

PASCAL PIA

LETTRE
SUR LES
PREMIÈRES ÉDITIONS D'ÉROTIQUES
DE
PIERRE LOUÏS



Pascal Pia

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NOTE

The following is my translation into English of a letter written in March 1977 by Pascal Pia to an unnamed recipient. It was first published, in French, in 1985 at Muizon by William Théry as the first of an occasional series of plaquettes called “Lettres d’Ecrivains” appearing under the imprint of Éditions “A L’Ecart”. The edition was limited to 150 copies, 50 on *Hollande van Gelder Zonen* and 100 on 100 on *papier de Rives*. I am indebted for M. Michael Neal of Paris for generously providing me with my copy.



Pierre Louÿs

Dear Sir:

I thank you warmly for the bibliographical details in your letter. I don't have the Talvart-Place¹ bibliography, but it is in the "usuels"² room of the catalogues of the Bibliothèque Nationale, where it may be easily consulted. It's an extremely useful resource, but should be treated with caution because its authors sometimes include works which they've not actually seen for themselves and rely instead on bookseller's catalogues which can be undependable.

I am fairly familiar with the bibliography of the clandestine editions of Louÿs published between 1926 and 32 or 33, but I haven't collected these works myself, and the BN is far from having them all.

The original edition³ of the *Trois filles de leur mère* is the one printed in facsimile of the MS, which was sold, when it was published in 1926, by the bookseller Gaillandre.⁴ I have always thought that Gaillandre was merely the distributor of this edition, which was printed on specially manufactured paper whose watermark was the name of Pierre Louÿs, written backwards. The first typographical editions published after that is a large 8vo bound in brown wrappers, a copy of which I found by chance

recently on the quais, and an edition of large size, bound in blue or grey boards (my memories, a half-century old, are vague)⁵. The edition I found recently was printed by a clandestine publisher at Antwerp whose name I have completely forgotten, but who I saw once or twice about 1927-28.⁶ He was Flemish and his knowledge of French was weak.

Another edition I might mention was of German origin (Leipzig or Frankfurt).⁷ These two editions were certainly not circulated widely in France. Pieyre de Mandiargues,⁸ in his Preface to the Desforges edition, ignorantly assembles a series of complete untruths.⁹

The first edition¹⁰ of *L'Histoire du Roi Gonzalve* is the quarto published in 1927 and which has a frontispiece reproducing a page of the original manuscript. I arranged for the book to be printed at the expense of my friend Bonnel.¹¹ It was printed in Paris by a small, craftsman printer named Gaston Coquette and who had a workshop at 69, rue de la Glacière. Later, in 1931 or 1932, the same printer prepared for Bonnel an edition of *Gonzalve* in a smaller format, illustrated with etchings by Brouet. This edition is generally to be found in blue boards, but a score of copies were bound in full morocco by one of the best bookbinders of the day, Huser, who, because of the small size of the book, was able to use pieces of morocco left over from the bindings of quartos and folios he'd done for others. This explains why this edition is to be found bound in morocco of different colors, red, green, yellow, &c. These bindings alone would make the books expensive today because Huser's work is greatly valued by collectors.¹²

The first edition¹³ of the *Douze douzaines*, which must also have appeared in 1927, was published by a bookseller now dead named Robert Télrier. He was a Swiss, and located in Paris on the rue de l'Université, close to the rue de Saints-Pères, at the sign of "Au Lys rouge."

There were various editions of erotic poetry, which is to say various editions of different texts. The first¹⁴ was a 16mo, limited to just 60 or 75 copies, which was published in 1927 with the false imprint 'Liège,' and printed by Coquette for Bonnel, from the original manuscript loaned by a Raoul Simonson,¹⁵ a bookseller in Bruxelles, who'd had bought them from Bernard¹⁶ and resold them to a Belgian collector named Hayoit.¹⁷ This M. Hayoit, who owned, in Belgium, a chain of shops specializing in women's blouses along the same lines as the '100,000 shoes' chain in France, gave his consent to publish the MS pages that he had acquired, with the proviso that the edition would be extremely limited.

Later, in 1931 or 1932, Bonnel reprinted the same poems, but in a large quarto format with original lithographs by Vertès. I still have a copy of this edition which is dated "l'an I de la République Catalane" (it was after the abdication of Alphonse XIII and the creation, in Barcelona, of a Catalan "generalidad" presided over by colonel Macià). The text of this edition was printed at Paris by Massol on rue Tourloque, and the illustrations by Vertès by Mme Duchatel on rue Henri-Monnier.¹⁸(18)

*La Femme*¹⁹ appeared a little later (1936 or 1937). The publisher was Georges Briffaut, and it was edited by Perceau. I don't know who owned the manuscript and the drawings by PL which were used for this edition.

The first edition of *Pybrac* was published in 1927, and had as the imprint "Au Coq Hardi." The only illustration for it was an engraved vignette (by Foujita) which decorated the title page.

