book, recently published under the title *Retour à Duvert* (3), is worth comparing with the first for the additional information it provides on the complexity of an author who, speaking of himself as a paedophile, had no qualms about his paedophilia.

Tony Duvert was born in Villeneuve-le-Roi on 2 July 1945, a symbolic date as he himself pointed out in *L'Enfant au masculin*: "Strange predestination, a sign from heaven? The paragraph of article 331 that makes love for children under 15 a crime was written on 2 July 1945. That's my date of birth. No one could have been born a paedophile under better auspices. That's worth all the astrology in the world. But more than this coincidence, or the fact that he was

born and died in July, there was a child, "the youngest", a sort of "only son despite the siblings", Gilles Sebhan explains, brought up by a mother who was excessively present, while the father only returned to the marital home, which he had abandoned, to commit suicide. And then there's an extremely precocious and academically brilliant teenager, expelled from his lycée for a vice scandal before being handed over to a psychiatrist, who sets about "straightening him out". This led to his running away from home at the age of 15, during which he tried to commit suicide, a story he later recounts in *Récidive*, his first book and one of his finest, because whether we like it or not, Tony Duvert is also a good writer. In his last published work, *Abécédaire malveillant*, he wrote: "Suicide, because it's easier to give up on life than on the illusions you have about it". A bit like the irreparable disillusionment that youth confers on middle age, which makes Gilles Sebhan say that Tony Duvert "has always been nostalgic for a self that never happened". This is undoubtedly part of his secret - and a key to his work - because "something in him was dead".

Be that as it may, Tony Duvert had an early vocation as a writer, even if it meant having a sulphurous reputation. Nothing is more essential in this respect than the magnificent letter he wrote in January 1966 - he was 20 - to one of his classmates at Savigny-sur-Orge lycée. Like Valéry and his famous "Night of Genoa" or Rimbaud's famous *Letter from the Seer*, "Duvert's first great text", received by Gilles Sebhan from the hands of the person to whom it was addressed, has, as Sebhan observes, "the appearance of an entry into a vocation". This is because Tony Duvert was in the middle of writing *Récidive*, an explicitly pornographic story through which he entered literature. What followed, as we all know, was a literary body of work spanning just over twenty years, ever more sexual, ever more violent, and ever more experimental, in which the author is the only person in the French language to have made paedophilia his sole subject. Gilles Sebhan notes that "it's hard not to read it [...] as a written life". The great success of his book lies, of course, in the excellent research he has carried out, but even more so in the fact that he never pleads for the "rehabilitation" of Tony Duvert without admitting "the dirtiest or most secret corners of his life".

the most desperate of his life". This is the story of the trip he took to Morocco in 1974, in search, like Gide before him, but also like Burroughs and Barthes, of something to satisfy his taste for boys. His stay in Marrakech in the company of journalist Jean- Pierre Tison, whom he had met in 1970, could well have been the equivalent of those sex tours that take rich Western tourists to the brothels of South-East Asia, if a few years later, on his return from Morocco, he had not published a series of books on the sex trade, he had not published a series of columns entitled *L'Amour en visite*, which "contrary to what a Manichean mind

might have imagined, were not a defence of paedophile love but, on the contrary, a scathing indictment of the affluent Westerner, present even in the boy lover".

From commitment to silent reclusion

The fact is that we might be forgiven for forgetting that Tony Duvert's thought "has always been caught up, beyond the sexual, in a political dimension". Thus, "as a reaction to morality", there is in his books, "not precisely a commitment, but a radical stance, a contestation, a total critique of bourgeois mores, a desire to undo everything, and finally a certain taste for utopia that led him to write theoretical texts, essays, all centred on the place of the child, on the role of the child, and dedicated to its liberation". Delicious remarks, in particular about castrating mothers, which were already read with some resistance, if not a great deal of open-mindedness, but which today are so horrifying. Hence, putting things in context, Gilles Sebhan's observation: "It's hard today to realise what happened over a few years, between May 1968 and May 1974, let's say, something like the impression that we could reinvent the world, that anything was allowed because anything was possible".

In any case, it is in the service of his passionate commitment that Tony Duvert puts not only his wit - one of the most biting there is - but also his scalpel-sharp pen. For proof of this, just read the open letter he wrote to Renaud Camus, who was to take over from him, after ceasing his monthly columns for *Gai Pied* magazine. This was in 1982, "that fateful year of the Coral, but also of the decriminalisation of homosexuality, which would definitively separate the cause of homosexuals from that of paedophiles, and sink Duvert's intellectual influence, which had gone from scandalous to unacceptable". Indeed, homosexuals were to show a desire to dissociate themselves from the pedophile cause.

