

les moins de seize ans

gabriel
matzneff

idée fixe

julliard

Apology and appeal

We, the translator of this book and the editor of the website Greek Love Through The Ages, apologise to Monsieur Matzneff as the author of *Les Moins de seize ans* for posting this translation online without having first obtained his permission. We have only done so after trying in vain to contact him, and in the hope that he will be pleased rather than displeased by our introducing such an excellent book of his to an English-language readership.

We would much prefer to have published this translation as a paperback than to have posted it online, if only we could have sought and obtained his permission. Being great admirers of his other books, we would also love to translate and publish them on the same condition.

We therefore appeal to our readers that, if anyone of them should know how to contact Monsieur Matzneff, he should please do so on our behalf, reassuring him of our good intentions and our wish to honour him and his magnificent literary accomplishments by making his books available to as wide a readership as possible. Should it be the case that he does not want the publicity of having his books published in English in his lifetime, we would gladly accept an indefinite delay in publication as a condition of his approval of our project. We can be contacted at greek.love.tta@gmail.com

GABRIEL MATZNEFF

THE UNDER- SIXTEENS

Translated from the French by
J. M. Thian

MATZNEFF
Editions Leo Scheer

Gabriel Matzneff

The Under-Sixteens

Meet the archangel of crazy love! He loves girls, boys and the Russian god. To fuck in a Matzneff book is to open the windows. He's very much a "writer", and that's not fashionable. Who dares say: "Me, the artist"? Matzneff says it. Matzneff talks about art. The others say "art is dead", and do their utmost to kill it. Matzneff talks about passions. When Matzneff gets into trouble with Morality, no one in the writing world will come out of the woodwork to defend him. Is Matzneff from another planet?

Probably so. He wears a big white cape and advances slightly above the ground. Fathers can't love Matzneff! Mothers can't either. Matzneff flies too high, he's out of his time! Ah, times are hard for archangels! If you have cherubs at home, give them a Matzneff book as a present."

Victoria Thérame, Charlie Hebdo

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GABRIEL MATZNEFF

THE UNDER-SIXTEENS

Léo Scheer

L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.
Dante

“Winckelmann did somersaults on the floor with the male and female children of the Mengs, who adored him. This scientist loved to frolic with childhood in the style of Anacreon and Horace: Mille puellarum, puerorum mille furores.”

Casanova, Memoirs, VII, 9

For Francesca

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION
(1994)

When *Les Moins de seize ans* was published, it caused a scandal. There's a Russian proverb that says "Truth stings the eyes". If I had been concerned about my career, I would never have published this book, which was going to cause me enormous social harm. My reputation as a debauchee, a pervert, a devil dates back to when I published *Les Moins de seize ans*. In short, a social suicide.

When I submitted my manuscript to Marcel Jullian and Jacques Chancel, was I unaware of this danger? No, but at the time I was madly in love with Francesca, the fifteen-year-old girl to whom the book is dedicated, and this passion excited me beyond all fear and caution. Francesca had rescued me from the horrible crisis that had destroyed my marriage and my religious faith, and without her I would have destroyed myself. *Les Moins de seize ans* was the report card of my victory over despair and death. Hence the light-hearted, provocative tone that so shocked people. If I had confessed my love of extreme youth while whining and beating my chest, people would have forgiven me. What the self-righteous on both the left and the right couldn't stand was the insolent atmosphere of happiness and freedom in which my book bathes.

Twenty years have gone by. I might be entitled to hope that the truths I so passionately defended in *Les Moins de seize ans* are commonly accepted, and that between 1974 and 1994 their subversive nature had waned. But alas! I'm afraid that's not the case. The shams of the moral order have never been so noisy and frenzied. The cage in which the State, society and the family confine minors remains hysterically locked. Lovely schoolgirls! Rebellious schoolchildren! A long time will pass before your teachers draw their dictation texts and essay topics from *Les Moins de seize ans*. This little book with its innocent title is dynamite.

G.M.

THE MASKS OF DIONYSOS

The purpose of this library, as defined by its director, Jacques Chancel, is precise: "The *Idée Fixe* collection gives writers the opportunity to openly declare the secret they have hitherto slyly nourished in their books".

Precise object, ambiguous object. Assuming that we do have *secrets*, and admitting that up until now we have been *sneaky* about feeding them into our books, it is not obvious that we should deliberately stop being sneaky and reveal our *secrets*. Dionysus is the god of masks - the masks worn by the Silenes and Satyrs who escort him - and only those who have been initiated into his mysteries have the right to look him in the face. Moreover, to unmask oneself is still to throw smoke in the eyes of onlookers, to invent a new mask. Any confession is a lie, because a creator is the last person to know what his creation expresses. And, assuming that posterity is willing to take care of us, we don't have to do the work of the scholars who, in a century or two, will be doing doctorates on our books and our lives. Can you imagine Chateaubriand or Vigny *spilling their secrets*? They would have reduced Mr Henri Guillemin to unemployment, or even begging, which would have been unfair, because everyone - that's what I learnt at Sunday school - has the right to live, even the necrophagous old arses of the rue Sébastien-Bottin.

About catechism.

In the days when I was one of the knights-guards of the Orthodox Church (young girls used to write to me, I met Christ thanks to your books, but it invariably ended up in my bed, Godworshippers are incorrigible, just look at the monks of the *Decameron* and the seminarist Casanova, it's not serious, as if Christ had only become flesh so that we could deflower first communion girls and give blow jobs to little singers with wooden tails), In short, at the time when I was to be found in the holy churches loved by God, lighting the candles and kissing the icons, I had studied a little of the sacrament of penance among primitive Christians, and I remember that public confession played an important role in it. New Father of the Church, Saint Jacques Bouche d'Or of spontaneous confessions, Jacques Chancel's *Idée Fixe* reintroduces public confession into our customs.

Does this mean that our other books are the stuff of auricular confession? The truth is that if people knew how to read, they wouldn't need *Idée Fixe* to dot their i's and cross their t's. But people don't know how to read, they don't read. They flip through our books in the drugstore, they skim through the articles we get in the press, that's enough for them, the important thing for them is not to know an author, but to be able to talk about him. Hence the need for an explanation of the text, like at school, hence the usefulness of *Idée Fixe*.

I'm not short of obsessions. I'm obsessed, and I love my obsessions, they keep me warm, they keep me from freezing to death. My obsessions are like the balloons they tie under the armpits of little children learning to swim: if they burst, I'll sink like a rock. It's my *fixed ideas* that keep me alive. Without them, I would have blown my brains out a long time ago.

That's right, suicide, one of my major obsessions. I began my career with an essay on suicide among the Romans, included in my first book, *Le Défi*. The main male character in *L'Archimandrite* takes his own life. *La Caracole* ends with the suicide of a young actress. In *Comme le feu mêlé d'aromates* I dream of a stranger's suicide in the Aegean Sea. The hero of *Nous n'irons plus au Luxembourg* is haunted by the suicides of Atticus, Apicius and Petronius. In *Isaïe réjouis-toi* Nil tries to kill himself and Véronique's father kills himself.

Another of my fixed ideas is solitude. I could go on and on about this. Here are two:

"I have never loved anything but solitude, for it is only in solitude that I have found freedom. No matter how far I go back into my past, I come across this wild, painful desire for independence. From an early age, maybe eight, certainly ten, I knew that I would always be an exile among men, a stranger on this earth". (*Comme le feu mêlé d'aromates*, p. 135.)

"Blamed or praised, but never understood, I have no one to share my *yes* and *no* with. I don't suffer for it, because from childhood I knew I would always be marginal, solitary, different..." (*Le Carnet arabe*, p. 229).

I have many other fixed ideas. For example:

The sun and the water, the naked life, the tanned skin, the heat, the flight to the Orient.

Greco-Roman antiquity and the art of living happily.

The myth of Kitege, the obsession with the sunken city, the awareness of the inescapable victory of the Barbarians over Beauty.

Nostalgia for holiness, for Christian theosis, for satori Zen.

Hash, kif and opiates are the delights of the island of Monte Cristo.

Dietetics and contrasts, chasse-spleen and carrot juice, pumpkin seed oil and Chambolle-Musigny.

These fixed ideas, these passions, these obsessions, these experiences feed my life, which in turn feeds my books, because I have no imagination, and I can only express on the blank page what I have lived, known and experienced. However, as the central theme of this *Idée Fixe*, I have chosen another one, the Other, divine and demonic, stronger than the desire for death, stronger than the desire for God, which recapitulates and envelops in a single stroke, in a single sheaf, these contradictory desires whose heads with hissing tongues spring in all directions from my heart like a nest of hungry snakes.

My *Idée Fixe* are the under-sixteens.

Young people are a delicate subject, at least today, as they were not for Sophocles, Tibullus or Khayyam. However, we are no longer in the nineteenth century, when Dostoyevsky lent his immoderate taste for twelve-year-old girls to characters in novels such as *Svidrigailov* and *Stavroguin*, but, using the "I" of the essayist, thought it prudent to write only about the necessary deliverance of Constantinople or the benefits of Slavic-Orthodox messianism, subjects of less direct interest to the morality police. Nor are we in the first half of the twentieth century, when a Thomas Mann wrote *Death in Venice*, a fictitious pederastic tale, but felt obliged to virtuously condemn the attraction of the German poet Storm to a ten-year-old child. Today, Dionysus can take off his mask; he can eat his heart out.

Cantat, amat quod quisque, "let each one sing what he loves", as Calpurnius wishes in his eleventh eclogue. I'll sing here what I love, I will sing to the tender troupe of little girls and boys.

LETTERS FROM THE LITTLE GIRL
TO THE NAUGHTY MAN ¹

Gabriel, my love, I need you, I need you too much. You're not here, and I'm talking to myself, talking to the walls. I kiss your photo in the dark corners and write your name on the school tables. I erase it immediately afterwards, because there are too many of my classmates who know that my lover is called Gabriel, but so as not to really erase your name, I write it by superimposing the letters ten times, until it becomes illegible.

¹ The letters from the little girl were written to me by the fifteen-year-old girl to whom this book is dedicated. There is not a word that is not hers.

THE UNDER-SIXTEENS

The under-sixteens. Girls or boys, it doesn't matter. I will not imitate Plutarch and Lucian of Samosate who wrote dialogues in which a lover of women and a lover of boys fight one another. What captivates me is less a specific sex than extreme youth, the period from the tenth to the sixteenth year, which seems to me to be - much more than what is usually meant by this phrase - the true *third sex*. Sixteen is not, however, a fateful age for women who often remain desirable beyond that age. My ex-wife was eighteen when she became my mistress and twenty-three when I married her. On the other hand, I can't imagine myself having a sensual relationship with a boy past the age of seventeen. The age of the first beard is also the age limit: one season is enough to turn a kid into a goat. Great youth runs with its torch, and its light is fleeting. I have never had sexual relations with anyone of my sex who was older than seventeen, except once with a twenty-two-year-old boy, but that evening we had smoked a lot of hash, we were completely stoned, and what's more, as blonds often do, this boy wasn't wearing his years, he was barely eighteen.

