

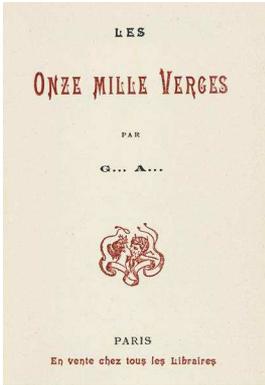
Colette Colligan et Cécile Loyer

Who Was The
Mysterious Underground Publisher
of
Guillaume Apollinaire?¹

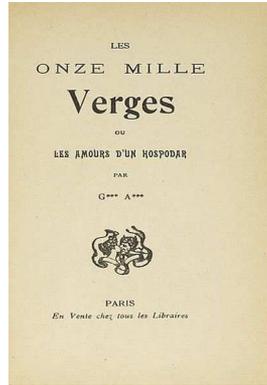
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The first edition, c. 1907



The second edition, 1908.

From an early age, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) was passionate about forbidden literature. Known for his use of the *vers libre*, after Laforgue, Kahn, Krysinska or Régnier, and an avant-garde author in the artistic field at the beginning of the 20th century, he was also throughout his career a curious man and an avid lover of erotic literature. We know that he is the well-known author of two erotic novels, *Les Onze mille verges* and the *Les Exploits d'un jeune Don Juan*, which were published *sub rosa* around 1907.² Apollinaire worked closely with the Briffaut brothers as collector, editor, translator, and researcher, for the libertine series *Les Maîtres de l'amours* which included works by the Marquis de Sade, Andréa de Nerciat, and Pietro Aretino. With the assistance of éroto-bibliographical companions, he compiled the first bibliography of *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (1913), a collection of books seized by the French government beginning in 1836. He also had a strong taste for the erotic literature of his time. In his personal library, which can now be found in its entirety in the Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris, he created his own little *enfer* with the latest clandestine books published in French and other languages. Although he did not hide as an author, Apollinaire

never acknowledged his two erotic novels, *Les Onze mille verges* and the *Les Exploits d'un jeune Don Juan*, which were published only under his initials. The origin and production of these novels remain a mystery to this day. Who was the publisher and what was his relationship with the author? Faced with this mystery, the shadow of an unknown printer/publisher began to appear. Following new research, we unveil here for the first time the true portrait of this publisher, who hid behind a reputation as a little pirate of unknown origin. A thorough search of the French archives also allows us to throw a new light on this secret literary culture, and on what we might call the *bibliographie sentimentale*, which fascinated Apollinaire.

It is in 1913 that we find the first written trace of this mysterious publisher. The bibliography of the *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, compiled by the three friends Guillaume Apollinaire, Louis Perceau and Fernand Fleuret, reveals partially his family name a few times, abbreviated to these three letters: G...ch.. This person, mainly characterized in *L'Enfer* as a clandestine printer of *contrefaçons* and the occasional publisher of original works, was not recognized as the publisher of Apollinaire's two infamous novels until half a century later.³ In 1978, when he updated the bibliography of *L'Enfer*, Pascal Pia finally revealed this name, which was already circulating among bibliographers: Apollinaire's pornographic publisher was called "Gaucher" and worked as a freelance printer in Vanves and Malakoff, suburbs of Paris.⁴ Peter Mendes, an English bibliographer, adds a new dimension to the publisher's image, thanks to a letter from Henri Michaux, an erotic bookseller with whom he was in contact. In this letter, he described Gaucher as an itinerant broker selling the books he carried in his suitcase. In addition to this letter, Mendes discovered a profile that could correspond to Gaucher's description in the autobiography of an expatriate collected in *The Memoirs of Montparnasse*⁵ in which

appears a *sous le manteau* publisher by the name of Elias Gaucher.⁶ Apollinaire's biographers and literary critics followed this lead and, by repeating the same information, "Elias Gaucher" is to this day regarded as the presumed publisher of Apollinaire.

However, our research revealed that the biographical information on "Gaucher" collected over the past half-century was incorrect.