They were completely free of paedophile practices, such as the love affair between a man and a child recounted in *Quand mourut Jonathan* (1978), and emphasised that their sexual orientation did not imply any more inclination towards paedophilia than that of heterosexuals. The tide had turned, or as Gilles Seban put it: "The times had changed [...] these times were beginning to look grey". The fatal blow would come from a young critic called Jérôme Garcin, who would "bury an era with him". In an article entitled "Au diable Duvert" ("To the devil with Duvert") in *L'Événement du jeudi* (7-13 December 1989), he wrote of "a little exercise in ordinary hatred".

What is important to understand, however, is that Tony Duvert's silent reclusion, having already taken place, if only in 1982, does not stem from there, nor "would it be the effect of guilty loves" but "would appear to be constitutive of his person". In 1976, unable to return to Morocco, he left Paris for Tours, until, in 1994, due to a lack of funds, he found himself obliged to move to Thoré-la-Rochette, to his mother's house, with whom he lived until her death in 1996 - a dark irony for a man who "had written so much about the detestation of mothers". Then there he is, alone, like a hermit, without resources, at the end of his tether. Gilles Sebhan's excellent book is basically about the absolute solitude that only the underworld can offer, and which gradually led Tony Duvert into voluntary silence. Now, like the author, we can always hope that one day we will read some of Tony Duvert's unpublished novels, even if they are unfinished, that come into the possession of someone close to him or of his letters to one or other of them, which for the moment are sealed in safes. For, putting aside any prejudice about the morals of this writer, an authentic writer, let us say, between Jean Genet and Pier Paolo Pasolini, whom he undeniably reminds us of (and on this point the critics and the jury of the Prix Médicis were right), the only thing at stake here is the affirmation of a human being's right to literary expression, even if it is embarrassing or shocking or even provocative in the eyes of morality.

(1) With the exception of two titles, *Les Petits Métiers* and *District*, published in 1978 by Fata Morgana.

(2) Gilles Sebhan, *Tony Duvert. L'enfant silencieux*, Denoël, 2010.

(3) Gilles Sebhan, *Retour à Duvert*, Le Dilettante, 2015.

INDEX

190° death of an illustrious unknown by Jacques de Brethmas 923-925
A la recherche de Tony Duvert (La Revue Littéraire, 2010) 954-960
ABC (full text, Libération 1980) 792-796
Abécédaire malvaillant, L'Evènement du Jeudi (1989) 452
Abécédaire malvaillant, Le Figaro (1989) 451
Abécédaire malvaillant, Le Nouvel Obs (1989) 450
Abécédaire malvaillant, Scandal in the ink (1999) 453
MALICIOUS ABECEDARY 450
Alejandro - the body of desire (full text 1974) 583-595
Alt Jean-Yves 274, 416, 420
Ambroise-Rendu Anne-Claude 51
André Serge 90
Arnoi Joannic 415
Artières Philippe 19
Assouline Pierre 924
Ballade des petits métiers (first complete version, Minuit 1977) 621-632
Bataille contre Genet (full text, Masques 1981-1982) 850-853
Benderson Bruce 339
Bérard Jean 64
Ticket to the magazine Tout ! (1971)519
Bréa Antoine 263
Brethmas Jacques de 923
Brongersma Edwards 411
Ceccaty René de 967
Cecille Thierry 421
Chapsal Madeleine 132, 272, 412, 545
Claude Hastaire - scènes d'intérieur (full text, Cimaise 1979-1980) 758-761
Counterculture 1969-1989 - L'esprit français (2016) 19
Review of Michel Longuet's book *Chassé-croisé* (1971) 521-525
Dalmas André 173
From the liberation of children to the violence of paedophiles 64
Deligeorges Stéphane 376
Frozen draughts (full text 1968) 513-514
Desporte Bernard 948
District (full text of the 1968 version)475-491
District (1968) vs *District* (1978) 633-659
Dreyfus Arthur 965
Duvert is dead, long live Duvert by Anne Simonin 927-930
Duvert plays with fire 440
Duvert Tony (1945-2008) by Pierre Assouline 921-922
Untitled interview, with Arthur Dreyfus 965-967
Fawnes 424
Forbidden Fictions 133, 146
Garcin Jérôme 452
Gay Signatures, Gay and Lesbian Theories, Fiction and Films in France 1945-1995
Georgesco Florent 925; 954