Is this taste for young boys homosexuality? Strictly speaking, yes: a thirteen-year-old boy is the same sex as me, so by sleeping with him I'm performing a homosexual act. However, if *homos* means *similar* in Greek, it's clear that this kid and I are not similar. I'm 1.82 m tall, I have a deep voice, body hair and a beard that, ten hours after I shave it, starts to sting the person I'm kissing. As for the pubescent or just pubescent boy, *he* has a short stature, a high-pitched voice, a smooth body, fresh skin, a beardless face, a gracefulness that makes him "pretty as a girl", and I'm only talking about the physical here: the psychological dissimilarity between an adult and a child is also obvious.

To be homosexual is to desire your fellow man, your double. The differences in somatic appearance, age and mentality mean that a man over twenty and a kid are profoundly heterogeneous beings. A sixteen-year-old girl and a fourteen-year-old boy are more alike than an adult man is to a fourteen-year-old boy. In the March 1973 issue of the magazine *Recherches*, devoted to homosexuality, one of the participants in the debate on paedophilia said of heterosexuals: "I'm convinced that there isn't a forty-year-old man who wouldn't want to fuck a fourteen-

year-old boy in the nude". Voltaire, in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, in the article "Amour nommé socratique", writes: "Often a young boy, by the freshness of his complexion, by the brightness of his colours and by the softness of his eyes, resembles for two or three years a beautiful girl; if we love him, it is because nature misunderstands: we pay homage to the sex, by attaching ourselves to what has its beauties, and when age has made this resemblance disappear, the misunderstanding ceases."

Voltaire is wrong on one point: there is no *misunderstanding* in the love of young boys. A pederast, a lover of children, has no need to make excuses or justify himself ("forgive me, my boy, I mistook you for your sister!"): a young boy is a young boy, there is no doubt about his uniqueness, as evidenced by pederasts such as Gide who have *nothing but* a taste for boys. But as for the rest, Voltaire is right to emphasise the resemblance between the beauty of a young boy and that of a young girl. For me, this resemblance is so close that just as it seems logical to me that a man who likes young men or men should not be attracted to girls, I am astonished that a man who desires little boys and teenagers should remain insensitive to the charms of a thirteen or fifteen year old girl. Call me bisexual or, as the ancients used to say, ambidextrous, I have no problem with that. But frankly I don't think I am. To my mind, extreme youth is in itself a special and unique sex.

The hostility of homosexuals towards child-lovers shows *a contrario* that pederasty is not a synonym for homosexuality - despite what the expression has come to mean. Despite the confusion that homosexuals themselves sometimes indulge in. Despite the confusion to which homosexuals themselves sometimes give in, such as this contemporary author who, in a book of memories, talks about his "sick paedophilia" whereas his entire body of work bears witness to the fact that he loves young men and not young boys, who alone would justify the use of this word: after the age of eighteen, you are no longer a child; the reign of paedophilia is over, and the reign of homosexuality has begun.

No one has better defined the nature and limits of pederasty than Straton of Sardis, in the fourth epigram of his *Muse garçonnière*:

"I love the freshness of the twelve-year-old; but much more desirable is the thirteen-year-old.

"Sweeter still is the flower of love that blooms at fourteen; even more charming is that of the fifteenth year.

“Sixteen is the divine age. I wouldn’t dare claim seventeen: only Zeus has that right.

“If someone wants older boys, he has no taste for childish games: he already demands the replica.”²

Straton says nothing about those under twelve, but he who says nothing consents. According to Hellanicus, Helen was not yet ten when she was abducted by Theseus, who was well into his fifties.

It seems that these tastes are the exception today. My friends laughingly tell me that I’m an exception. But it wasn’t always so. Just think of the *Satyricon*, set not in decadent aristocratic circles, but among the little people of Rome, a well-balanced, healthy people, a Rome at the height of its power and glory (in the first century of the vulgar era, we are still in the Empire inherited from Augustus, and the *pax romana* stretches majestically across the known world). Now, the only god on whose altars Petronius’ heroes sacrifice is Priape, son of Dionysus and Aphrodite, the ithyphallic god of gardens and woods; and their great business is sleeping with the extreme youth. Whether it’s two young men sharing the charms of a teenager; a boy who takes the cherry out of a seven-year-old girl; wealthy old men to whom a lady prostitutes her two children; a teacher who debauches his little pupils - all of them have just one thing on their minds: getting kids into their bed.

Last century, the excellent Gaston Boissier was astonished by these scenes “where the passions most contrary to nature are expressed in such a lively and natural tone.”³ And even today, this voluptuousness of the under-sixteens has posed insoluble problems for Fellini, who was forced to betray Petronius in his film. However, that the arbiter of elegance combs “with natural” passions that are “most contrary to nature”, instead of us being outraged, invites us to reflect on this ambiguous concept of *nature*.

For the best of the Ancients, the distinction between the terms “natural” and “unnatural” mean nothing. There is no dividing line between heterosexuality and pederasty: Horace and Catullus flirt with young girls and beardless boys alike. In *Leukippe et Kleitophon*, a romance

² I have departed slightly from the translation given by Roger Peyrefitte of this epigram in his unabridged edition of Straton's *La Muse garçonnière*, Paris, 1973.

³ Gaston Boissier, *L'Opposition sous les Césars*, Paris, 1875.

novel by Achilleus Tatios, there is a lively discussion about the respective merits of girls and boys: Menelaus prefers to kiss little boys, whose kisses, “though they lack the science of feminine kisses”, are all the tastier for it, while Kleitophon prefers the lips of young girls, because “a woman’s kisses are full of art and she makes her kiss as sweet as she can”. There are several pages like this, but at no point does Kleitophon, the lover of girls, claim that Menelaus’ taste for little boys is “unnatural”. For him, as for the whole of the ancient world, every taste is in nature, and the best is the one we have. The author of *Leukippe* and *Kleitophon* was to convert to Christianity at the end of his life. Suidas even specifies that he was consecrated a bishop. I hope his altar boys were pretty.

These days, as far as little girls are concerned, thank you, we’re doing quite well. French society is, to put it in gibberish, rather “permissive”. I currently have a wonderful fifteen-year-old mistress, and our love affairs don’t seem to shock anyone; I’ve even heard that we make a very nice couple. With boys, it’s a different kettle of fish. Although I don’t hide my fifteen-year-old lover too much, my adventures with little boys are strictly clandestine. Our civilisation is so vulgarly, so flatly phallogocratic that a pretty girl, even a very young one, always arouses a kind of mischievous complicity (the guy who nudges you, winks, “She was a virgin? You were the first? You lucky bastard! You roquentin!”). No one takes offence at Hamilton’s erotic photos of teenage girls, or at Irina Ionesco’s posing of a ten-year-old girl - her own daughter - naked and in extravagantly lascivious poses. But if a photographer tries to publish similar albums, replacing the girls and the teenage girls with boys of twelve or fifteen! It would be a scandal, an immediate confiscation of his books. The silence surrounding the work of Goor, that marvellous painter of young boys, is significant in this respect and forms an enlightening contrast with the notoriety of some second-rate painter who specialises in chicks. The truth is that the erotic charm of the young boy is radically denied by modern Western society, which rejects the pederast into non-being, the kingdom of shadows, *Katobasileia*. The assumption of our age is that *a young boy is not desirable*. Thomas Mann described the anguish and panic of Aschenbach - a “normal” man who lives in a world where it is understood once and for all that a boy can be neither troubling nor disturbing - when he discovers, thanks to Tadzio’s fourteen years and blond curls, that this is not true, that pederastic desire

exists, that it is reason and nature itself, that the sexual and emotional prohibitions he had accepted until then are nothing but a sham. Aschenbach's salvation would be to take the child in his arms, to put his lips on his; but the blocks are too imperious, the fear of living too paralysing, and once again the pederast is reduced to flight, to nothingness, to the realm of death.

Many educationalists (teachers, monitors, scout leaders) are pederasts - sometimes active, more often repressed. "Any desire to educate is a perverted pederastic desire,"⁴ observes René Schérer. However, these are not things that can be said in a society such as ours, where one of the pillars of Hercules is the illusion that our dear blond (and brown) heads can be neither tempting nor tempted. Hence the indignation of grown-ups when a chaplain is caught fiddling with a cub's fly ("You can see, my darling, that you're a little devil because you've got a little tail!") or when a teacher takes one of his pupils for a lover (the adventure of the unfortunate Gabrielle Russier). Indignation is not the right word. It's more a question of rage, the rage of the adult caste at having been betrayed, cheated by one of its own. Yes, the adult caste, a caste, like in India. And the kids are the untouchables.

That said, I'm not going to feel sorry for teachers. I don't give a damn about the university, let it die. I loathe Socrates, Plato, all the sublime treacle they wrap desire and pleasure in, I loathe pederasty with pedagogical pretensions. You can caress a young boy without feeling obliged to give him a lesson in maths or history-geography within half an hour. And don't let anyone pull the wool over our eyes about the love of souls. I don't want to sound more cynical than I am, but in *Isaïe réjouis-toi* I told the story of a man who almost died from believing too much in the soul, in the theological pastry of the soul. A scalded cat fears cold water, I won't be caught at it again.

No, it's not true, it's not true, I believe in your soul, my darling child, I want to believe in it, beyond betrayal, beyond despair, I will not lose confidence in human beings, I will not lose my hope in you, I will keep faith in my power to love. When Jesus saw Peter again after his threefold denial, he didn't ask him, "Do you repent?" He simply asked him:

⁴ René Schérer, *Émile perversi*, Paris, 1974.

“Do you love me? We will not be judged by our deeds, nor by our downfalls, nor by our “vices”. At the adorable and terrible hour when we stand before the nuptial altar of Christ, we will be judged on love.

(Strange vocabulary from the pen of someone who no longer believes in God, but when I’m moved, it’s the words of the Gospel, the words of the Church, that naturally come to my heart and lips. And then, to be modest, my opinion on the existence or nonexistence of God is of little interest. The main thing is not that I believe in God. The important thing is that God, if he exists, believes in me).

LETTER FROM THE LITTLE GIRL
TO THE NAUGHTY MAN

Love of my life, it's one o'clock in the morning and as I can't whisper in your ear that I love you (yeah yeah yeah), I'm saying it to the paper and the paper will tell you.

We had a won-der-ful day, just like every time we see each other at your place (our place!). With love and chocolate galore, it was heaven.

I love it when you talk to me seriously and teach me things, my sunshine, and I'm so proud of you...

And I love it when I kiss your cheek, your eyes, your ears where I want to whisper so many words of love and tenderness.

I love it especially when we make love, it's oh so beautiful and wonderful there are no words to describe it. I'd like to stay like that for the rest of my life, in your arms, with my head on your shoulder, lying in a big bed and the air we breathe overflowing with tenderness.

