

Gérard Depardieu



INNOCENT

Gérard Depardieu

INNOCENT

TRANSLATED *by*
RAINER J. HANSHE



Contra Mundum Press New York · London · Melbourne

Innocent © 2015 Le cherche midi
éditeur; translation © 2017
Rainer J. Hanshe

First Contra Mundum Press
Edition 2017.

All Rights Reserved under
International & Pan-American
Copyright Conventions.
No part of this book may be
reproduced in any form or by
any electronic means, including
information storage and retrieval
systems, without permission in
writing from the publisher,
except by a reviewer who may
quote brief passages in a review.

Library of Congress
Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
Depardieu, Gérard, 1948–
[*Innocent*. English.]

Innocent / Gérard Depardieu;
translated from the French by
Rainer J. Hanshe

—1st Contra Mundum Press
Edition
168 pp., 5 × 8 in.

ISBN 9781940625249

- I. Depardieu, Gérard.
- II. Title.
- III. Hanshe, Rainer J.
- IV. Translator.

2017947793

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Friendship	0
Cinema, It's That, Too	12
A Political World	32
What Keeps Me Alive	50
I Mistrust Civilizations	70
The Open Door	100
Innocent	114

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is a question mark.

It exists perhaps only in childhood.

Friends are the people with whom we grow up. We go fishing together for the first time, we spend nights together outside, we steal cherries, we get caught red handed, we support each other. Friends are the people with whom we touch the willy too, we discover and develop ourselves, we live all of our first times together.

We believe a lot in friendship, then things deteriorate a bit. It's not the same thing anymore since time changes, lives change, even molecules change.

At fifteen we're not the same as when we're forty, still less that of a man of seventy.

So we can think of friendship as a flower: it grows, it fades, it disappears, then the following season, it can return like a peony that was believed lost but which suddenly reveals itself, splashing its most beautiful colors.

When you're my age, many of your friends have already left.

And since you know that you will no longer see those people who have disappeared, you remain with the idea of that past friendship.

In spite of everything, we still try to believe that other friendships are possible.

Even if the word friendship has become a bit obsolete. Even if we live in a society where friendship no longer exists. Even if we know that to be human is to always betray. To be human is to kill.

In spite of everything, we say that there are perhaps friends whom we don't know, people who love us from afar and who we could love. Still, it's necessary to make the first step ... and sometimes, it's tiring.

What most worried me when I left Châteauroux was not to have school buddies. Even if I had realized that mine were often morons or the children of morons. Because, in Berry, where the houses were narrow, where the doors were narrow, & where the people were often narrow, I was only defined by the place that I came from, the people who had raised me, & their reputation.

We were a family of Indians.

And I had often heard parents say to their children when pointing their fingers at me: "I don't want you to play with him! He's a thug!" I heard that, but it didn't bother me. I wasn't very affected by narrow mindedness back then.

But just to leave those buddies, it takes courage. Because we never know what we're going to find after.

Because maybe we'll find even worse.

So I wandered alone for a long time, telling myself that I would never find friends.

I was mourning my school playground.

It's a bit like a first love — you're in love with someone, and then there's a rupture. And it takes time to fall in love again. Except that there was no first love. I had life to live and I was curious about what was going to happen. Even if I had no real ambition. Just keep silent, smile, and look likeable enough to slip through the cracks.

It took one brief year: I had seen something else; I had invented something else. I had read Jean Giono's *The Song of the World*, which gave me the idea to take off, to hit the road. And then, on my way, I had met other people. People who had the same desire for life as me.

People like Marcel Dalio, like Pierre Brasseur, like Michel Simon.

Marcel Dalio and I both played Israël Horowitz at Gaité-Montparnasse. Him, *The Indian Wants the Bronx*, me, *Clair-Obscur*. I would wait for him at the exit of the theater and we would travel together under the stars. Marcel was always made up, by day as by night, acting or not acting. He was an extravagant character, the kind you don't see anymore nowadays. My Marcel, he was like my Jean Carmet, but I met him before. He was about the same size. He also had moments of intense despair because he was too lucid. But his immense culture and an incredible sense of derision used to help him carry on. Life had taught him to overcome his fear. He said to me: "Never say no, always say yes, *oui!*"

CINEMA, IT'S THAT, TOO

The young Pierre Niney, who received the César for best actor for his interpretation of Yves Saint Laurent, thanked the “profound benevolence” of the voters, “that benevolence so important to acting,” that “necessary benevolence.”

Since when should the cinema be benevolent?

The cinema is not benevolent; the cinema must above all not be benevolent.

The cinema must be full of dangers, of hellburners, of dynamite, of burning stones that one tries to juggle.

Art, whatever it may be, true art, has always been the opposite of benevolence.

To be of value, art must be dangerous.