Grainville Patrick 451
Haro sur Duvert by Eryck de Rubercy (Revue des deux mondes 2016) 971-976
 Hastaire: another name for Claude Hislaire
 Heathcote Owen 318
Homotextuality: Tony Duvert's Récidive 146
Hors (syn)thèse, or queer childhood 345
Ideas on Narcissus (right of reply, Masques 1980)784-789
Ideas on Narcissus (full text, Masques 1979-1980) 744-757
Innocence on trial: the politics of Tony Duvert 339
 NO ENTRY 223
Interdit de séjour (homage to Tony Duvert) by Bernard Desporte 948-950
Interdit de séjour, Dahlhousie French Studies 106 (2015) 230
Interdit de séjour, L'Unebêvue no. 32 (2014) 223
 Isabelle 273
 Jaccard Roland 273, 442
 Jamot Alain 951
 Marie 345 Garden
Jobs for the boys ? Or what's new about the male hunter in Duvert, Guibert and Jourdan 318
 Josselin Jean-François 270, 274, 440, 450
 DIARY OF AN INNOCENT 279
Journal d'un innocent, Diary of an innocent, Semiotext(e) (2016) 339
Journal d'un innocent, French Studies (1998) 318
Journal d'un innocent, L'Unebêvue no. 32 (2014) 345
Journal d'un innocent, L'Unebêvue no. 33 (2015) 282
Journal d'un innocent, Le Monde (1976) 281
Journal d'un innocent, Les Nouvelles Littéraires no. 2519 (1976) 279
Diary of an Innocent Man, Scandal in the ink (1999) 336
 Kennelly Brian Gordon 134, 206, 230, 378, 394
L'amour en visite (full text in 5 parts, Gai Pied 1981-1982) 829-848 ; 856-860
L'écritoire by Michel Longuet 938-943
The writer, the publisher and bad morals 32
 THE MALE CHILD 440
L'Enfant au masculin, Le Monde des Livres (1980) 442
L'Enfant au masculin, Le Nouvel Obs (1981) 440
L'Enfant au masculin, Retour à Duvert (2014) 447
L'Enfant au masculin, Scandal in the ink (1995) 443
The child or the third sex 279
L'érotisme des autres (full text, Minuit 1976) 597-606
L'érotisme n'est pas un violon d'Ingres (interview with Chapsal, 1973) 545-546
 THE ATLANTIC ISLAND 412
L'île atlantique, Culture and debate blog (2005) 416, 420
L'île atlantique, L'Express (1979) 412
L'île atlantique, L'Unebêvue no. 32 (2014) 425
L'île atlantique, Le Figaro magazine (1979) 412
L'île atlantique, Le Matricule des Anges no. 69 (2006) 421
The Atlantic Island, Le Monde (1979) 413
L'île atlantique, Les Nouvelles Littéraires (1979) 412

L'île atlantique, Scandal in the ink (1999) 414
The Atlantic Island, Amazon site (2003) 415
The Atlantic Island, Amazon site (2010) 424
Incest or Prison (full text, Gai Pied 1982) 866-870
The innocent in newspaper 282
Tony Duvert's letterbox by Florent Georgesco 925-927
La casserole au bout de la queue (full text, Gai Pied 1981) 807-813
La fessée, L'amour, le droit (full text, Le Gai Pied 1979) 709-720
La folie Tristan (full text, Minuit 1973) 559-575
The schoolchildren's strike in England in 1911: jubilant chaos 425
La lecture introuvable (full text, Minuit 1972) 526-543
Immediate memory (full text 1977 with intro by A. Bréa) 616-618
Speech and fiction (full text of the 1968 version) 492-511
Speech and fiction (full text of the 1984 version) 876-893
The persistence of place 7
La sexualité chez les crétins (full text, Minuit 1973) 547-558
The sexuality of minors in political discourse in the 1970s 64
The meaning of paedophilia 90
Life is a novel 450
Laurent 930
 THE GOOD SEX ILLUSTRATES 273
Le bon sexe illustré, Culture and debate blog (2016) 276
Le bon sexe illustré, Charlie Hebdo (1974) 273
Le bon sexe illustré, Le Monde (1974) 273
Le bon sexe illustré, Le Nouvel Obs (1974) 274
Le bon sexe illustré, Le Point (1974) 273
Le carnaval sans masques (full text, Gai Pied 1981) 819-823
The case of Tony Duvert, the last misanthrope, by René de Ceccaty 967-971
Le garçon à la tête dure (full text, Minuit 1978) 672-686
Le Temps des Médias n° 1, 2003 51
 LE VOYAGEUR 263
The traveller, Antoine Bréa 263
Duvert's diversions 442
Les mauvaises têtes (full text, Gai Pied 1981) 824-828
The Pope's Mules (full text, Gai Pied 1981) 814-818
Les petits métiers (comparison between the two versions and pages added) 662-668
Revolutionaries will either be children or they won't be 19
Les voleurs de vent (full text, Gai Pied 1982) 861-865
Letter to Jérôme Lindon 902-904
Letter to José-Manuel Cano-Lopez 916-918
Letter to Madeleine Chapsal 582
Letter to Michel Guy 901
Letters to Claude Hilaire (known as Hataire) 607-615; 619-620; 660; 692-694; 894-900
Letters to Claude Navarro 457-469
Letters to Jean-Pierre Joecker 724-729; 757; 764-765; 779-783; 802-804; 849; 854-855 ;
 871
Letters to Michel Longuet 548-581; 670-671