I mean... we also need to see lots of beautiful things and places together, that's obvious, but always hand in hand.

You're my whole life, Gabriel darling, and I'm sorry we argued (a bit) (a tiny bit) (well, very little) this morning and while I lay there amorphous and speechless, I thought, my God, I've got to tell Gabriel that it doesn't matter and that it's so stupid to argue, but I didn't because I was also thinking, if I say that, it will mean that he is right, so I won't (you weren't right, but not more wrong than me, in any case).

Oh, I get confused.

Anyway, I was very unhappy when you kissed me and I had to stand still. But you know, if you'd sulked back then, I'd have ended up dragging myself to your feet to see you smile at me again.

My sweet love, we're terribly happy, but it's also by comparison with the times when we're a little unhappy, for example when we're angry or worried. By contrast, if you see what I mean.

In any case, we are remarkable people because of our immense love, our happiness, our understanding for each other and all that.

It's very late, my lover of honey and gold, I place my lips on your eyelids and slip my arms around your neck.

Your darling child.

THE OGRES

Kid lovers 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 daring advocates of sexual liberation agree that children and teenagers need to be “protected”. An “eminent sexologist”, Dr Zwang, a member of the French Family Planning Movement and author of a book on the erotic function, lumps lovers under the age of sixteen in with masochists, coprophiles and zoophiles, and explains their sexual tastes in terms of genetic abnormalities⁵. Ah, what a great subject for a classics student’s thesis: the genetic anomalies of Latin poets, from Virgil to Horace. Now that’s a real treat! Thank you, Dr Zwang!

Curiously, being a child lover is linked in people’s minds to the idea of violence. For them, a satyr can only be a sadist. The Evil M, that’s me! Tony Duvert rightly points out that there are infinitely more parents who martyr their children than pederasts who slit the throats of their boyfriends or young mistresses⁶. This notwithstanding, adult society believes, or pretends to believe, that child love begins with a kiss but necessarily ends with a stabbing. Hence the terror in which the unfortunate children are brought up, the atmosphere of mistrust in which they are confined by their parents and educators: it is forbidden to speak to a stranger, forbidden to accept an invitation to the swimming pool or cinema from a stranger: “Never follow an extremely nice stranger. It’s a trap. If he insists on chasing you: shout, call for help.”⁷ The stranger is the enemy. *You should never follow an extremely nice stranger*; on the other hand, you should wisely and obediently follow old acquaintances, parents, teachers, even if they’re not very nice. even if they are not nice at all , even if they slap you, even if they sit on your head and prevent you from breathing, from living, from being happy. Adults who don’t like children can’t stand the fact that children are loved by those who do. A child has no right to his or her heart, body, love or kisses. A child belongs to its parents and teachers. They have exclusive use of them. Yet it is we who are accused by these nauseating characters of statutory rape. You are a child thief, Mr Matzneff, an

⁵ Interview published by the magazine *Éléments*, March-June 1974.

⁶ Tony Duvert, *Le Bon Sexe illustré*, Paris, 1974.

⁷ *Encyclopédie de la vie sexuelle*, Paris, 1973.

odious individual. You belong in an asylum or in prison. The authorities and Dr Zwang will put a stop to it.

It's been fifty years since Freud coined the term "polymorphous pervert", and centuries since Aristotle emphasised the extreme lasciviousness of impubescent or barely pubescent children. Nevertheless, in a child-adult relationship, it is always the eldest who is seen by society as the seducer and the child as the "victim". But anyone who loves kids can testify that they're great flirts, or (which amounts to the same thing) they excel in the art of being flirted with. I've hit on a lot of under-sixteens, but a lot of under-sixteens have hit on me. Just recently (I'd already started writing this book) I was approached on rue Gay-Lussac, in Paris, by a twelve-year-old kid who might have wanted me to buy him a cinema ticket, but who really wanted something else. There are kids who are very well-behaved, that's true, but there are also kids who act like real whores. Whore is not the right word. They simply dream of "cinema-style" kisses, caresses, hugs and so on. Some don't like adults and reserve their favours for children their own age or younger (I was like that when I was a kid), but there are others who don't mind the idea of sleeping with a grown-up.

In the autumn of 1973, the newspapers were full of the story of a fat, ugly, one-eyed man in his fifties who organised *ballets roses* in his home in a village in the east of France, near Forbach. In the space of a few years, "Tonton Lucien" had sex with more than sixty eight girls aged between eleven and fifteen. He gave ten francs to virgins and three francs to those who were no longer virgins, except on Sundays when they were entitled to five francs. In his bedroom, he would show pornographic films bought in Germany, then invite the teenage girls to do with him what they had seen on the screen. He would make them adopt erotic poses and photograph them. He certainly seduced some of these little girls, and perhaps raped them a little, but most of them were willing and came to him spontaneously, attracted by the stories of their friends: at school, they passed on the tip (if I dare say it). Uncle Lucien's love affairs lasted several years. None of the children ever betrayed the secret, and none of them ever complained. The *ballet rose* was only discovered when a local resident bought some pornographic photos and was astonished to recognise (those dear parents, always blind and, when their eyes open, always astonished!) his own daughter, aged under

twelve, naked and playing with a sex gadget. Today, Uncle Lucien is in prison, charged with statutory rape. His parents should be pleased: Tonton Lucien only slept with their daughters, it seems, and never with their sons. Heterosexual morality is saved, hallelujah!

There isn't a normal man who reads the juicy tale of Uncle Lucien's love affairs without getting a hard-on and thinking that he would have liked to be in his place ("he must have had a really good time, the dirty old pig"). But you mustn't say that. He's the naked king from Andersen's fairy tale.

The very young are tempting. They are also tempted. I have never extracted the slightest kiss or caress, either by trickery or force. People will object that in poor countries like Egypt or Morocco, where children often expect to make a profit from their indulgence in love, there is violence - the violence of money. So be it, but apart from the fact that the poor are not as self-interested as the rich imagine, I don't think that venal love is the privilege of little Arabs. There are more prostitutes of both sexes in the restaurants and clubs of Paris and the Côte d'Azur than in Place Djemaa el Fna. Anyway, everyone gives what they have: the bird its song, the flower its perfume, the creator his work, the cook his tasty dishes, the wise old man his wisdom, the rich man his money, the beautiful child his beauty. What's more, if there is violence, the violence of a banknote slipped into the pocket of a pair of jeans or (short) knickers is nonetheless gentle violence. Don't kid yourself. We've seen worse.

The worst, precisely, are the abusive, possessive, castrating parents; they are also, I readily admit, the murderers, the guys who rape and kill. Sadists. The ogres. Sadists are rare, much rarer than the press would have you believe, which, as an accomplice of the family and bourgeois order, does not fail, every time one comes along, to make a fuss about it, to devote huge and horrifying headlines to it. Nonetheless, I don't deny that they exist. Ogres do exist.

I've always had a soft spot for ogres. On 30 June 1964, in *Combat*, I defended the man whom the press had nicknamed "l'Étrangleur" (the Strangler) and whom I called "a lonely young man". This text, which got me into a bit of trouble, has been reprinted in my collection of polemical columns, *La Caracole*.⁸ Two years later, on 21 April 1966, still in *Combat*, I wrote a plea in favour of Miss Hindley and Mr Brady, accused of

⁸ Title of the first edition of *Le Sabre de Didi*.

seducing, torturing and murdering two children and a teenager. In this column,⁹ I argued that the alleged crimes of the “monsters of Chester” (as the headlines read) were a trifle compared to the genocide the United States was guilty of in Vietnam. I concluded: “... so leave us alone with the “Chester monsters”. Monsters are everywhere. Nobody made such a fuss when virtuous England exterminated the Mau-Mau peoples in the middle of the twentieth century.”

This column drew the ire of the right-wing press. As for the left-wing press, they didn't come to my defence. Not a word. It was two years before May 68, and the French left, which is always a step behind, was fuelled by bromide. The tone in which I wrote about sexual matters (and not just in this column) was frowned upon by the Left, considered unserious, in bad taste, a sign of decadent libertinism. The brand image of the revolutionary was Lenin, a chaste, sober, puritan man. That sex was revolutionary was an idea that only a “right-wing anarchist” (such was the label attached to my name) could develop. Wilhelm Reich had already been dead for nine years, but he was not yet a fashionable author among the Parisian intelligentsia. I repeat, in France we are always a little late.

In the summer of 1973, while I was writing *Isaïe réjouis-toi*, in which Nil's love affairs with Geneviève (aged seventeen), Anthony (aged sixteen), Moktar (aged thirteen), David (aged sixteen) and Angiolina (aged fifteen) occupy a cardinal place, the most interesting character we read about in the press was undoubtedly Dean Arnold, whom *France-Soir* simply christened “the Houston ogre”, Dean Arnold Corll, an American who had slept with around thirty (probably more) boys aged between thirteen and eighteen, and then murdered them.

The story was horrifying, and the details of the torture Corll put the kids through before killing them was chilling for anyone who, like me, has never understood Sade (whom I admire greatly, by the way) and the joy his heroes take in torturing the young people they make love to. For me, pleasure is inseparable from tenderness, and gratitude too, and I can't imagine torturing a young person who has just left my bed. Nevertheless, I was bothered by the way the newspapers were reporting the affair. When you read them, you didn't know what they were condemning. Was it Dean Arnold Corll's demented behaviour, or was it

⁹ Included in *Le Dîner des mousquetaires*.

that teenagers between the ages of thirteen and eighteen had engaged in erotic activities? In a strange moralistic shift, those writing about the Houston tragedy hypocritically passed from one to the other, and that was intolerable. That same summer of 73, a women's magazine carried a long article entitled *L'Amour à quinze ans* (Love at Fifteen). Admittedly, it was about girls, but I don't see why what is allowed for girls should be forbidden for boys. Since Victor Duruy's schoolgirls have been taking the pill since the third year, there's no reason to prevent Montaigne's schoolgirls from being hit on in the Luxembourg gardens. If there's one age when boys crave sexual contact, it's adolescence. Adult society has no right to prevent him from quenching that thirst. As Alexander Neill writes in *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child-rearing*, "I know of no argument against youth's love life that holds water. Nearly every argument is based on repressed emotion or hate of life."¹⁰

From time to time, a husband murders his wife. This unfortunate incident does not call into question, in the minds of the bourgeoisie, the institution of marriage. Just because a mentally ill person strangles a little boy from time to time doesn't mean that these same middle-class people are entitled to blame all pederasts and deprive their children of the joy of being introduced to pleasure, the only way to ensure that "sex education" isn't a lie and a load of rubbish. *O Venus, regina Cnidi Paphique...*

¹⁰ A. S. Neill, *Libres enfants de Summerhill*, Paris, 1973 [French edition of *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child-rearing*, New York, 1960].