Like the art of the young tightrope walker that I saw falling in front of his father’s eyes on Place Voltaire in Châteauroux when I was young.

Artists are all circus people.

And their art is a journey, a journey that begins with deep thinking, because we know that with all the things that we have to express, we have to take a dangerous path alone and face the consequences alone.

And if that process requires psychological understanding, its first concern is not benevolence. What motivates it above all is truth.

The cinema must be true, that is, *dangerous*.

The very great actors are everything but benevolent. I don't even believe in the so-called sensitivity of the actor. When they are real artists, actors are wild, they are cruel, their way of apprehending things is painful and violent.

And it's the same with directors.

When I think of Michelangelo Antonioni, when I think of Marco Ferreri, of Jean-Luc Godard, of Bertrand Blier, the first word that comes to my mind is not really benevolence. They are extraordinary people, not necessarily nice, and their primary concern was not to please or be likeable.

Chabrol, with his magnificent human qualities, dissected the bourgeois milieus, their neuroses, their perversities. He couldn't have done that with such lucidity if he'd regarded his contemporaries with benevolence.

And Buñuel, courtesy and manners wouldn't have helped him portray society or religion as he did.

All those great filmmakers weren't trying to please people or be considerate, they had their qualities and defects, but every one of them was fascinated by human nature and society, which they revealed with a certain perspective, neither sweet nor indulgent, but true.

And that's why cinema was a few years ahead of its time and why it was the pulse of the future society.

When Chaplin released *The Dictator*, when Ferreri was making *La Grande Bouffe*, or Blier *Les Valseuses*, they showed the truth of their times.

The same goes with the great Italian directors: Vittorio De Sica, Dino Risi, Mario Monicelli, Luigi Comencini, or Bernardo Bertolucci for instance.

They depicted what was in front of their eyes, things that many people couldn't see because they were blinded by their good consciences.

It's become much more difficult today to be at the very heart of the era as they were. Not because there are fewer talents, but because the era is different. Society has evolved. Everything changes so swiftly now that it's become extremely difficult for fiction to capture & depict reality.

A reality that surpasses all fiction, including the most lucid and the most tragic fiction.

But everything is not however lost.

There are still authors and directors with, despite everything, a strong enough vision to identify that reality.

I think for example of Abderrahmane Sissako. With *Timbuktu*, he simply tells the story of a contemporary village in Mauritania. He shows us a truth.

Same thing with Jafar Panahi, who reveals the true Iran with his film *Taxi Tehran*.

Equally with Jacques Audiard. *Dheepan* depicted the fate of a migrant a few months before the plight of those refugees became a hot topic.

That's what the great auteurs of cinema have always done — they give their own vision of the world, with simplicity, strength, emotion, and great lucidity.

Since society has changed, the cinema itself also had to evolve.

Of course, the cinema was always commercially motivated, but for a long time the poets and artists had people with whom they could talk and make projects.

There were real producers who were willing to get money for them, like artists in search of patrons. I think for example of Serge Silberman or Jean-Pierre Rassam.

Then there were the big production houses, like Gaumont, which occupied the field. When they worked with other artists like Toscan du Plantier, it was still fine, there was culture and it produced cinema. Toscan took Federico Fellini, Akira Kurosawa, Joseph Losey, Satyajit Ray, Andrzej Wajda, & Ingmar Bergman under his wing.

Today, it's television that holds the power.

And when a poet has to confront a "decision-maker," he has very little chance of winning.

The decision makers are people whose main tasks involve building models, writing specifications, and making schedules. Their job isn't to encourage poets, but to

make products for their channels. Mastering the medium and the message, as Jean-Marie Messier said.

For them, film projects fall into three categories: what can be broadcast during prime time, what is vacuous and innocuous, and what may be broadcast only at midnight or what cannot be shown on TV.

And what cannot be shown is censored straightaway. Censored because it isn't mainstream.

It's the same as in communist countries during the Cold War.

The projects that those channels give the go-ahead to often lead to very bad films, because the creators are obliged to replicate the channels' standards, to respect that censorship if they want to work. There are more and more commissioned films, therefore fewer and fewer directors and auteurs. Because on a set, you need someone who leads with a vision, and when TV is in charge, the leader is no longer the director, TV is. For a private channel, TV leads; for a public channel, the government does.

Therefore, the movies they finance are less cinema than the TV movies released on the big screen.

I don't know who would support Buñuel or Ferreri today; they wouldn't find many people to listen to them, let alone to make their films.

Fortunately, there are still artists with strong personalities who won't let themselves be confined without a fight. Guillaume Nicloux, for instance, still happens to

subtly include a certain strangeness in his films which contrasts with everything that one usually sees.

What I like on TV are the series.