Letters to René Schérer 688-691; 721-723
 Letters to his brother Alain 906-916
 Letters to a friend 688; 692
 Liénard Rosine 223
Lorsque l'enfant paraît (full text, Libération 1980) 768-772
 Mauriac Claude 272
Michel Longuet remembers Tony Duvert, interview with Sebhan 943-948
Focus (Gai Pied 1983) 873-875
Mothers and/as monsters in Duvert's Quand mourut Jonathan 394
 Crosswords (Gai Pied 1980) 762-763; 766-767; 773-778; 790-791; 797-800; 805-806
Non à l'enfant poupée (full text of interview, Libération 1979) 695-708
Our sadistic capitalist society 109
 Nourissier François 412
 Nuridsany Michel 445
A funereal odyssey for the homosexual ? Rereading Duvert's Interdit de séjour 230
 Orezza Antoine 376
 FANTASY LANDSCAPE 269
Paysage de fantaisie, L'Express (1973) 272
Paysage de fantaisie, Le Figaro (1973) 272
Landscape of fantasy, Le Monde (1973) 269
Paysage de fantaisie, Le Nouvel Obs (1973) 270
Pedophile as paragon ? Or (mis)representing motherhood in Duvert's Quand mourut Jonathan 378
Paedophilia everywhere, freedom of thought nowhere by Peggy Sastre 961-964
 Phillips John 133, 146
 Pignon Laurent 7
 Piquet Colette 173, 282
 Poirot-Delpech Bertrand 269, 281, 376, 413
 PORTRAIT OF A MAN KNIFE 173
Portrait d'homme couteau, L'Unebêvue no. 32 (2014) 173
Portrait of a knife man, Le Monde (?) 173
 Presentation of *Paysage de fantaisie*, Tony Duvert, 4th cover of the first edition 269
What is paedophilia (1999) 90
 WHEN JONATHAN DIED 376
When Jonathan Died, Dalhousie French Studies (2008) 378
When Jonathan Died, Dalhousie French Studies 92 (2010) 394
Quand mourut Jonathan, Le Monde (1976) 411
Quand mourut Jonathan, Les Nouvelles Littéraires (1978) 376
When Jonathan died, Loving Boys vol. 1 (1986) 411
When Jonathan died, Scandal in the ink (1999) 411
When all meaning gives way 223
Rape fantasy redux ? Textual victimhood in and between versions of Duvert's Portrait d'homme couteau 206
 RECIDIVE 132
Recidive, Dalhousie French Studies 67 (2004) 134
Recidivism, Forbidden Fictions (1999) 133
Récidive, French Fiction Revisited (1990) 132

Recidive, L'Express (1967) 132
Récidive, Magazine Littéraire (1967) 132
Rewriting, rereading Recidive 134
Ringebach Anne-Marie 109
Rivière François 412
Robinson Christopher 336, 411, 414, 443, 453
Rolin Dominique 273
Roudiez Léon S. 132
Rubercy Eryck from 972
Sam the hero (intégral text, Libération 1979) 730-743
Sastre Peggy 961
Schérer René 279
Sebhan Gilles 447
Simonin Anne 32
Simonin Anne 927
Text Couteau 173
Tony Duvert was a shooting star by Laurent 930-938
Tony Duvert: Is this how my men die? by Alain Jamot 951-953
Tony Duvert: a sombre joy 445
A SILVER RING IN THE EAR 445
Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille, Le Figaro (1982) 445
A writer with a flamethrower 451
A novelist of desire 270
A century of paedophilia in the press (1880-2000) 51
Vanhove Anne-Marie 425