Later, Vertès himself illustrated and published another edition (in 1928), limited to 100 copies at most, and which had as the imprint "les sœurs des Ursulines à Narbonne", but it is at best a poor imitation and cannot be described as a counterfeit.

The original edition of the *Manuel de Civilité* was in 1926. It was the first erotic work by Louys to have the honour of

being printed. The publisher was [Simon] Kra. The title and the pages are bordered in coloured frames (red or blue, my memories are fuzzy).

The edition of *Aphrodite* in 2 volumes, plus a volume of notes and facsimiles, appeared in 1928. The text was printed by Coquette, but I no longer recall the name of the copper-plate printer who handled the illustrations, which were by a Russian artist named Serge Czerefkow. The manuscripts which were used to establish the text belonged to Jacques Lipschutz, a bookseller on rue Lamartine, who later moved to the place de l'Odéon. As he was Jewish, Lipschutz had the good sense to leave for the USA in June [19]40 where he died a few years later. But the publisher of this edition of *Aphrodite* was again my friend Bonnel, who'd had dealings with Lipschutz.

Poèmes erotiques inédits, published in 1947 rather than 1945 as stated, had a preface by Georges Hugnet (G.H.) and was published by a bookseller in Nice, and printed there. I don't know who did the illustrations, probably an artist in Nice of no great talent.

I will try to find and date the reprints of these various erotic works, but it will not be easy. The majority of the booksellers and brokers who could have informed me about the clandestine productions of the years 1935-36 (Lubineau, Briffaut, &c.) are now dead.

As you are interested in PL, I thought I should tell you right now that what I know came from a reliable source. Bonnel died in 1975, and no one after me would be able to give serious information on the first editions of erotica by Louÿs.

I knew Artaud around the time of his Parisien debut (1921-22), that is to say when he joined the Atelier Dullin and became friendly with Génica Athanassiou, but I confess that I tried to avoid him. As a drug addict he was watched on by police, or rather the police kept an eye on him to get their hands on the coke dealers. It would have been unwise for me to be in his

company. They would have tailed me, and Bonnel and I would have got into trouble.

I think I'll be seeing Régine Deforges again shortly, and I'll share with you anything I learn.

Kind regards

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NOTES

¹ *Talvert-Place* is the French national bibliography which, I am informed, has not progressed beyond the letter 'M'.

² "Usuels" refers to the free access, or open shelves, of the Library.

³ 'P.L. | TROIS FILLES | DE | LEUR MÈRE | [monogramme] AUX DÉPENS D'UN AMATEUR | ET POUR SES AMIS'. 4to (28 x 19 cm), 5 ff, 361 pages. White printed wrappers, reproducing the titlepage on the front cover. Translator's copy.

⁴ C. Gaillandre, a bookseller & publisher who, in the 1920s and 30s was located at 21, quai Malaquais, Paris 6e.

⁵ The large-format edition of *Trois filles de leur mère* described as being "bound in blue or gray boards" cannot be identified.

⁶ 'P.L. | TROIS FILLES | DE | LEUR MÈRE | [device] | MONT PELÉ | MARTINIQUE'. 4to (24.5 x 16.5 cm), 4 ff, 200 pages. Brown wrappers printed in black. This edition was probably published c. 1930. Translator's copy.

⁷ 'TROIS | FILLES | DE | LEUR | MÈRE'. 8vo (18.3 x 12.1 cm), 4 ff, 302 pages. The translator's copy has been rebound in green cloth, with a

red leather label blocked in gilt on the spine. Limited to 250 machine-numbered copies: nos. 1 & 2 on *parchemin*, nos. 3 – 25 on *Chine* and nos. 26 – 250 on *Hollande*. The edition was published in Germany by *Officina Serpentis*, and printed by W. Tieffenbach. Translator's copy.

⁸ André Pieyre de Mandiargues (1909 – 1991) was a French writer born in Paris. He became an associate of the Surrealists and married the Italian painter Bona Tibertelli de Pisis (a niece of the Italian metaphysical painter Count Filippo Tibertelli de Pisis). He was a close friend of the painter Leonor Fini.

⁹ The Régine Deforges edition of *Trois filles de leur mère* was published openly in 1970. Pieyre de Mandiargues' Introduction occupies [9]-15. A translation of the Introduction by Alexis Lykiard was published by Scissors & Paste Bibliographies, Santa Rosa, California, in 2004.

¹⁰ 'HISTOIRE DU | ROI GONZALVE | ET LES DOUZE | PRINCESSES [device of crown] | AUX DÉPENS D'UN BIBLIOPHILE | MADRID'. 4to (26.5 x 21.8 cm), 38 ff. Bound in wrappers reproducing the titlepage. Limited to 100 copies on *vélin de Hollande Pannekoek*. Translator's copy.

¹¹ René Bonnel (1884-1975), one of the great clandestine publishers of the 20th century. Bonnel was responsible for fine editions of erotic works by Guillaume Apollinaire, George Bataille, Louis Aragon, Pierre Mac Orlan, Alfred Jarry, among others. He also published some good pastiches of erotic poems by Apollinaire, Raymond Radiguet, Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire, actually the handiwork of Pascal Pia.