Series really do work, because they are, & from the beginning, television products.

It's something that was born with TV and has always existed.

It's somewhat equivalent to the great novels of the late nineteenth century, those of Alexander Dumas, Eugene Sue, and Ponson du Terrail. It was a genre in itself, different from the novel itself; it was written for the newspapers, and the authors were paid by the line.

TV fiction also began with feuilletons: there was *Thierry la Fronde*, *Jacquou le Croquant*, *Vidocq*, *Les Dames de la côte*. Today we have *The Wire*, *Breaking Bad*, *House of Cards*.

All the channels are following that trend; we have even moved on to the next step, which comes after TV: Netflix productions for example, made directly for the Internet.

With those series, channels really have the opportunity to become windows to today's world, to be witnesses to society, to express cultural identities.

A few years ago, with Josée Dayan, Étienne Mougeotte, Jean-Luc Lagardère, Jean-Pierre Guérin, and a few others, I worked with some TV people to adapt Dumas, Balzac, and Hugo to recount the story of Napoleon.

A POLITICAL WORLD

Men of power fear nothing.
Or perhaps yes.
The sole thing that scares them is honesty.
It's what gives them that monstrous look.
Because they are forced to be monstrous.
And you cannot bear power if you're not.
There's never much concord among those who love
power.

Just re-read Shakespeare. Or Peter Handke.

The madness of power has always existed.

Think of Gilles de Rais. Chevalier and Lord of Champtoceaux-sur-Loire, Marshal of France at twenty-four, national hero, fervent admirer of Joan of Arc, and murderer of one hundred and forty innocent children.

Crazed by power.

There's a magnificent text by Hugo Claus, *Gilles et la nuit*, which recounts that hell.

Even the most normal and honest guy in the world can be driven mad by power.

I've never met an honest man of power, ever.

When I say man of power, I'm talking about those who prevaricate, those who affirm that they're in charge

of our lives, who do things for our good, who lead us. All those who try to make us believe that horses don't fuck.

Power, that's what kills innocence.

Everywhere & since forever.

Just look at the history of France.

A history that isn't very glorious.

The story of so-called enlightened men of power who show innocent people the way.

Innocents who don't see evil and who become the martyrs of those who lead them to the front.

The French Republic is also that.

We have to keep in mind that that Republic began with the worst fundamentalists: Robespierre, Saint-Just, Fouquier-Tinville. Not religious fundamentalists, but political fundamentalists. Our great men. Three hundred years after the Inquisition, it was the politicians' turn to start burning people at the stake and cutting heads as pathways to the Republic.

After such a baptism of blood, the rest shouldn't surprise us.

With the way, for example, we've been behaving, we French, in the Maghreb or sub-Saharan Africa.

Who remembers the Voulet-Chanoine mission, those two French officers who, during the conquest of Chad, committed massacres so despicable that the army had to be sent to arrest them?

And Indochina? And Algeria?

After the Second World War, we found ourselves doing things as abominable as the Nazis made us endure.

It took twenty-seven thousand dead on the French side, and tens of thousands of young people who came back completely confused, before understanding that Algeria should be left to the Algerians.

I'm not even speaking about torture; André Mandouze spoke about that very well.

What the French government has done there is shameful.

We truly behaved like fucking bastards.

That's why I put Guy Mollet and others like René Coty in the same sack as Stalin or Hitler. The spirit was different but the result was not. Innocence sacrificed for the benefit of power.

Hypocrisy as well, as far as it concerns us.

A little specialty of ours, that hypocrisy, and very characteristic of our men of power.

It's enough to re-read Marcel Aymé, *Uranus* for example, to appreciate the smallness of character of those who have power.

Everything is there.

In France, there are many people just like Marcel Aymé's characters.

The proof is that we never talk about Aymé.

The Frenchman is afraid of him because he is afraid of the image he reflects of them.

When today I hear that Algerians here or there aren't grateful enough to us, I find it shameful.

We have occupied that country for nearly a hundred and fifty years without ever taking care of educating or caring for its inhabitants.

We were kings, little kings devoid of grandeur.

I was criticized for my friendship with Castro, but Castro, at least, actually worked to feed his people, to give them hospitals, education, and culture. Which is nevertheless the basis, the minimum of human dignity. He also helped establish literacy in Africa, struggled for states to free themselves from their colonizers without falling under American influence.

We can hardly say the same thing about our French governments, who spent their time pillaging Africa.

When Mandela was released, his first trip was to Cuba. To thank Castro for funding his struggle, for training doctors, for helping African organizations fight against apartheid from the start.

So you can guess what I think of the moral lessons of our men of power ...

Power and the hypocrisy that goes with it is a fucking infamy.

And we're in the midst of dying from this scum.