Digging in the archives

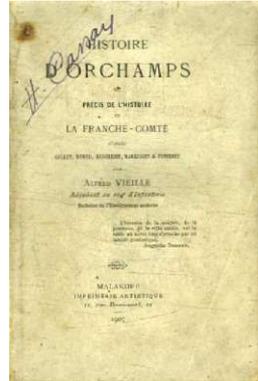
It is Apollinaire himself who sets us on the path. The Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris has an important collection on Apollinaire, coming from his first biographer, Pierre-Marcel Adéma, in which there are unpublished proofs of *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale*. These proofs include handwritten explanatory notes, as well as text elements, that do not appear in the printed version of the bibliography. The codes that replace the names of some publishers are not yet established throughout the volume, so that the full names of pornographers are sometimes unveiled, as well as details, hitherto unknown, of their clandestine activities. In these proofs there is a remarkable paragraph, which was removed from the printed version and thanks to which, for the first time, we can establish an explicit link between the mysterious publisher and the *Les Onze mille verges* of Apollinaire :

Above all, this G... produced counterfeits, but he published a few original works, some English and German novels, and an excellent fantasy, *Les Onze mille verges*, by G. A. (The copy is called *Les Onze mille verges, ou les amours d'un hospodar*, and it is this extended title which appears to be the correct one). A French novel mixed with verse, it is said to contain the first libertine poems in *vers libre* and it is one of the most amusing erotic productions. It was written immediately after the

Russo-Japanese war for, as we can see, mention is made of General Anatoly Stessel.⁷

A few pages later, the full name of the editor is revealed: it is “Gauché.” We also learn that he was established in Malakoff and the brother-in-law of Charles Hirsch, another clandestine publisher based in Paris, known for his clandestine edition of the French version of Teleny (1934), a homosexual novel he attributed to the anglo-Irish writer Oscar Wilde.⁸ The proofs of the *Bibliographie de l’Enfer* reopened the question of the identity of the publisher of Apollinaire. They also paint a very different picture of the man. Rather than a mere pirate, we learn that we are dealing with a cosmopolitan, avant-garde publisher.

Long before the discovery of this new information, Jean-Pierre Dutel had located the printing house of this publisher at 11 rue Danicourt in Malakoff, thanks to an advertising card for the l’Imprimerie Artistique du Commerce. Although it did not bear the name of the printer, Dutel noticed that it had the same typographical characteristics as the books produced by Gauché.⁹ By cross-referencing several references, we are able to confirm Dutel’s hypothesis. The fact that the l’Imprimerie Artistique at Malakoff also published and printed a book on the Franche-Comté by Alfred Vielle, having the same typographical ornaments as *Les Onze mille verges*, finally convinced us.¹⁰ Finally, it was the *l’Annuaire Déséchaliens* of paper makers and printers of 1906,¹¹ where a typographer named “Gauché” with the same address on rue Danicourt was listed, which naturally prompted us to direct our research towards Malakoff.



An officielle Gauché publication

Thanks to the address of the Malakoff print shop discovered by Dutel, evidence of the mysterious printer-publisher was finally found. A 1911 census of the town of Malakoff indicated that a certain “Jules Eugène Gauché” lived at 13 rue Danicourt, a stone’s throw from the printing house.¹² After establishing the true spelling of the Gauché family name, we were able to deepen our research. Indeed, for years it had been established that his name was Gaucher. Who would have thought that an acute accent and a simple address could have revealed the entire life of a man whose existence had remained until then so controversial?

The census and civil records are truly fascinating. Thanks to the digitization of the registers carried out by the archives services of the local authorities of France and their free online access, the essential elements to recount the story of a life are now within easy reach. Taking advantage of this wealth of information, gathered from town hall to town hall, we were able to rewrite the story of Jules Eugène Gauché.