LETTER FROM THE LITTLE GIRL
TO THE NAUGHTY MAN

Gabriel, my gingerbread lover, barley sugar, golden sugar, I love you, you know, I love you. I love you with all my strength, with all my mind, with all my hope. You are the first I have loved and you will also be the last, because I could never say to another the words of passion that I whispered to you, never could I repeat with another the gestures of giving and possessing that are our secret. If you were to leave me now, you would leave me totally helpless and broken. An old woman of fifteen. But even if one day you were to make me suffer, suffer a lot, never, never could the idea even cross my mind of regretting having known you. I am paid a hundredfold in advance by my present happiness. I love you, my golden archangel, I'm just a little girl, and our love - love, love, love, what a lovely word - is only a few months old, but it's also a beautiful, blossoming passion, shining like a five-day-old rose. Oh, I assure you that we must not die, that we must live, live as intensely as possible, our love, the two of us, an island of treasure that only we will discover, a plant that climbs and entwines itself around our bodies.

Gabriel, my sun prince, the colour of a cloudless sky, the colour of eternity, whenever I think of you my eyes fill with tears. But they are tears of sweetness, tenderness, gratitude and love... How lucky we are, my beautiful lover, to escape the everyday, the sordid, to live a passion that takes us out of the world, that lifts us above mediocrity and banality. Gabriel, my beloved, my adorable, naked, golden lover, I'll never tire of devouring you with kisses, your skin so soft that it leaks under my lips, slips between my teeth, your perfume where I can't get enough of you. I bury myself religiously, drinking in your wet tongue. I'd like to be there again this afternoon, my cheek on your belly, your confident hand on mine, then the sun dancing, our bodies recognising each other, your hands and mouth shimmering, intoxicating, your desire rising up, opening me in two, blossoming like a flower, your eyelashes slowly lowering, the warmth of your body, my beloved, my intimate lover, and the pleasure rising, our looks of wonder, - oh I'm stopping, I'm too confused, my love, tomorrow I'll get up as soon as possible to be in your arms as quickly as possible.

Your child is all yours.

THE ISLAND OF THE BLESSED

We sometimes read that the lover of extreme youth is condemned never to be loved in return, never to experience reciprocity. This is an idea supported by Aristotle in *Eudemian Ethics* and Peyrefitte in *Jeunes Proies*. This observation has the appearance of being true: our love affairs with the very young of either sex are often furtive, without a future, a kiss exchanged under a *porte cochère*, a quick embrace in a grove, not seen, not taken, goodbye little one, good luck little one, we won't see each other again, and the brevity of such adventures certainly doesn't allow serious emotional bonds to develop. But is that what happens with children? Don't similar brief encounters happen every day, every moment, between adult men and women? And what's so important about being loved in return? Isn't the most important thing that the young person allows herself to be loved? In my affairs of the heart, I always remember Aristippos' reply to a friend who told him that the beautiful courtesan Laïs, who was his mistress, did not love him: "Neither fish nor wine have any love for me, and yet I use both with pleasure."

Having said that, I think that those who maintain that lovers of children are doomed to loneliness of the heart are mistaken. In any case, my personal experience is the exact opposite of theirs. What impresses me about the very young, on the contrary, is their capacity for total self-giving, their unreserved abandonment to the beloved. Adolescents in love don't deal with love; they believe in the absolute of passion and give themselves over to it completely. This is so true that it seems to me that *the only serious argument* against love for those under sixteen is that when we light a fire in the heart of one of them, we don't know whether, once the frenzy has passed in the first few days or weeks, we'll still want to feed that fire, but we don't know whether we'll be able to put it out. Detaching a child from yourself is sometimes more difficult than attaching yourself to them. You can take a woman and then throw her away; but unless you're a bastard, you shouldn't play games with the very young. Let's not forget that fifteen is the age when people kill themselves out of desperation for love.

Yes, there is a pitfall. A woman of twenty-five is a responsible, autonomous person, who has already "lived" (as we say), who doesn't expect more from her lover than he can or wants to give her; she respects

his independence, his freedom. A fifteen-year-old girl, on the other hand, demands everything from the man who awakened her to love, because she lives only through him, she's possessive and jealous, she can't stand the fact that he's not permanently at her disposal, that he sees other people, that he receives mail and phone calls, that he accepts dinner invitations (even if she has to go home to Mum and Dad in the evening anyway). A man who loves a very young person is mobilised on the spot. It was the American novelist John Hopkins who, one night as we strolled through the medina of Marrakech talking about these things, said to me: "The very young take a long time." At first, such a charming tyranny delights the eldest; it flatters and amuses him, and he submits to it willingly. But in the long run, it tires and irritates him. Accustomed to solitude and complete freedom of movement, he's fed up with having this child on his back all the time: seeing him or her for two hours a day (preferably at bedtime) would be more than enough. Hence the need to distance oneself, which cannot be done without tears, grievances and misunderstandings, and can sometimes lead to a break-up.

Now I'm playing the devil's advocate and painting a black picture. In reality, it's not always like that. One of the charms of an affair with a boy or girl is precisely that, with family and school taking up a large part of their time, you only see them a little, that these brief moments are devoted entirely to love, and that you thus escape the heaviness of permanent tête-à-tête, that tomb of passion. I would add that these reflections on the possessiveness of extreme youth apply less to boys than to girls. Not that girls are more sentimental than boys, but a boy of fourteen or fifteen, even if he's very much in love with you, knows obscurely that he won't spend his whole life in your arms; whereas a girl, as soon as she's in love, starts fretting, dreaming of cohabitation, of a life together, of eternity. In the newspapers you read all kinds of things about the end of the family, about young people's mentality being so different from that of their parents. Would to God that this were true! Alas, this is not the case, and the day is not about to dawn when girls will finally be freed from the idealistic mush in their heads. I don't know if it's because they are called upon to give birth to children, but what is clear is that a girl is less capable than a boy of living in the moment. She has to plan ahead, project herself into the future. A simple affair is not enough for her; she wants permanence, duration, security (what she

believes to be security), marriage. Anyone who hasn't heard a fifteen-year-old girl whisper during sex: "I'd like to have your baby" knows nothing about today's adolescent girls.

When I wrote that it's not easy to detach an adolescent from oneself, I was thinking of specific cases. Thinking of this or that case, I could just as easily argue that it is sometimes with disconcerting ease, a resignation bordering on indifference, that the teenagers accept being dumped. It's not because they're too dry-hearted, but because they feel they have an unlimited field of possible encounters and happiness ahead of them. What's more, teenagers lack self-confidence. How many times have I heard the phrase: "Why do you love a little person as insignificant as me, why me? What do you find in me that you wouldn't find in other kids my age?" Being dumped seemed natural, inescapable.

If the kids get dumped, they also dump, and badly so. A rather serious quarrel is enough for all their vows of eternal love and all their plans for the future to be called into question. They go in an instant from absolute fervour to radical absence. The ability of women to turn the page, to start again from scratch, to say to their new lover, you are the first man I've loved, and to be sincere in saying it, we observe even more strongly in very young girls. When it's over, it's over.

I'm sitting on a bench in Luxembourg. Next to me are two pretty girls, aged fifteen or sixteen. They are chatting animatedly.

"Are you still with Eric?"

"You're crazy! Eric is long gone!"

"Since when?"

"Wait... it was at Patrick's party, when I flirted with François... it's Friday, you see, it'll soon be eight days... now I'm with Philippe, he's great, I love him... oh, you know, yesterday, on the bus, I bumped into a guy I'd been with last summer, in Cannes, I was crazy about him, well, old girl, I couldn't remember his name!"

Sixteen-year-old Anne laughs when anyone mentions fidelity in her presence:

"After two weeks, I'm already fed up. So I spend the rest of my life with the same guy!"

Fourteen-year-old Christian tells me he's decided to break up with me. Three days ago we were madly in love, and now it's over. I'm sitting

on the bed. He's standing up straight in front of me, his mouth tight and his gaze hard.

"I realised yesterday that I didn't want to come to your house anymore. This morning I thought I could pretend, but you see, I couldn't do it."

"And everything we've been through together?"

"It will take its place in my heart..."

Fifteen-year-old Monique gets angry when I jokingly allude to her former flirtations:

"I don't like the past, I don't like the truth, I prefer to forget them, to recreate them as I please."

The tenderness of childhood, the harshness of childhood.

Childhood is a reflection of the times, both cruel and Rousseauist.

It doesn't really matter. Whether people under sixteen are possessive or fickle, whether they crash or run, that's their business. For me, the golden rule is to accept them as they are, and to live to the full the moments of happiness they want to share with me - without thinking about the future.

I'm a man of the discontinuous, I'm a man of the moment, and I don't like the future. Only the present captivates me, and sometimes also the past to feed my books. But I don't want to hear about tomorrow. There will be no tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll be dead.

Childhood, adolescence, and all that these two words express of the uncertain, the fragile, the ephemeral, nothing suits my temperament more, nothing is in closer harmony with my *physis*. Which is not to say that true love doesn't exist. Cross-country adventures are our daily bread, but true love can also be found, and I pity those who haven't experienced at least one in their lives.

According to Lucian of Samosata, on the Isle of the Blessed, "little boys grant everything that is desired and never refuse anything".

Still on the Isle of the Blessed, the governor, Rhadamanthus, explains to Lucian that it is forbidden to have sexual relations with boys over the age of eighteen.¹¹

"To love the very young is to condemn oneself not to love beings, but a moment of beings". I often read developments on this theme. It seems

¹¹ Lucian, *True History*, II, 19 et 28.

to me to be greatly exaggerated. Loving people under sixteen doesn't necessarily mean breaking up with your girlfriend on her sixteenth birthday. I have a friend whose lover was a fifteen-year-old boy. Time has passed, the boy is now twenty, and their relationship has never been stronger. They love each other as much as the day they met. And if we admit that we only love people for a moment, is that a trait that is unique to us? Isn't the same true of the loves that society recognises, that the Church and the State bless? It seems that the average length of marriage for young couples today is three years. My own marriage only lasted two and a half years. Lawyers and judges are swamped with divorce proceedings. This, too, is a "people moment".

I am not a teacher. However, I know that the young people with whom I have had a slightly ongoing relationship have come out of it happier, freer, more *fulfilled* in the Indian sense of the word.

Loving a child only makes sense if that love helps him to blossom, to fulfil himself, to become fully himself, to shatter the bars of the family cage, to push back with a light hand the false duties to which society pretends to subject him. Our love must not be a vampiric, selfish love that subjugates and suffocates, the love of the wolf for the lamb; on the contrary, this love must be a love that fecundates, liberates, "gives life", like the Holy Spirit in Byzantine prayer.