France today, nobody talks about it anymore. I see it clearly when I'm abroad. It no longer resonates; it no longer exists.

If things go on like this, France will soon become a kind of great amusement park, a Disneyland for foreigners. We all risk ending up like morons with our berets; we'll make wine and stinky cheese right in front of the tourists; we'll let them pull our hair and mustaches; they'll come to inhale the smell of the French.

Of course French ideals have made their way around the world.

But if you take a second to look at them ... Liberty, it no longer exists. They take it away from us. People are manipulated and tracked and they have no secrets anymore.

Equality, I won't even talk about it, it's always been a utopia.

Brotherhood, I still believe in it a bit. I think it can exist because I believe that humans are fundamentally good.

Even if because of the political spirit humanity grows stupider & stupider every day.

I'm speaking about the masses, who end up creating fear, for they are being frightened all the time. But the individual, as always, remains faultless. And he has great merit when one becomes aware of the world in which he struggles.

In France I see almost nothing but exhausted people, trapped people.

In the city, they are everywhere, whereas in the countryside, the Frenchman has become very rare.

In the countryside, it's truly misery, and it's in people's heads, in their eyes, that misery. They can't even talk about it any more; they can only endure it.

Yet, they are honest people, people who believe in some values, but values that, alas, are disappearing.

When I go for a stroll, I look at the guys in the countryside who are harvesting, struggling in the heat, and I think to myself, when they perish, that land on which they worked to death growing vegetables, that land which they cultivated for their children or grandchildren, that land which their descendants could inherit, soon instead it'll be made into a supermarket parking lot. In other words, there'll be nothing left.

When I'm in urban areas, I think of it, the land that was there before, those who took care of it. In Châteauroux, when I was born, there were fields around the town where people used to plow & harvest with horse carts like in the olden days. There were day laborers, people who would offer their help in exchange for room and board. All that no longer exists. That's normal, the world changes, and so much the better.

But even so, I'm happy when I arrive in an area where that spirit still lives, in China, for example, north of Sichuan, where there are still whole fields cultivated by men. For miles and miles you don't see a single tractor.

When shooting Benoît Delépine & Gustave Kervern's *Saint-Amour* with Benoît Pœlvoorde, where I played the role of a peasant, I saw how things worked in France.

We started at the *Salon de l'agriculture* in Paris. And then we went to see the farmers at home, on their land, & it had nothing to do with all the bigwigs at the exposition, who for the most part know how to play the grant game.

There, in the countryside, I saw really lost people, people who, between Brussels, globalization, and agricultural mutuals, are truly at their wits' end.

There are more and more rules, more and more standards, more and more decisions coming from powerful men, and all those things prevent the farmers from doing what they know how to do healthily, healthily and honestly.

They don't know what to do with their land, their cattle.

During the shooting, I met a breeder who suffered from a terrible hernia. He had to be treated, he had to be operated on, otherwise, he was going to die. I asked him what he was waiting for, and he told me that he couldn't find anyone to whom to entrust his cattle to. I wrote to the farm fund to tell them what I thought of them, that they were collecting the money but that they were unable to take care of a guy who would probably die, unable to find someone who could be trusted to replace him.

But hey, an innocent who croaks, who cares? Certainly not the powerful. That isn't what will prevent the director of the fund from giving us moral lessons.

WHAT KEEPS ME ALIVE

I feel more & more like a vagabond. Nothing holds me anymore.

I can go anywhere. Whenever.

I always travel without a suitcase.

When I was young, I went from Châteauroux to Côte d'Azur; now I go from Paris to Vladivostok, but it's exactly the same thing, exactly the same need, the same curiosity.

When I left Châteauroux, it was to live. When I leave France, it's to live, to live more.

I've always traveled, I've always been a citizen of the world, I'm not someone who settles, I'm only a passenger.

When I stop, I see things too quickly, people, their discomforts, I feel them very deeply, I can't bear it, I prefer to leave.

Since forever, as soon as I arrive somewhere, I keep an eye on the emergency exit, I know that the moment will arrive when it'll be necessary to leave.

But wherever I am, I'm curious about everything.

When I arrive in a country, I breathe it, I'm interested in the people, how they eat, how they work the land,

where the products come from, how the animals are fed. It never ends.

In each country, everything tells me a story.

The landscapes tell me a story, a culture. Monuments, architecture, nature, food, everything speaks to me. I breathe in everything. Whether in a Mauritanian desert, at sea with Olivier de Kersauson, in the Amazon jungle, in a French province, everywhere I'm always on the lookout.

Always having the capacity to be amazed, that's what keeps me alive.

And what amazes me above all else, what always guides me, is other people.

A jaded person is someone who no longer observes other people.

I constantly observe people: their land, where they live, how they live.