It all starts in November 1854 at Attigny (Champagne-Ardenne region). Jules Eugène Gauché was born there, and his birth certificate is one of the few documents that display his name in full.¹³ It does not reappear in the archives until 1911. Gauché then moved to Malakoff for a few years, where he worked as a printer under Mme Angéline Leboucher, the young widow of M. Bernard Mamet, and owner of the print shop at 11, rue Danicourt. The Mamet/Leboucher family seems to have always been immersed in the world of books. Indeed, the woman typographer comes from a long line of book sewers, and had a printer for a husband. The couple gave birth in 1891 to little Marguerite, who grew up in this bookish world and became a printer herself. After the death of her husband, the widow Leboucher left Paris, moved to Malakoff with her family, and quickly became the owner of the printing house on Rue Danicourt, where Gauché worked. Employee and boss lived a

few steps away from each other and worked under the same roof. The birth certificate of Mme. Leboucher's first son in 1904, born nine years after her husband's death, reveals that Gauché and Leboucher had more than professional relations. Indeed, in 1920, sixteen years after his birth, Gauché officially acknowledged René Ulysse Charles Leboucher as his son, changing his name to Gauché. Madame Leboucher gives birth to a second son in 1906 that Gauché does not recognize although it is probably his son.¹⁴ Gauché remained at the same address as Madame Leboucher until her death in 1918. It is he who registers her death, in the absence of his children. On the death certificate, he is described as the *ami imprimeur* of the deceased.¹⁵ This love story did not involve a marriage; nevertheless, we shall see that some clues, left by Gauché himself, indicate to us the importance of Mme. Leboucher in his life and affairs.

On 9 November 1922, Gauché died at his home in Malakoff.¹⁶ It took more than a century to discover the singular love story of this mysterious man. The Gauché/Leboucher couple lived and worked in the suburbs and managed in secret one of the most active clandestine businesses of the early 20th century, publishing more than eighty surreptitious editions. Their greatest achievement was to see the publication of two novels by Apollinaire, who was to become one of the greatest authors of the time.

Deciphering a *bibliographie sentimentale*

Even though some pieces of the puzzle are still missing, yet we possess enough information – documentary and well as bibliographical – to better understand the clandestine cultural context in which the publisher of Apollinaire's erotic novels operated.

The discovery of the link between Gauché and Angéline Leboucher is by far the most significant. On the clandestine editions that have been attributed to the Malakoff print shop, we often find the brand “G. Lebaucher, libraire-éditeur, Montreal (Canada).”¹⁷ Until now, the bibliographers thought it was a homonym for Gaucher, but the information we have gathered indicates quite clearly a combination of Gauché and Leboucher. This mark was not only a means of hiding and mystifying the authorities, but also a secret code for their relationship. This latest finding does suggest that the couple, and not just Gauche, was involved in this pornographic undertaking, perhaps even including the family in the affair. Looking more closely at the status of Mme Leboucher, the possibility that a woman is at the head of this pornographic business becomes entirely plausible. In fact, she was listed as Gauché’s boss and had the professional experience of her first husband, a printer, who died in 1895. This hypothesis brings new nuances to the social model of pornographic trade, which was previously thought to be predominantly male.

This brand of G. Lebaucher, much more than a secret code for the pair, is also the eternal inscription of their feelings, which is displayed openly on the title pages of their books. On the cover of the novel *Odor di Femina* (c. 1900–1904), as well as on other works bearing this mark, is printed a vignette representing a satyr who plays the flute under a banner whose letters have been erased. This vignette is an adaptation of the one used by Gay and Doucé, a Brussels couple who, a few decades earlier, published erotic French books. Originally, it was inscribed on the banner the phrase “Gay and Doux C’est”, a homonym combining their names with an expression of tenderness. Using this modified vignette in their own erotic editions, the Malakoff couple creates a link between their work and that of the Brussels couple, while tracing a path of gay and sweet feelings. Ann

Cvetkovich talks about a phenomenon of accumulation of feelings in sexual documents, as well as those that motivate the archivists of these documents.¹⁸ Thanks to the new information found in the archives, we can now partially decipher the feelings carefully encrypted by the bibliographic practices of pornographers such as Gauché and Leboucher.