The elder should not try to make the child love him or her; he or she should not try to make him or herself indispensable. Of course, when a child says passionate words of love to you, that you are his or her life, that he or she couldn't live without you, that he or she will never love anyone else but you, it's pleasant, it reassures you ("Lord, someone needs me! someone needs me to exist!"). And yet, *we who know* must have the courage and honesty to answer him or her: "You mustn't count on me too much, no one must count on anyone too much. When you say to me "I belong to you entirely, I'm your slave", I don't like that. I want you to know that you don't belong to anyone, neither to your parents nor to me, you only belong to yourself."

The most important service I can do for a teenager, after I've given him everything I can, is to teach him to do without me.

One of the pleasures of our love affair with the very young is that it frees us from two spectres that haunt our love affair with the very old: cohabitation and marriage. This is how it has always been: in Athens, at

the height of institutional pederasty, it was shocking and improper for a young boy to live permanently with his lover.

If it's a woman, we're likely to see her turn up one morning with her suitcases, like Katy at Lieutenant Lucas's house in *The Good Soldier Švejk*. A teenager (male or female) is out of the question. Yes, on an evening when he/she is running away from home, he/she may ask you for hospitality for a night, but you don't have any trouble explaining to him/her that it's only temporary, because otherwise you'd both have the juvenile police on your heels, and he/she understands that very well he/she doesn't want the cops to interfere any more than you do.

So here's to midday-two o'clock, five to seven, Wednesday afternoons; here's to days when teachers go on strike; here's to the fleeting, burning hours. It's true that we pay a price for these enchanting hours. The punishment for child lovers and pederasts is the time spent waiting. The necessary clandestinity, the impossibility of sending a telegram, of telephoning (except in the rather rare cases where the lover is a friend of the kid's family), the lack of autonomy of the young kids always at the mercy of the parents' decision ("this weekend, we're going to the country") or a teacher's decision ("today, you'll stay at school to finish your Latin translation") mean that the pederast is first and foremost a man (or woman, as there are also female pederasts, women who love kids) who waits.

Waiting at home, watching the stairs for the sound of your darling's footsteps, waiting at the school gate, waiting at the cinema, waiting at the metro station, waiting at the Luco, waiting. And if the little figure is slow to appear, the hand crushing your stomach, the heart racing, what's happened to him/her, is he/she ill, has he/she had an accident, has his/her mother found out, dreadful uncertainty. For a nervous emotional person, it's hell. But hell is a drug, and we wouldn't want to do without it for the world, because *when the child appears*, pink in the cheeks, a little out of breath from running, we are rewarded supremely, and anguish gives way to the most delirious happiness. "You've come, my darling child! You have come, with the third night and the third dawn" (Theocritus, *The Beloved*).

After love come the tender reproaches :

"Why didn't you come earlier? You told me you'd be here at two!"

"I had to walk here, I didn't have a metro ticket..."

“Why didn’t you phone? You know how crazy I get when you’re late!”

“I didn’t have the money to buy a token, and I couldn’t phone you from home, my parents didn’t take off...”¹²

“What did you tell them?”

“That I was going to Molitor, to skate. But I have to be back by seven...”

It’s obvious that men who go out with models, press attachés, “brilliant” women, don’t experience this kind of misfortune. Yet I don’t envy them, I know that I’ve got the better end of the deal, and that it won’t be taken away from me.

The implacable thing about adolescent love is that you feel an everlasting disgust for the others. Once you’ve held in your arms, kissed, caressed and possessed a thirteen-year-old boy or a fifteen-year-old girl, everything else seems bland, heavy and insipid. Socrates felt as an electric shock just touching a pretty kid’s bare shoulder. With my eyes closed, I can tell with my fingertips whether a breast, a stomach, a back or a calf belongs to a very young person. That marvellous skin of the under-sixteen’s, warm, velvety, smooth, perfumed, tasty, compared to which any other skin texture seems greasy, rough or dry. There have been times in my life when I’ve had a very young woman, and then an older woman, one over twenty. Well, when I was in bed with the new woman, I couldn’t get the memory of the little girl out of my mind. What an overwhelming comparison!

One argument often put forward in favour of older women is their alleged know-how - know-how that teenage girls lack. As Montherlant’s Don Juan explains to Le Commandeur, “there are the very young and there are the very expert”. That’s a joke. In love, there are those who are gifted and there are those who are not, full stop. At sixteen, one girl is divine in bed, while at twenty another is just a flask. I have memories of almost nightmarish pageant sessions with a twenty-four year old girl, beautiful, whom I loved dearly, who before me had already had lovers, yet who was borrowed, inhibited beyond belief. All she could do was spread her thighs and wait for things to happen. She never took the initiative, never caressed her body in a sensual way, obviously a man’s

¹² This book was written before the mobile phone was invented... (Note written in 2005.)

body didn't interest her or excite her, it rather embarrassed her. A real log. We stayed together for several months, during which time I tried to teach her the rudiments of the *gentle art*, telling myself that my predecessors were brutes who only knew how to get her drunk and hadn't taught her anything. All in vain. After six months, she was as inactive and ineffective as the first day. Wearily, I gave up. On the other hand, the two most sensual people I'd ever met in my life, the most gifted in bed, are a boy of twelve and a girl of fifteen. As for the fifteen-year-old girl, never has anyone given me so much pleasure, never have I had such a gifted pupil. At first she knew nothing, but her innocence was matched only by her curiosity, and this combination of ingenuity and complacency was infinitely voluptuous. She soon became a fantastic lover, caressing and posturing in ways that no one had done before, no one had ever done before. A woman of twenty-five has her modesty, her repugnance, her habits. As an adolescent, everything seems natural to her, because everything is new. My dear Casanova would not contradict me, who had countless mistresses of thirteen or fourteen years of age, and who one day had a delicious blowjob given to him through the grille of a convent parlour (hat's off to him!) by an *eleven-year-old boarder*.¹³

Naked under the sheets, we play at making a shelter, like schoolchildren who read secretly in their beds at night.

Taking advantage of her parents' absence, we made love for the first time in her nursery, in her little bed, among her dolls. Then we took a shower together.

Her chirping, before and after cuddling.

"Us kids..."

"When I was little, two years ago..."

N (girl, 15) sees a photo of Y (boy, 14) at my house. She grabs the photo.

"He's really cute! She kisses the photo."

"What did you do with him? The same things you did with me?"

"I'll explain it to you one day, when you're older..."

"If you'd met me when you met him, would you have wanted the three of us to sleep together?"

¹³ Casanova, *Mémoires*, VII, 13.

A thirty-year-old woman is reassuring, it suits those who are looking for a mother in a lover. I'm not looking for a mother in a lover, I'm looking for a child. Ergo those under sixteen.

Pederasty, the only possible form of fatherhood for someone who is reluctant to start a family. Special fatherhood, but fatherhood all the same. I stand before the kids I love like Athos stood before Raoul de Bragelonne at the age of fifteen: "Lessons are a lot for a child, an example is better. I set him an example, d'Artagnan. The vices I had, I corrected myself; the virtues I didn't have, I pretended to have..."

A woman in her thirties has seen it all, known it all, experienced it all. Nothing can surprise her any more. She is determinedly blasé. A sixteen-year-old girl is constantly amazed. A book, a walk, a raspberry ice cream, everything is a celebration for her. And this joy of initiation is not a one-way street, it's reciprocal: it was a sixteen-year-old boy who introduced me to Janis Joplin; it was a fifteen-year-old girl who taught me to love Cubist painting.

To initiate comes from the Latin verb *inire*, which means to *saillir* (in reference to a male), hence *to get to know a girl*, but also *to take charge of the auspices, to initiate into mysteries*. It was in this sense that I wrote, in *Comme le feu mêlé d'aromates*: "For me, taking part in the sacraments of the Church and making love give me the same feeling of divine-human fulfilment". Today, I'll be more specific. Sleeping with a thirty-year-old woman is fun. Sleeping with a child is a hierophanic experience, a baptismal ordeal, a sacred adventure. The field of consciousness expands, the "flaming ramparts of the world" (Lucretius) recede. A Western mind may find this hard to understand, but Makavejev, like me, who is steeped in Orthodoxy, when he depicts a woman who seduces a ten-year-old boy in *Sweet Movie*, chooses as her accompaniment one of the most celestial chants of the Eastern Church's vespers service, *Nynié otpouschaïeschi...*, "Now, Master, let Your servant go in peace..."

For the religious mind, to make love with a child is to celebrate the divine liturgy, epiclesis, communion of body and blood, dithyramb of the Lord Dionysus.

LETTER FROM THE LITTLE GIRL
TO THE NAUGHTY MAN

Mr Lover, surprise, I wake up in my little bed, and at the tip of my fingers, at the tip of my breasts, in the hollow of my stomach, your perfume, You, You, the One, I love you, I think of you, of us, on Monday we'll make love. I really want to be in your arms, I caress my stomach, my shoulders, my thighs, imagining that it's your skin that I feel under my fingers, or that it's your hand that's caressing me. I desire you, I want you - very much. I want you to take me in your arms, to lie me down on the bed where we've loved so many times, to hold me close to your chest. I want to kiss you, your mouth so soft, so warm, so deep. I love pressing my mouth to your lips, savouring you, oh! I'd like you to stand in front of the candle like last Sunday and I'd undress you with my lips. I kneel before you, I hold your waist in my hands, I take your desire rising in my mouth, it's warm and soft against my tongue, I love caressing you, I want to caress you a thousand and one nights, I want to lose myself in your desire, I love you. In your turn, you kiss me and caress me all over, for a long time, tirelessly, you penetrate me, your body becomes harder, your eyes bluer, my golden archangel, you make me die of pleasure.

IMMATURITY

For anyone who, like me, has studied the sages of the East and Greco-Roman antiquity since adolescence, the love of children is in itself neither a good nor an evil, but something indifferent, *adiaphoron*. In the third book of his *Pyrrhic Sketches*, Sextus Empiricus summarises the thinking of the Stoics on this point as follows: "Zeno, head of the Stoic school, says in his talks on the education of children that you can have carnal relations with children you like as well as with children you don't, with girls as well as with boys...". I totally subscribe to this opinion. However, when in doubt, I'm impressed by the pseudo-scientific literature on the subject. Is liking people under sixteen a bad thing? I put the question to Roland Jaccard, whose work on Melanie Klein is authoritative. Here is a fragment of his answer:

"It's not being attracted to very young people that would seem to me to be a bad sign. Having said that, psychoanalysis (in whose name a lot of nonsense is written - essentially to justify one's own emotional and intellectual prejudices) is not a mental police force. Or, if it is, it is without any power to repress: it even accepts that no one is attracted to anyone. Its project lies elsewhere: in a better understanding of what drives us. We are all pursued by an erotic imagination; psychoanalysis, properly understood, merely sheds light on a scene - that of desire - that we generally prefer to leave in the dark."