There's never been a cultural barrier for me, no language barrier, no color barrier. It's the other's conviction, culture, life, and intelligence that continuously give me hope.

My sole strength is life; it's to look at people and to be with them.

I come without luggage and I learn.

There's nothing more important than knowing how to listen and observe.

Language was never an obstacle for me. When I'm in Russia, I always understand what's said to me. I don't

understand vocabulary or grammar, it's not what's interesting, but I understand people, their movements, their way of being, all that non-verbal communication, which is by far the richest and the most important. And the people understand me.

When we were in India, in 1983, Toscan was knocked on his ass because I spent hours with people without knowing their language. They would speak to me & I'd mimic them; we understood each other perfectly.

I'm free of the inhibition that people with a normal education often develop.

When I arrive in China, India, Russia, I arrive as I am.

As Cyrano says: "But there's nothing I walk with that doesn't shine, plumed with that honest freedom that is mine."

If ever I sense danger or aggression, I know how to escape. It was Dédé who taught me that: always a smile when you feel aggression, a smile & then you walk away.

But the fears that others may have, their apprehensions, I don't experience them until I've felt the danger myself.

In New York, in 1972, everyone said to me: "Whatever you do, don't even think about going to Central Park at night, it's terrible, it's full of drug addicts, there's violence, murders." It was others' fear, not mine, and I wanted to see what was really going on there. So I walked through Central Park at night, I saw people, I saw shadows moving away as soon as I approached, but nobody

called out to me. It's a bit like with a dog — if you're not afraid, it's not going to bite you. You just have to know not to be contaminated by others' fears or prejudices.

Well, after all, since I'm not as dumb as a wild boar, I won't put myself in danger. You have to know how far you can go.

I'm like St. Thomas, I only believe what I see; I only believe what I experience.

So I saw people considered to be the worst scoundrels on earth and, it's funny, I never spotted any of the flaws that they were said to have. Never.

They bore the fuck out of me with Putin, with Kadyrov, with Lukashenko, with all those people who disturb the sacrosanct consciences of the Parisian press. But my meeting with Russia has nothing to do with politics. It's above all a human & spiritual encounter.

I grew up with Russian writers; I learned to speak French through their literature, first with the *Stories of a Russian Pilgrim* when I was around twelve. It was a book that aroused my interest from the start because I saw that the author was anonymous and I was also anonymous. I liked that. And I considered myself a bit like a pilgrim, except that a pilgrim has a purpose, and I didn't know where I was going.

I loved that kind of literature far more than comics. *Tintin* for example always deeply bugged me. I thought he was a muckraker, a snitch, a copper. It doesn't surprise me that the Americans love him so much. I wasn't

interested in those comics at all. They were fucking stupid to me.

I preferred the *Stories of a Russian Pilgrim* by far. It's a book that has always accompanied me. Then, very quickly, I loved Dostoevsky, Pushkin. Long before I knew the country and its inhabitants, I was a fervent lover of Russian culture. It was the one that echoed more than anything the way I saw things, my agony. Tolstoy deeply moved me; Mayakovski deeply moved me. It was in Russian literature that I recognized human nature itself, as I perceive it, the fate of humanity. In Russian novels, people can't be good all the time, they can't be bad all the time, it's tiring. But they're Russian all the time. That is, they love ten times more intensely than anywhere else, they hate ten times more intensely too, and they say that they love or hate ten times more strongly than everywhere else.

It's a country in which there's no mountain to stop the wind that sweeps everything away, which allows every excess, including with faith, with love, with the love of life.

Every time that I encountered Russians, there was an immediate sympathy, a shared warmth. The Russians can be cunning, fickle, liars. I adore their madness, their violence, their paradoxes. They're a bit like me — they live the moment, but a moment that's immense. It's an abundance, and I love it. I find myself nowhere else but in the Russian spirit, in the temperament, fervor, and

faith of the Russians. Their relationship with religion, with spirituality, with all the drama that they put into it, it perfectly matches me. And they make me feel good; they feel my *muzhik* side, my way of seizing life. The Russians and I are as thick as thieves.

Even Bertolucci hired me at the time of 1900 because he was searching for a guy who looked Russian!

Then, in 1977, I met Vladimir Vysotsky, who was permitted to come to France to see his wife, Marina Vlady. It was the time when every night I played in Peter Handke's *Unreasonable People are Disappearing*, directed by Claude Régy at the Théâtre des Amandiers. It was a real crush. We spent fifteen days and fifteen nights together. His wife didn't see him very often and my family didn't see me very often. During those two weeks with him, I was really a Russian in Paris. He made me discover a lot of places. We spoke Russian, ate Russian, and especially drank Russian. I don't know how I managed to perform at night. I didn't know his work yet, I didn't know what a genius that immense poet was, but I had before me, with me, a magnificent Russian, a being of incredible humanity.