¹² 'HISTOIRE DU | ROI GONZALVE | ET LES DOUZE | PRINCESSES [device of crown] | AUX DÉPENS D'UN BIBLIOPHILE | MADRID'. 16mo (10 x 7.2 cm), 2 ff., 130 pages, 3 ff. 'Couverture remplée en papier Ingres rose avec étiquette, ou couvretue en papier brun avec étiquette jaune imprimée en rouge et noir.' Illustrated with twelve etchings by Auguste Brouet. Limited to 5 copies on *Japon impérial* and 200 copies on *vélin de Montgolfier*. The description of this edition is extracted from: Jean-Pierre Dutel, *Bibliographie des ouvrages érotiques publiés clandestinement en français entre 1920 et 1970* (Paris, The Author, 2005).

¹³ [Title in facsimile of original MS over a coloured engraving:] 'DOUZE DOUZAINS DE DIALOGUES | OU | PETITES SCENES AMOUREUSES | ★'. 4to in leaves (23.5 x 17.5 cm), 68 ff. Illustrated with 12 coloured etchings by Andre Collot. Limited to 100 copies on *Japon nacre*. Published entirely in facsimile of the original manuscript, with the exception of the notice of limitation. Translator's copy

¹⁴ 'POÈSIES | ÉROTQUES | de | Pierre Louÿs | Imprimé a Liège | 1927'. 8vo (19.3 x 14 cm), 70 pages, 3 ff. Limited to 69 copies. The description of this edition is extracted from: Jean-Pierre Dutel,

Bibliographie des ouvrages érotiques publiés clandestinement en français entre 1920 et 1970 (Paris, The Author, 2005).

¹⁵ In addition to being a bookseller, Raoul Simonson was an author and bibliographer. He compiled a *Bibliographie de l'œuvre de André Gide, 1891-1924* (Maestricht: Boosten & Stols, 1924) and in collaboration with Ronald Davis a *Bibliographie des œuvres de Paul Valéry* (Paris, Pour la collection de "Plaisir de Bibliophilie", 1926).

¹⁶ 'Bernard'. An obscure allusion, but perhaps a reference to "the mysterious... pharmacist-bookseller 'Dr.' Edmond [Dardenne] Bernard," as the late Gershon Legman described him, who apparently acquired Pierre Louÿs' erotic manuscripts from the poet's widow and one of his secretaries, and sold them piecemeal to collectors, who in turn, in some instances, arranged for their sub-rosa publication. See: G. Legman, *The Horn Book; Studies in Erotic Folklore & Bibliography* (New York: university Books, 1964), and in particular Mr. Legman's *Avant-Propos* (in French translation) to *Chansons de Salle de Garde* (Paris: Cercle du Livre Precieuse, 1962).

¹⁷ Charles Hayoit (1901-1984), a notable Belgian book collector whose exceptional private library of first edition French literature was auctioned at Paris in 2001 by Sotheby / Poulain Le Fur. The catalogue of the sale was in five volumes, the fourth of which contained a number of important items by Pierre Louÿs, including such wonders as the beautifully bound original MS of *Trois filles de leur mère*, and the original MS of *Douze Douzains de Dialogues*, which had formerly belonged to Maurice Sachs and Andre Maurois.

¹⁸ 'POESIES | EROTQUES | D' | UN | AUT | UR CE | LEBRE, | ILLUSTRE | ES DE TR | ENTE-DEUX | LITHOGRAPHIES | ORIGINALES | DESSINEES | PAR UN | ARTISTE | INCON | NU | ★ | BARCELONE | ATARAZANAS | (BARRIO CHINO) | L'AN I DE LA REPUBLIQUE | CATALANE'. 4to in leaves (26 x 20.3 cm) 52 ff. 'couverture remplie imprime en noir et gris, chemise et etui recouverts de papier Ingres gris'. 32 lithographs by Marcel Vertès. Limited to 165 copies. The description of this edition is extracted from: Jean-Pierre Dutel, *Bibliographie des ouvrages érotiques publiés clandestinement en français entre 1920 et 1970* (Paris, The Author, 2005).

¹⁹ 'PIERRE LOUÏS | LA FEMME | TRENTE-NEUF POÈMES ÉROTQUES INÉDITS | AVEC 16 DESSINS DE L'AUTEUR | RE-PRODUITS EN FACSIMILE | ET UN PORTRAIT GRAVÉ | PAR | P.-A. LAURENS | - MYTILÈNE - | A L'ENSEIGNE DE BILITIS | MIMXXXVIII'. 4to 1ff. 96 pages. 7ff. Bistre wrappers, with printed paper label on the front cover. Preface signed "L. P." [i.e., Louis Perceau]. One portrait and twelve drawings by Louÿs. Limited to 10 copies on *Japon ancien* and 250 copies on *Vélin de Rives*. Translator's copy, from the library of Gershon Legman.