As we saw earlier, reactionary medicine explains this taste for *pueri delicati* by genetic anomalies. I think it more serious to think, with Professor Albeaux-Fernet, that pederasty has no endocrine basis, but that it has its origin in certain psychic disturbances of puberty (passionate friendship for a classmate, divorced parents, abusive mother, etc.), exerted on a more or less accentuated neurotic temperament: it is "an autoerotic fixation occurring in the ambiguous period of adolescence in the form of narcissism."¹⁴

If this *fixation* is received by society as a scandalous deviation, it is because it expresses a rejection of adulthood, a rejection of maturity, a radical questioning of the "you shall be a man, my son" that is the foundation of our entire Promethean Western civilisation. Adolescence is an age of rupture and challenge, a time for breaking away. To remain an

¹⁴ Cf. Le Monde, 7 May 1974 issue.

adolescent, psychologically and emotionally, is to say that you are determined not to play the game, not to join in the social comedy. Here we find my other fixed ideas: marginality, bohemianism, solitude... The pederast, the lover of the very young, boys and girls, is doomed to an existence as a rebel, an outsider, a heretic, an existence that constantly thumbs its nose at the grown-ups, their worries, their ambitions, their way of life. His passions don't prevent the under-sixteen lover from making a work of art; on the contrary, they carry that work, inspire it, nourish it; but they protect him from the temptation of respectability, of false seriousness, of the "career", of the leaden arse. At the age of sixty, Sophocles had his coat stolen by a boy with whom he had just made love on the grass on the outskirts of Athens.

Homosexuals are the ones who rush headlong into this temptation to respectability. Hence their lack of sympathy for pederasts, with whom they are often confused and who, they say, compromise them. Homosexuals face virtually no risk in France, where love between consenting adults is not considered a criminal offence; but that's not enough for them: they want society to recognise, admit and accept them; they want honourability and security, a smile from their concierge and academic honours, a certificate of good conduct and a marriage contract.

These demands, these nostalgias are respectable, and it is indeed important, to use an example dear to Jean-Louis Bory, that the worker at Renault can love his line mate without incurring the mockery of his buddies, the persecution of those around him. I myself have no vocation to martyrdom, and sometimes I have whiffs of regret that I don't live in a society that is less coarse and more refined than ours, like Megara in the time of Theocritus:

"Inhabitants of Nicaean Megara, so skilful at handling the oar, live happily, you who have honoured with the rarest prize this Diokles of Attica, whose love for young children was an ardent passion. Every year, at the beginning of spring, the young boys gathered around his tomb vie for the prize of the kiss; and he who knows how to place his lips most lovingly on them returns to his mother crowned with flowers. Happy is the one among the children who is the arbiter of these kisses!"

Surely it is not such crowns that today's mothers are prepared to see adorn the foreheads of their young sons. And yet, I believe that our era is as favourable as any other to our happiness and the indulgence of our

passions. The approval of society? I couldn't care less. It's in hiding, in danger, in transgression that I find my balance, my health, my joy. One of the charms of under-sixteen love is that it's hidden. The day when we'll be seeing men and women kissing twelve-year-olds on the lips on the front pages of magazines, in the cinema, in the street, everywhere, and I'll probably have a lot less fun flirting with young boys and girls. And then, on that day, "the young boys whose vain beauty seduces men and gods", as an anonymous epigram in *The Greek Anthology* puts it, seeing themselves courted and adored, will quickly become as captious, cruel and unbearable as they once were in Athens or Rome, at least according to the poets who often complain about their demands and their disdain. If in our society very young boys and girls are an enchanting business, it's because adults are not interested in them, because they are unloved kids who are not even aware that they are objects of desire and love. So I have no nostalgia for the official status of pederasty. Let the hunt for kids remain a dangerous and forbidden sport! The fewer naughty men who seduce little girls and boys, the better. The true lover, like the true collector, is the opposite of a proselytiser.

LETTER FROM THE LITTLE GIRL
TO THE NAUGHTY MAN

My beloved, my poet, my incense, my companion, we will make our way together. You made me discover everything, you know, love, pleasure, tenderness, you revealed the world to me through myself, you revealed yourself to me in all your splendour. You made me realise that I exist, that I am a human being, a woman.

I'm a stranger in my mother's house, she tells me I'm a parasite, that she can't wait for the day when I'll earn my own living, when I'll leave... I'm not at home here, it's true, I'm nowhere at home, my azure lover, except in your heart... How empty everything seems to me, and sad, and derisory, without purpose or cause, compared to what we experience together, you and me. Nothing else matters but us. I dream that you come to take me away, my Prince Charming, at midnight, you take me by the hand and we fly away, light, airy, wearing tulle...

SCOUTS ALWAYS READY

Solitary or in solidarity, none of us can escape this choice. There's a lot of talk about the "return to Jesus", about the craze for wilderness communities that are springing up in the United States and Europe. I don't think we should exaggerate the originality of this neo-evangelical movement. The nostalgia for the circle, the small group, where we keep each other warm, where we find friendship, or the illusion of friendship, is not new. It even predates Christianity, and the campfire around which we gather to eat, sing, pray, dance, love each other and sleep is as old as the hills. It's only natural, however, that the drought and boredom that blanket modern Western society should make teenagers want to form gangs, clans and new knighthoods even more than before. As the scout song says, "together, everything seems more beautiful".

Scouting.

Montherlant liked to declare, detaching his syllables: "All educators are pederasts!" And he added, half-seriously and half-jokingly: "Scouting has done invaluable service to the cause!"

As a kid, I never wanted to be a Scout, the military side of Scouting (the uniform, the flag, the gatherings, the "chiefs") sounded childish to me. Most of all, I didn't need that as an excuse to go out with the boyfriends I was in love with.

It wasn't until I was eighteen, when I left high school to go to university, suddenly exiled from the world of childhood and thrown into the world of adults, that I realised the value of organisations - movements of youth clubs, holiday camps, sports associations - which enable older children to stay in touch with younger ones.

In the Mediterranean basin, this contact with children is daily, permanent and poses no problem. The streets, shops and beaches are teeming with kids - and kids who are already independent, left to their own devices, free from their parents' supervision. From the Greek or Spanish kid who works as a cinema usher to the little Arab boy who replaces the maid or cook, children and teenagers play the same economic and social role in the life of the *Mare Nostrum* as their older sisters and mothers do north of the Loire.

A Parisian, if he has no family or educational reason to be in contact with children, can go for days, even weeks, without speaking to one of

them. If a bad fairy were to wave a magic wand and make the children of Naples or Alexandria disappear, these cities would be transformed into dead cities. In Paris, such a disappearance would go virtually unnoticed. Living abroad for part of the year, what strikes me every time I go back to the Latin Quarter is how few kids there are. And yet, with Henri-IV, Louis-le Grand, Montaigne, Fénelon, Saint-Louis, its communal schools and private classes, this area is privileged compared to other parts of Paris. Despite this, the streets seem to be given over to adults: forty-year-old men with attaché cases under their arms, bearded students with their political opinions slung over their shoulders - what a sad sight! The kids, on the other hand, are either invisible, in a hurry to catch the bus home, or escorted by their parents. The thirteen-year-old boy strolling along, alone, available, *flirtable*, is the rare bird. Still in the Luxembourg, I know of only *one* shop where the customer is served by children (two boys of about fifteen). As for the house where I live, if I meet a kid on the stairs, there's no way I'm going to invite him or her to come and read the first edition of *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets*, Marie-Laure or Julien at the home of the-guy-who-writes-books-you-know-whom-you've-seen-on-TV, Mum and Dad would find that suspicious. Made for grown-ups and by grown-ups, French society is a society where grace and beauty are sequestered.

Hence the usefulness of educational subterfuge. As I said, it was around my eighteenth year that I began to take an interest in youth movements, from which I'd previously stayed away. Of course, I didn't become a leader of anything - I liked my freedom too much - but I did lay the foundations: I made friends with a guy who ran a youth centre, I got to know a counsellor who invited me to the Easter and summer camps he was organising for the teenagers in his association, I was more assiduous than before in the Russian emigration circles, which are a breeding ground for young people (it was at an Orthodox youth congress that I was to meet the schoolgirl who was to become my wife), and I even obtained a membership card from one of my friends, a bigwig in a scout movement. As an active member, needless to say.

This fictitious card often got me out of trouble, particularly one summer in Venice, when an Austrian tourist, a rather rough man, took umbrage at my affair with his son, a ravishing twelve-year-old kitten, one of the most voluptuous kids I have ever known. The child and I used

an Anglo-Italian dialect that was enough for us to get along, but as I didn't know a word of German, which was the only language he spoke, there was no way I could sweet-talk Dad. Now, in this kind of adventure, it's all about talking down to the parents, wrapping them up in words and chocolate. What to do when faced with this suspicious, almost threatening person? In desperation, I brandished my card, with photo, stamp and all, under his nose. Like the paper torn from Milady that d'Artagnan presented to Richelieu ("It is by my order and for the good of the State..."), the fake chief scout card had a salutary effect. As soon as he saw it, his father ceased to be surprised that his son was always so busy with me; he became friendly and smiled: in his eyes, my status as a professional teacher justified the interest I took in his son, and if he had caught me sodomising him, he would have thought it was one of those great educational "games" that scouts are so good at. "Glory to make oneself loved" (Chateaubriand). Diplomas to love with impunity.

There aren't just fake scout leaders. There are also real scout books. I'd be showing ingratitude if I didn't mention the debt of affection I owe to the Scout novels by Serge Dalens, Jean-Louis Foncine or Jean-Claude Alain, whose characters have been intimately linked to my dreams, my fantasies and my life since I was a child. When I was fourteen, the heroes of the Swallow Patrol and the Wolf Patrol were as real and present in my daily life as my best school friends, my best horsemen (I was a keen rider at the time) and my closest friend. And when, the day after my military service, I decided with a friend - a boy of fifteen - to canoe down a river, it was the *Relais de la Chance au Roy* (a book I put above *Le Grand Meaulnes*) that we naturally chose. Ah! those balmy Franc-Comtois summer evenings when, after a tumultuous day on the waters of the Lost Country, we would bivouac by the river, in the shadow of the Château de Rambermont or the Abbey of Acey, and, stretched out around a log fire, we would welcome the warm night like a propitious deity... There were only two of us under the tent, but Xavier was invisibly beside us, and Jean-Pierre, and Chiquito de Ryes.

It is generally agreed that Scouting novels encourage teenagers to "sublimate", to experience as a "chaste" friendship what might otherwise have become a friendship based on sensuality. Some congratulate themselves on this result, others deplore it, like the editors of *Recherches* who bitterly denounce the "subtle repression of

homosexuality among young people” and the “fascist heterosexual ideology” [sic] of the *Signe de Piste* collection (which they rather amusingly rename “*Pine de Sylphes*”).