Yet, for a long time, I didn't want to go to Russia.

Stalinism and its offspring didn't interest me; I couldn't tolerate seeing people so humiliated in their daily lives.

I jumped at the chance to go when I heard the word *perestroika*.

I can say now that, when you really know Russia as I know it, you'll see how the Russian spirit reveals itself, expresses itself through its land, when you see those infinite spaces and the people who live in them, the great things built by the hands of those people, their strength, their presence, their energy, you'll understand why Putin is at the head of the country and why one needs someone of that temper there.

Putin, he's an old rogue, I've heard him talk to the oligarchs who are trying to suck the country dry — he doesn't have his tongue in his pocket. It's they who are afraid of him, not the other way around, as in so many other countries. And I see when I talk to the people over there how grateful they are to him for restoring their dignity in the eyes of other countries, which they had lost with that Elstine guy, who loved the drink and who collapsed in public before heads of state, like me with my scooter in front of the Parisian firefighters.

I've always believed that the real dictators were those who starved their people, but I've never seen anyone starve in Russia.

I see Putin regularly, and most of the time we talk about geopolitics. Last August, for example, we spoke for hours about Crimea. That region has always been considered sacred land by the Russians, for it was at Chersonese, near Sebastopol, that Vladimir I, the great prince of the principality of Kiev, the cradle of the Russian Empire, was baptized in 988. It was at that time

that Byzantine Christianity became the official religion of the State. Then later the country fell under the Ottomans' yoke until the Sultan of Constantinople, supported by the Austrians and the French, declared war on the Russia of Catherine the Great in 1768. In 1771, the Russians freed Crimea from the Ottomans. With the Treaty of Küçük-Kaynardja in 1774, Crimea became independent. In 1782, its sovereign, the Khan Şahin Giray, appealed to the Russians so that the country was definitively rid of the incessant Ottoman conspiracies. With Potemkin, he organized the annexation with Russia, & in 1783 Crimea became the first Muslim territory definitively lost by the Ottoman Empire, for the benefit of the Russians. At the same time, in 1772, a whole part of the Ukraine joined the Austro-Hungarian Empire, under whose domination it remained until 1918. Then there was the Crimean War. In 1854, France and the United Kingdom declared war on Russia to support the Ottoman Empire. The siege of Sebastopol, narrated, among others, by Tolstoy, lasted for a year, during which the Russians resisted under the worst conditions. Five hundred thousand Russians died during the conflict. It was not until 1954 that Nikita Khrushchev, a man with a strong Ukrainian accent, an executor of Stalin's base actions, decided to cede Crimea to the Ukraine, the region in which he acquired all his political training and ascension. It was his "thank you gift" to celebrate the tercentenary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav, by which the

Cossacks of Ukraine had proclaimed their allegiance to Moscow. That act was decided in a few minutes, off the record, without any debate, by simple decree. That is hardly surprising on the part of Khrushchev who, a few years later, betrayed and then dropped Castro and Cuba in the same careless way as when he set up missiles in Cuba. Crimea, where at the time about two hundred thousand Ukrainians & a million Russians were living, was therefore subjected to the authority of a country with which it had very little history & culture in common. It's understandable why after being sold off in a few minutes to the Ukrainians in 1954, the inhabitants of Crimea answered yes by 96.6% to the annexation to Russia during the 2014 referendum.

When you're eating with a bunch of pseudo-intellectuals in Paris, it's obviously more difficult to understand. But *intellos*, the only people they don't despise are themselves, which is why they must be left to themselves. And those people are so used to talking about things that they don't know or live, they're of no importance. I'm not going to try to fuck them in the ass, anyway their asses are full, the Americans are already deep in there fucking them on and on.

The Americans, I met them at the Châteauroux military base. And I must confess, it was extraordinary. I was admiring those young guys, their discipline, their barracks with a strong smell of wax, their smell of chlorophyll. I was dazzled by those guys who ate omelet

sandwiches. I had never before seen anyone stuffing an omelet into a sandwich. I thought it was wonderful.

I never knew at the time how well meaning and puritanical that country was. Finally, when I say well meaning and puritanical, I speak of the image they've given themselves, because behind that puritanism, everything is very rigged.

I can barely tolerate real puritans; I can't stand it when they let morality stifle life. So with the fake ones...

It's necessary to see how, from the start, those colonists, often extremist, always terrifying, those so-called "Puritans" coming from Holland, Germany, and England, where they were mostly a nuisance, have, with the hand on the Bible, eradicated the Indians, beginning with killing their buffalo, their food. Just read the wonderful novel by Jim Fergus, *A Thousand White Women*. It covers all of that.

Then, always with the hand on the Bible, those so-called Puritans, they established slavery.