The story of the meeting between Apollinaire, Gauché and/or Leboucher remains a mystery to this day. No records of the cases of these three characters could be found. However, we know that Apollinaire was familiar with this secret bibliographic culture and knew the booksellers active in it, such as Gustave Lehec, who is the subject of a portrait in *Le Flâneur des Deux Rives* (1918), and Charles Hirsch, who provided him with information for his bibliography of *L'Enfer*. In the small *enfer* of Apollinaire's personal library was a modest collection of books published by Gauché and Leboucher, as well as other underground publishers of the time.¹⁹ The *flâneur* and the Malakoff couple were part of different networks whose paths crossed regularly, but the nature of their encounters and their working methods remain a mystery. Their application in this secret culture and *bibliographie sentimentale* is the common denominator of these three personalities. We find in them a desire to build up for posterity this culture of forbidden erotic literature, while hiding it behind codes that only wait to be deciphered. In the encrypted bibliography of Apollinaire as well as with the bibliographic mark of "G. Lebaucher", the quasi-scientific impulse behind the need to create a bibliography undergoes a transformation. Instead of accumulating a simple list of titles, the bibliographer collects a collection of secret feelings. As we dig into the archives, we begin to decipher this clandestine bibliography and to see it as a record of the intimate and sentimental culture of pornography of the *Belle Époque*.

¹ The original French text was published in *Histoires littéraires, revue trimestrielle consacrée à la littérature française des XIX^e et XX^e*

siècles. Jan-March 2017 – vol. XVIII, n° 69, pp. [115]-124. *Translator's note.*

² *Les Exploits d'un jeune Don Juan* par G.A., Paris : En vente chez tous les Libraires ; *Les Onze Mille Verges* par G... A..., Paris: En vente chez tous les Libraires. [*Les Exploits d'un jeune Don Juan* is strictly speaking not by Apollinaire. It is actually Apollinaire's translation, or adaptation, of a German work, *Kinder-geilheit. Geständnisse eines Knaben*, published at Berlin in 1900. – *Translator's note.*]

³ Guillaume Apollinaire, Fernand Fleuret, et Louis Perceau, *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Bibliothèque des Curieux, 1919, p. 127. This is the second edition of this work; the first was published in 1913.

⁴ Pascal Pia, *Les Livres de l'Enfer du XVI^{ème} siècle à nos jours*, C. Coulet et A. Faure, 1978, vol 1, p. 241-42.

⁵ John Glassco, *Memoirs of Montparnasse*. Introduction by Leon Edel (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970). John Glassco (1909-1981) was a Canadian poet and novelist. *Translator's note.*

⁶ Peter Mendes, *Clandestine Erotic Fiction in English 1800-1930*, Scholar Press, 1993, p. 40-41.

⁷ Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Fonds Guillaume Apollinaire, 4-APO-0196 (RES), p. 175.

⁸ Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Fonds Guillaume Apollinaire, 4-APO-0196 (RES), p. 175,180.

⁹ Jean-Pierre Dutel, *Bibliographie des ouvrages érotiques publiés clandestinement en français entre 1880 et 1920*, Chez l'Auteur, 2002, p. 18-19,25, 654.

¹⁰ Alfred Vieille, *Histoire D'Orchamps et Précis de l'Histoire de la Franche-Comté*, Malakoff : Imprimerie Artistique, 1907.

¹¹ *L'Annuaire Déséchaliers: Répertoire des papetiers et imprimeurs*, E. Déséchaliers, 1906, p. 210.

¹² Archives & Patrimoine des Hauts-de-Seine, Recensement de Malakoff, 1911, p. 86-87.

¹³ Archives départementales des Ardennes, Registre des actes de naissances d'Attigny, 1854, p. 40.

¹⁴ Mairie de Paris, registre des actes de mariage de Paris 14^c, 1889, p.78-79 (Bernard Mamet et Angéline Leboucher). The certificate states that Mamet is a printer and Leboucher is a book sewer; Mairie de Paris, registre des actes de naissances de Paris 14^e, 1891, p.123 (Marguerite Mamet); Archives & Patrimoine des Hauts de Seine, registre des actes de naissances de Malakoff 1906, p.79-80 (Raymond Jules Leboucher).

¹⁵ Archives & Patrimoine des Hauts-de-Seine, registre des actes de décès de Malakoff, 1918, entrée n°380 (Angéline Leboucher).

¹⁶ Mairie de Paris, registre des actes de décès de Paris 14^{ème}, 1922, entrée n° 280 (Jules-Eugène Gauché).

¹⁷ At least thirty-one books were published under this imprint.

¹⁸ Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, Duke University Press, 2003, p. 239-71.

¹⁹ For a catalogue of the works in Apollinaire's library, see *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de Guillaume Apollinaire*, Editions du CNRS. 1983.