I take the opposite view. The novels in the *Signe de Piste* and *Jamboree* collections, far from “blocking the development of homosexual tendencies in an adolescent”, as *Recherches* claims, seem to me on the contrary to shed light on this tendency, to encourage it, to fix it. As for the drawings by Pierre Joubert or Michel Gourlier that illustrate these texts, depicting young boys with ravishing faces and sensually bare legs and torsos, they can help even the least pederast of readers to understand, and therefore admit, that a pretty boy is as attractive, disturbing and desirable as a beautiful girl. In *Le Foulard de sang*, Foncine extols the “real life” of fifteen-year-old boys, and mocks adults “who have nothing left in their hearts and nothing left in their heads”. This nostalgia for the fifteenth year, this pederastic fixation, I certainly didn’t need books to feel them: they were part of my nature, in my “genes” as Dr Zwang would say. It’s clear, however, that these couples formed by Éric and Christian (*Le Bracelet de vermeil*), Christian and Michel (*Le Royaume près de la mer*) or Loys and Jean-François (*Le Signe dans la pierre*), this literature in praise of adolescent friendships, this apotheosis of immaturity were not lacking when I myself was fifteen years old, to justify my tastes in my own eyes and confirm them.

If Prince Eric and (slightly differently) Tintin fascinate teenagers, it’s because they’re free, I mean, they don’t have parents on their back. For Tintin, it’s clear: with no family, no “studies”, no obligations of any kind, he can pack his suitcase overnight and set off to the ends of the earth. It’s a holiday for life, and a holiday full of exhilarating adventures and extraordinary encounters. For the heroes of Scout novels, it’s more nuanced, but here too the adults - parents, teachers, chaplains - don’t intrude on them much, appearing only furtively, a mere alibi. Every time the grown-ups have the temerity to interfere with the desires and friendships of the kids - Mlle de Terny in *La Tache de vin*, the bourgeoisie of the town in *La Bande des Ayacks* - they are fooled, ridiculed, debunked. All in all, it’s a triumph for the under-sixteens.

LETTER FROM THE LITTLE GIRL
TO THE NAUGHTY MAN

I'm your darling child, your schoolmistress, your little girl, and yet, when you're naked and helpless beside me, when you're sleeping and I'm watching, when you're resting with your head on my chest, I want to protect you, I'm afraid for you, I'm afraid of others, of people who write bad things about you, who gossip about you, I'm afraid they'll hurt you, and I want to make you a bulwark of my love.

Our love is so beautiful and so pure that it's awful to think that anyone (my mother, for example) could believe that we are doing evil. Gabriel, I love you, I love you, you are my kingdom, nothing else exists but you and me, take me away, far from wicked people.

MOTHERS

As far as mothers are concerned, there are two schools of thought.

The one that holds that the mother is enemy number one, the adversary to be eliminated or tricked.

The one that sees the mother as a potential accomplice, who needs to be tamed and brought into his camp.

I don't believe that one school is right and the other wrong. In love, every adventure has its rules: there are only individual cases. I've known complacent mothers; I've known others obsessed by the threats to their offspring's virtue.

Since a mother is the last person to know what is going on in the heart and head of her child, she is most often condemned to be fooled. The archetypal blind mother is that of the adolescent from Pergamum, in *The Satyricon*. Eumolpus, doing his military service in Asia, is staying with a local in Pergamum. His stay is very pleasant, both because of the comfort of the house and the marvellous beauty of his hosts' son. How to seduce the young boy without attracting the suspicions of his parents by being too considerate? Clearly, Eumolpus was not about to publish a book about under-sixteens. On the contrary, he had to persuade the family that his interest in the boy was not pederastic, but purely educational. So, "whenever there was talk at the dinner table of the love of handsome boys, I was so indignant, so austere in my seriousness that I would not allow anyone to sully my ear with such indecent talk, that everyone, especially his mother, regarded me as one of the seven wise men."¹⁵ This *mater praecipue* is sublime, it is to maternal blindness what Harpagon's "no dowry!" is to avarice: it sums it up and expresses it in its entirety.

The complicit mother is rarer. But she does exist. In February 1744, Casanova arrived in Ancona from Rome. At the inn where he stayed, he met a family: the mother, an actress, and her four children: Cécile and Marine, two girls aged twelve and eleven, a boy of about fifteen called Petronius, and the eldest, Bellino, "a ravishing beauty who could not have been more than seventeen". The day after their meeting, Petrone, the fifteen-year-old boy, applied a "voluptuous kiss with half-open mouth" to Casanova's lips, but the Venetian did not push his luck in this direction. Instead, on the same day, he flirted with the girls, aged twelve

¹⁵ Petronius, *The Satyricon*, LXXXV, translation by Ernout, slightly modified.

and eleven, They're like "real live rosebuds", and he has sex with them, successively, on the following two nights. As for the older brother, Bellino, Casanova courted him passionately and wanted to check with his hand whether he was a boy or a girl in drag. Bellino tells him that this verification is pointless: "You are in love with me whether I am a girl or a boy, regardless of my sex". Bellino, who is a girl, will become Casanova's mistress in the same way that the schoolboy from Pergamon became Eumolpus's lover, but what is remarkable about this adventure in Ancona is the smiling, indulgent and amused complicity of the mother, who, in the space of a few days, sees her four children, aged between eleven and seventeen, parade through Casanova's arms without feeling the slightest remorse, without even (and this is even more extraordinary) feeling bitter that she, an actress, is not being courted by the indefatigable seducer. Pederasts the world over should raise a statue of her in marble and gold.

A father will be proud of his young son's first venereal exploits ("You're quite a lad, aren't you! You've got a lot to live up to! You've been trained really well!"), whereas a mother will find it hard to shake off a feeling of jealousy at her daughter's entry into the world of love. Few mothers agree to step aside, to give way to their daughters. Go and explain to a thirty-five year old woman that her fourteen-year-old daughter is more desirable than she is, and you'll see how you'll be received!

The mother who angrily tells her daughter: "You're crazy to go out with a guy twenty years older than you! He's going to stop you from being a teenager!" is a woman who considers herself, rightly or wrongly, still fuckable, and who can't stand her daughter having a man in her bed that she'd like to have in hers; it's the hatred of the badly-fucked woman for the one who's getting off; it's the jealousy of the declining woman for the woman at the dawn of her life; it's the possessiveness of the abusive mother who feels her child slipping away from her.

This mother wants to be, and no doubt believes herself to be, a woman of progress. She reads the left-wing press and speaks of Reich with great ease at dinner parties; but when her fifteen-year-old daughter goes out with a gentleman, the insults and threats immediately follow. Beneath the cracked veneer of progressivism, the petty-bourgeois woman, the jealous wife, the abusive mother - a character who might

seem to be on the verge of extinction, but who, despite changing mores, remains alive and kicking.

Initially, she claims to want to “protect” her daughter, but when I push her, she ends up admitting to me, between two hysterical imprecations, that her repressive behaviour is dictated neither by maternal love nor by educational concern, but by her “good pleasure” [sic], her refusal that her daughter should experience a very beautiful, very luminous love, when nobody loves her, nobody hugs her. She has lived her whole life under the hospices of sexual misery, and would like the same for his daughter (“No! You won’t be happier than I was! No! You won’t taste the happiness I haven’t known!) A pitiful and dreadful spectacle.

I have no regard or respect for that ghoul called maternal love.

“I love you, so you belong to me” is the true face of maternal love. Don’t tell me it’s beautiful. It’s monstrous.

I read in *Tout*, a special issue on Mother’s Day (7 June 1971): “We are led to believe that we love in our families, and all hell breaks loose. The family is the first lid on the boiling point of our desires”.

I took part in a debate on teenage love organised by *Elle* (1st October 1973). There were seven of us around the microphone, including a charming mother, Mrs B. She talked about her two young sons, aged fourteen and sixteen, both “very handsome”, and said:

“I leave them free, because I want them to be happy, but I would never accept anyone trying to influence them, in any area whatsoever. In particular, I would become very nasty if an adult dragged them into a homosexual affair.”

This statement is exemplary. Maternal genius *in vivo*. Mrs B. leaves her children “free”, but this respect for their freedom does not go so far as to authorise them to choose the way they want to love, to live their sexuality the way they want to live it; Mrs B. wants her children to be “happy”, but cannot bear the idea that this happiness might come from someone who is neither her nor her husband, from someone from outside, a stranger, an unknown person. Any “influence” from the outside is outlawed, “in any field whatsoever”. The terrorism of the closed, stifling greenhouse. The child, that ingot of gold locked in a safe. The family, that shitty bunker.

A widowed or divorced mother bringing up her son alone is less hostile to a friendship between the young boy and an elder than a mother with the potential to marry. As far as possible, I choose my boyfriends from broken, chaotic families, and I always find them good friends. For a single mother, the adversary is more likely to be the first mistress, the rival, the other woman who might take her son away from her, so she is often prepared to tolerate, or even encourage, a pederastic-type relationship between the kid and an older man, confident that such an adventure will not end in marriage.

This divorced mother lives with her two children, a fifteen-year-old girl and a thirteen-year-old boy, both very pretty. I sleep with the girl, but the mother is convinced that I have only one idea in mind: to get her son into bed with me.

“If he sleeps with your brother, I’ll kill him! she screams at her daughter.”

With the occasional graceful variation:

“If you see this guy again, I’ll kill you!”

Maternal love is like a good bullfight: it always ends with a kill.

What a pity that the children’s lover is more often than not reduced to clandestine, furtive contacts that don’t give him or her the time to do the kids as much good as he or she would like! Nothing could be more fruitful or more beneficial for an adolescent than to meet an older person who loves him or her, who takes him or her by the hand, who helps him or her to rediscover the beauty of the created world, the intelligence of beings and works, which helps them to discover themselves. If I were a parent, I wouldn’t hesitate for a moment to entrust my fifteen-year-old daughter or my thirteen-year-old son to the naughty man.

LETTER FROM THE LITTLE GIRL
TO THE NAUGHTY MAN

My very tender love, my little boy, my poet, your protective chest, your caressing hands, your peaceful eyes, I want to be your future, I want you always to be able to rest your cheek on my breast, on my heart that beats only for you, I love you, dawn of my life, you have made me discover love, a new world, I trust you, I trust us, I trust this passion that unites us so strongly, Before I met you, I could never have imagined that one day I would experience a love like this, I will never stop loving you, my love, my lover, I have only one desire, one goal, one point of reference, you, my love, you, the man of my life, my evening visitor, my lover on the eleventh of August for all eternity.

THE ULTIMATE CHILD

For me, the ultimate happiness would be to divide my time between creative solitude and the company of an old monk, a teenage girl and a young boy.

An old monk.

I love old people and I learn a lot from them. I love them all the more because our technological society despises and rejects them. Our contemporaries walk backwards towards death, puffing out their chests and tucking in their stomachs. In the past, only the women of the world and the demi-monde had their skin tightened; today, they are imitated by men, the young dynamic executives, who even on their deathbed make the grimace of youth - this divinity of our time.

It is the radiant old age that noble civilisations offer for our respect and attention: the wise old man of pagan and Christian tradition, the guru, the geronte, the staretz who teaches and enlightens.