Just watch Paul Thomas Anderson's magnificent *There Will Be Blood*, based on Upton Sinclair, to understand the madness of that country, its unscrupulous businessmen & crazy preachers.

The entire history of that country is more of the same; everything is always scandalous in America.

Today the Americans are two hundred years old; they continue to kill and they're not about to give up arms.



COLOPHON

INNOCENT

was handset in InDesign CC.

The text & page numbers are set in *Adobe Jenson Pro*.

The titles are set in *Didonesque Display*.

Book design & typesetting: Alessandro Segalini

Cover design: Contra Mundum Press

Cover image: Federico Gori, *INNOCENT*, 2017. Ink & enamel on aluminum, 39cm x 26cm.

INNOCENT

is published by Contra Mundum Press.

Its printer has received Chain of Custody certification from:

The Forest Stewardship Council,

The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification,

& The Sustainable Forestry Initiative.



Contra Mundum Press New York · London · Melbourne

CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS

Dedicated to the value & the indispensable importance of the individual voice, to works that test the boundaries of thought & experience.

The primary aim of Contra Mundum is to publish translations of writers who in their use of form and style are *à rebours*, or who deviate significantly from more programmatic & spurious forms of experimentation. Such writing attests to the volatile nature of modernism. Our preference is for works that have not yet been translated into English, are out of print, or are poorly translated, for writers whose thinking & aesthetics are in opposition to timely or mainstream currents of thought, value systems, or moralities. We also reprint obscure and out-of-print works we consider significant but which have been forgotten, neglected, or overshadowed.

There are many works of fundamental significance to *Weltliteratur* (& *Weltkultur*) that still remain in relative oblivion, works that alter and disrupt standard circuits of thought — these warrant being encountered by the world at large. It is our aim to render them more visible.

For the complete list of forthcoming publications, please visit our website. To be added to our mailing list, send your name and email address to: info@contramundum.net



Contra Mundum Press

P.O. Box 1326

New York, NY 10276

USA

THE MÆCENAS CONSTELLATION

The Mæcenas Constellation (MC) is an alternative patronage experiment composed of individuals who together will form the inner circle of Contra Mundum Press. Through its combined resources, the constellation will serve as an entity akin to a Renaissance patron.

Contra Mundum Press is an award-winning independent publishing house that has published translations from Sumerian, French, Hungarian, Italian, German, Turkish, and Farsi, bilingual books, two world-premiere editions of Pessoa, and several bi- and multilingual books from a variety of genres. Our art journal, *Hyperion: On the Future of Aesthetics*, has an international readership stretching from the Americas to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Writers such as Erika Burkart, Quentin Meillassoux, Alain Badiou, and others have contributed original essays to the journal. Contra Mundum Press has also staged events and collaborated with numerous cultural institutions in New York, Budapest, Berlin, Paris, & elsewhere, including participating in international film and literary festivals. Since our inception in 2012, our publications have been heralded in the pages of *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The New Statesman*, *The Guardian*, *the Paris Review*, and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, amongst others. To become a member of the Mæcenas Constellation is to express your confidence in and support of such cultural work, and to aid us in continuing it.

Becoming a member of the MC simply involves a modest pledge of only \$60 per year. The funds received from such a membership body would not only help compensate for the bulk of the production

costs of producing six books per year, it would also provide some financial support for the different experiences the collective wishes to develop. Aside from receiving 2 books per year in advance of publication and a limited edition tote bag, you would be entitled to a 30% discount when purchasing any of our other books (which you would receive in advance of release to the general public). Additionally, you will be offered the opportunity of purchasing limited edition books only available to members.

Through our community of readers, we would then be able to remain an independent entity free of having to rely on government support and/or grant and other official funding bodies, not to speak of their timelines & impositions. It would also free the press from suffering the vagaries of the publishing industry, as well as the risk of submitting to commercial pressures in order to persist, thereby potentially compromising the integrity of its catalog.

With bookstores and presses around the world struggling to survive, and many even closing, we hope to establish this alternative form of patronage as a means for establishing a continuous & stable foundation to safeguard the longevity of Contra Mundum Press. Each individual member of the constellation would help to form a greater entity and so jointly advance the cultural efforts of Contra Mundum Press. A unified assemblage of individuals can make a modern Mæcenas.