The gentleness and gravity of the faces of the holy old men on the icons of the Christian East, the fire of the Word that springs from the Taboric whiteness of the hair, eyebrows and beard, that magnificent adjective by which the Church identifies old age with beauty: *kalogeros*.

The Church. At the moment, I'm a long way from it. A reader of *Isaïe réjouis-toi*, twenty-six years old, Orthodox, wrote to me: "How can you so demolish everything you have loved, insult God in your body and in your mind, why this desperate insolence? Your novel makes me think, irresistibly, of Dostoyevsky's description of the Russian peasant, indifferently capable of setting fire to his village or going on a pilgrimage for the salvation of his soul; and capable of both at the same time".

What could I say to this young woman, except that I had deciphered the icon of Christ on a human face. An icon that was not only a face, but also a window to the Light. Through my own fault, my own unconsciousness, my own folly, the icon became obscured, hidden, and I sank into the night. *Isaïe réjouis-toi* is the story of this descent into darkness, this descent into hell.

Having broken with the Church, abandoned by my spiritual father who, since reading this novel, has given me no further sign, distanced from all liturgical and sacramental life, I nevertheless persist in believing that this nostalgia for the adolescent boy or young girl who is the

cornerstone of my work and my life, this pursuit of the ultimate Child, this quest for a guardian angel who, reconciling the Byzantine disputants, would be boy and girl together - that this quest, that this quest, this pursuit, this nostalgia remains, despite everything, paradisiacal nostalgia, nostalgia for Christ, born of Woman and Spirit, virgin adolescent who transfigures opposites, divinised sex, rediscovered integrity, plenitude, primordial androgyne, descended to the depths of hell to raise me from the dead, like the blessed child who one August evening placed her fresh hand on my burning forehead.

Valerius Maximus tells us that Pindar fell asleep one day, his head in the lap of a young boy he loved, and never woke up again. My beloved child, my star, my crown, at the Elysian hour when the gates of mercy will open before me, this is how I would like to be *seized*, your naked skin against mine, your gaze so tenderly bent over me, your arms brushing my shoulders with the supreme gesture of blessing and forgiveness.

Marrakech - Paris - Villasimius, January-June 1974.

AFTERWORD

PREFACE TO THE 2005 EDITION OF
Les Moins de seize ans,
Text followed by
Les Passions schismatiques.

Les Moins de seize ans and *Les Passions schismatiques* are confessions, but they are also pamphlets; and the pamphlet is a literary genre which, because it is linked to the state of morals, ages quickly: the blazes cause a stir when they are published, but as the years pass they no longer frighten anyone, their scandalous paradoxes gradually metamorphosing into basic truths accepted by everyone. Sometimes it's the author himself who, as he matures, recants his youthful audacity and decides not to republish texts with which he no longer identifies.

Nothing of the sort here. Most of the ideas I express in these two books have not only failed to win over public opinion, but in 2005 they seem even more scabrous and untimely than in 1974 (when *Les Moins de seize ans* was published by Julliard) and 1977 (when Stock published *Les Passions schismatiques*). If I were a true leftist with a candid faith in a brighter tomorrow, I'd be stunned by the puritanical regression that is sweeping the entire planet. But I am only a part-time leftist, and I use the word "progress" only rarely, so it is distressing but not surprising for me to witness the triumph of the new world order of the bearded Mohammedans, the hairless parapets, the conservative George Bushes and progressive Ségolène Royals, the hysterical believers and atheistic Pharisees, bastards and sycophants.

Aside from that, rereading for this edition these works written some thirty years ago, I find them more truthful and necessary than ever. *Aut liberi, aut libri*: if our books are our children, then I am extremely proud of these two little ones. I don't deny them a single line, not a single word. Quite the contrary: I'm delighted that I published them at a time when cockroaches and quarrelsome people didn't rule the artistic life of our country, because today I wouldn't find a publisher for them and, what's worse, I wouldn't dare write them. Indeed, there are now forbidden subjects in France; and if I were to succumb once again to the titillations of polemics, I would refrain from evoking these cursed points, cautiously limiting myself to a few jabs at paunchy executives who go to the office on scooters, grannies on the bus who uncork bottles of mineral water

under your nose and drink from the neck like carters, back-packed bobos, irritating figures of fashionable silliness that, as far as I know, we still have the right to make fun of (it won't last) without being immediately dragged into court by the hounds of political (and sexual) correctness. Anecdotal themes, derisory in comparison with those, capital, that I deal with in this volume, but the time has come to be cautious. It's possible to republish scandalous books, since the law does not have retroactive effect, as the Civil Code explains; on the other hand, unpublished naughtiness, "given the weather conditions" as my beloved Baby Boom used to say, is out of the question.

Censorship is *una brutta bestia*; but there are worse things than censorship: self-censorship, whether conscious or unconscious. The pages that your publisher's lawyer asks you to cut out are unpleasant, but it doesn't matter: you put them in a safe place, knowing that sooner or later, in your lifetime or after your death, they will be published. On the other hand, the pages you decide not to write because they are too unsympathetic to conventional wisdom are lost forever.

Les Moins de seize ans and *Les Passions schismatiques*, published three years apart, form a whole, and since they have now finally been brought together in a single volume, I urge my readers to read the chapter on writing first. My gifts, my vital energy, my work, my love - from the time I first began to write to the last words I drew on my dying bed - I put them all at the service of the French language, and in my poems, my novels, my stories, my diary and my essays I had only one concern, only one aim: to create beauty. "What is a writer?" I asked myself in *Les Passions schismatiques*, and I reply: "It's a sensibility shaped by writing, a universe supported by a style." Do you understand? The spirit is nothing until it becomes flesh: what counts is incarnation. On 16 January 1852, one of my masters (and accomplices), Gustave Flaubert, wrote to his lover Louise Colet: "There are neither beautiful nor ugly subjects, and one could almost establish as an axiom, from the point of view of pure Art, that there are none, style being in itself an absolute way of seeing things". They should ponder this essential sentence, the pitiful sycophants who write denunciatory letters to journalists, publishers and even academics (for want of being able to write to the Gestapo) in which, arguing my alleged depravity, they demand my banishment from society. The neo-inquisitors, the foot soldiers of the moral order, the

associations for the defence of young girls (repugnant residues of miscarriages from the puritanical leagues across the Atlantic) can shove their slimy vespers about my bad morals up their arses.

My passion for pure art doesn't prevent me from having ideas of my own, because I believe they are good, liberating ideas, and after the chapter on writing I'd like the readers (and pretty women readers) of this volume *nuovo di zecca* to take a dip in the one on Christ. My readers, and in particular the most feverishly anti-clerical among them, because I have the feeling that I am writing here about the divine, about transcendence, about truths that will make them see religion in a new, unpolluted light.

I have already said that the opinions expressed in these two books are still dynamite today. It's true, with two exceptions: my pages on women and on Russia in *Les Passions schismatiques*, no person of good faith in 2005 can deny their accuracy. What can I say, their accuracy! It is their prophetic nature that is at stake. From the fall of the Bolshevik regime to gay marriage, the day I wrote them, it was Cassandra herself who held the pen.

In love, I abhor brutality and coercion. If the death penalty were reinstated for paedophobes, that is to say, child rapists and murderers, I would not be moved by it (although I would point out that idiotic laws against philopedics can only incite weak minds to panic and commit violence). Fifteen-year-old Francesca, whose love letters are the jewel in the crown of *Les Moins de seize ans*, and who, in *Les Passions schismatiques*, is the "amazon" of genius I mentioned in the chapter on women, can testify to this, as can Marie-Élisabeth, aged fifteen, Olivier, aged [...¹⁶], Anne, fifteen years old, Fabrice, fifteen years old, Vanessa, fourteen years old, Véronique, sixteen years old, Aouatife, fifteen years old, Maud, seventeen years old, Justine, fifteen years old, not forgetting the young girls of full age and inoculated who have shared or are sharing my life, what I like is to charm, seduce, conquer and in bed only the reciprocity of pleasure and enthusiasm captivates me. Venal love is not my cup of tea, and I don't think many men have less recourse to it than I do. In countries where I don't speak the language, I'm reduced to the status of

¹⁶ My lawyer - what a fool! - an ink stain on this figure. For those curious enough to find out, I refer you to my novel *Ivre du vin perdu*, in which young Olivier inspired a charming character called Jean-Marc.

a dumb tourist, and if I haven't brought my biscuit with me, I'm sometimes forced to resort to mercenary cuddling ; whether it's the *pueri delicati* of Hikkaduwa or the little waitresses at Harrison Plaza, the atmosphere is always one of trust and kindness. Incidentally, the harshest opinion ever expressed about philopedic tourism was mine in *Les Passions schismatiques*. I abhor tourism in general, and sex tourism in particular. When I go on a trip, it's to escape Paris, the dispersal of Paris, the cold of Paris; it's to write, to create. Those who read my diary will know that 98% of my love life takes place in France; and that abroad I am infinitely more studious, chaste and absorbed in my work than I am in Paris. The love letters written to me by the young people who succeeded one another, and sometimes met, in my bed will testify after my death to the veracity of this diary and the passions I describe in it.

This gives me all the more freedom to protest against the dishonesty of those who antiphonously call paedophobe scoundrels "paedophiles" and confuse Anacreon, Parny or Byron with the perverts and killers who make the legal annals of the law such a big hit. I know a lot of green fruit lovers: they would never do the slightest harm to a child, many of them are benefactors to the adolescents they love, a real blessing, and to lump them in with rapists and murderers is a disgrace.

The young lover who is reading this preface over my shoulder as I write it exclaims: "I know Anacreon and Byron, but Parny? Who's Parny?"

Parny, *bellezza mia*, was a local poet whose first name was Evariste-Désiré. Born in the eighteenth century, died in the nineteenth, he thought for a while of becoming a Trappist monk, but very soon love of creatures took precedence over service to the Creator, and he became a naughty poet (celebrating the pleasures of the flesh being, incidentally, the best way of honouring a God who, tired of being pure spirit, became flesh and bone). He excelled in the elegiac genre and was nicknamed the French Tibullus. He was one of King Louis XVI's favourite authors and, when he was sixty, the Emperor Napoleon I, a lover of his erotic poems, gave him a pension. Long live the king, long live the emperor, and I hope that the Republic would, if the occasion arose, celebrate a writer who penned these deliciously invigorating verses:

Love at thirteen, you say,

*It's too early: eh, what does age matter?
You need to be wise,
To taste the pleasure of madness*

On under-sixteens, on relationships, on God, on style, on the persecutors of spiritual freedom, on resistance to cretinisation, on the fruitfulness of schism, which are the themes of this volume, I write my truth. I'm delighted that this truth is the antithesis of what the current ideology and a bewildered public opinion with cottage cheese in its veins profess, because it's proof that I'm on the right track. Happy reading, then, and *viva la libertà!*

G.M.