To lend your support and **BECOME A MEMBER**, please visit the subscription page of our website: contramundum.net/subscription

OTHER CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS TITLES

- Gilgamesh*
Ghérasim Luca, *Self-Shadowing Prey*
Rainer J. Hanshe, *The Abdication*
Walter Jackson Bate, *Negative Capability*
Miklós Szentkuthy, *Marginalia on Casanova*
Fernando Pessoa, *Philosophical Essays*
Elio Petri, *Writings on Cinema & Life*
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Greek Music Drama*
Richard Foreman, *Plays with Films*
Louis-Auguste Blanqui, *Eternity by the Stars*
Miklós Szentkuthy, *Towards the One & Only Metaphor*
Josef Winkler, *When the Time Comes*
William Wordsworth, *Fragments*
Josef Winkler, *Natura Morta*
Fernando Pessoa, *The Transformation Book*
Emilio Villa, *The Selected Poetry of Emilio Villa*
Robert Kelly, *A Voice Full of Cities*
Pier Paolo Pasolini, *The Divine Mimesis*
Miklós Szentkuthy, *Prae, Vol. 1*
Federico Fellini, *Making a Film*
Robert Musil, *Thought Flights*
Sándor Tar, *Our Street*
Lorand Gaspar, *Earth Absolute*
Josef Winkler, *The Graveyard of Bitter Oranges*
Ferit Edgü, *Noone*
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Narcissus*
Ahmad Shamlu, *Born Upon the Dark Spear*
Jean-Luc Godard, *Phrases*
Otto Dix, *Letters, Vol. 1*
Maura Del Serra, *Ladder of Oaths*
Pierre Senges, *The Major Refutation*
Charles Baudelaire, *My Heart Laid Bare & Other Texts*
Joseph Kessel, *Army of Shadows*
Rainer J. Hanshe, *Shattering the Muses*

SOME FORTHCOMING TITLES

- Claude Mouchard, *Entangled, Papers!, Notes*
Pierre Senges, *Ahab (Sequels)*
Goethe, *The Passion of Young Werther*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

G rard DEPARDIEU has performed in nearly 200 films since 1967, many of them being with the world's most acclaimed directors, including Jean-Luc Godard, Bernardo Bertolucci, Marguerite Duras, Bertrand Blier, Alain Resnais, Marco Ferreri, Peter Handke, Francois Truffaut, Andrez Wajda & others. He is the recipient of the C sar Award for Best Actor (1981; 1991), the Venice Film Festival Award for Best Actor (1985), the Cannes Film Festival Award for Best Actor (1990), and a Stanislavsky Award (2006) from the Moscow Film Festival for outstanding achievement in the career of acting, amongst others. Depardieu is also a Chevalier of the Ordre national du M rite & a Chevalier of the L gion d'honneur. In addition to being an actor & entrepreneur, Depardieu is the author of several books, including *Lettres vol es* (1988), *Uivant!* (2004), *Ma cuisine* (2005), * a s'est fait comme  a* (2014), and *Innocent* (2015).

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Rainer J. HANSHE is a writer. He is the author of two novels, *The Acolytes* (2010) and *The Abdication* (2012), and a hybrid text created in collaboration with Federico Gori, *Shattering the Muses* (2017). His second novel, *The Abdication*, has been translated into Slovakian (2015), Italian (2016), and Turkish (2017). He is the editor of Richard Foreman's *Plays with Films* (2013) and Wordsworth's *Fragments* (2014), and the translator of Baudelaire's *My Heart Laid Bare & Other Texts* (2017), Joseph Kessel's *Army of Shadows* (2017), & Gérard Depardieu's *Innocent* (2017). Hanshe has also written numerous essays on Nietzsche, principally concerning synesthesia, incubation, & agonism. He is the founder of Contra Mundum Press and *Hyperion: On the Future of Aesthetics*. Other work of his has appeared in *Sinn und Form*, *Jelenkor*, *Asymptote*, *Quarterly Conversation*, *ChrisMarker.org*, *Black Sun Lit*, and elsewhere. Hanshe is currently working on two novels, *Humanimality* and *Now, Wonder*, and *In Praise of Dogs*, a photojournalism project with filmmaker & photographer Harald Hutter.



In his proto-memoir *Innocent*, world-renowned actor Gérard Depardieu reflects on his life as if from afar, like a bird surveying a wide horizon, presenting fervent observations on friendship, cinema, religion, politics, & more.

From his early days in the theater and his friendships with Jean Gabin and others to his rise in the cinema, this light, vibrant, but searching book offers us an intimate entry into the thinking process of one of cinema's most mercurial & impassioned actors. Depardieu also touches upon controversial topics such as his relationship with Putin & issues that have led to skirmishes with the press and public.

At bottom, *Innocent* is less a memoir & more the account of a man in search of faith, the faith that is of an innocent mystic, and includes passages about Depardieu's explorations of Islam, Buddhism, and other religions.

Esßousing a notion of innocence that calls us to move beyond dogma and ideology, Depardieu urges us to engage with others with respect, receptivity, and mindfulness. In these combative and divisive times, we believe this is a vital if not necessary book, one that could continue and extend dialogues about questions of faith, politics, & religion.

