

## Gay Liberation Comes to France:

### The *Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire* (FHAR)

*Michael Sibalis*

There were no cameras rolling in New York City in the early morning hours of Saturday June 28, 1969, when the Stonewall Riots launched the American gay liberation movement.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the founding moment of gay liberation in France occurred live on the radio. Between 1967 and 1981, Mémie Grégoire hosted a confessional-style radio program on station RTL, and more than a million listeners (overwhelmingly women) tuned in every weekday afternoon to hear Grégoire, her guests and the occasional studio audience discuss important personal and social issues.<sup>2</sup> The day's topic on Wednesday, March 10, 1971, was "Homosexuality, This Painful Problem."<sup>3</sup> Grégoire had brought together before an audience in the Salle Pleyel in Paris a group of so-called experts (she described them as "people who know the question for a lot of diverse reasons") that included André Baudry, the head of Arcadie, France's only "homophile" association; the young journalist Pierre Hahn, who had written magazine articles on sexuality and homosexuality; a priest; a psychoanalyst; and, quite incongruously (their presence has never been explained),

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Michael Sibalis is Associate Professor of History at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. He has published numerous articles on the nineteenth-century French labor movement, the police state of Napoleon I, and the history of homosexuality in France. His most recent work includes: "Urban Space and Homosexuality: The Example of the Marais, Paris' 'Gay Ghetto,'" *Urban Studies* 41 (2004): 1739-1758, and "Arbitrary Detention, Human Rights and the Napoleonic Senate," in *Taking Liberties: Problems of a New Order from the French Revolution to Napoleon*, eds. Howard G. Brown and Judith A. Miller (Manchester, 2002): 166-84. He has also co-edited, with Jeffrey Merrick, a collection of articles: *Homosexuality in French History and Culture* (Binghamton, N.Y., 2001). All translations are the author's unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>1</sup> Martin B. Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> See Dominique Cardon, "'Chère Mémie.' Emotions et engagements de l'auditeur de Mémie Grégoire," *Réseaux* 70 (1995): 41-79. Also available on [www.enssib.fr/autres-sites/reseaux-cnet/70/02-cardon.pdf](http://www.enssib.fr/autres-sites/reseaux-cnet/70/02-cardon.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> The transcript of the broadcast has been published in *La revue h* 1 (Summer 1996): 52-9, and is available on [www.france.qrd.org/media/revue-h/001/probleme.html](http://www.france.qrd.org/media/revue-h/001/probleme.html). There is an abridged version in Frédéric Martel, *La longue marche des gays* (Paris, 2002), 105-7.

the singing group *Les frères Jacques*. Grégoire's remarks in the course of the show well represent "enlightened public opinion" of the 1960s: she was smugly compassionate, condescending and even obtuse: "you well know that happy women are those who have men who have satisfied them" or "there is all the same a negation of life or of the laws of life in homosexuality! It seems to me that we can say that without offending anybody!" The audience, who could make statements or ask questions on the air, became increasingly restless as the discussion dragged on. André Baudry's intervention raised hostile shouts from those who judged his defence of homosexuality too conservative, but he was able to finish his statement. Grégoire then turned to Father Guinchat. Here is the transcript of the last few moments of the historical broadcast:

ANDRÉ BAUDRY: What we want, and what Arcadie—even if somebody in the audience has said that Arcadie would soon die—Arcadie certainly does not have the secret of eternal life—but what Arcadie has been doing for the last eighteen years with the five hundred thousand or so homophiles that it has contacted in France alone. It has first of all tried to reassure them, to tell them: "You are a homophile, and you are a normal man. You are equal to others, you are not below others or above others, you can love."

MÉNIE GRÉGOIRE: In any case, it is right to reassure them because these people suffer, we can't let them suffer without doing anything for them. You spoke earlier about a religious problem, I would like Father Guinchat to give [an answer] anyway ... to answer anyway. ... We have almost fundamentally called him into question, what do priests do when faced with a homosexual? What do you do when people come find you and tell you "I'm a homosexual?" What do you say to them? Do you also reassure them? Would you like to answer?

FATHER GUINCHAT: I am somewhat troubled in replying to that question. As a priest, well, I am part of a Church, and I try to be faithful to a God who has given us a certain model for life, which is not imposed on us, but in order to play by the rules, it is nevertheless necessary to go in the same direction as this model for life. After that, there is the concrete situation. I agree with all that has been said when we spoke about the suffering of certain situations. And then, I too, welcome many homosexuals, my colleagues as well, who come to talk about their suffering, that suffering, we cannot be indifferent to it.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE: Stop talking about your suffering.

MÉNIE GRÉGOIRE: Listen, well then, I have to say that there is something completely extraordinary happening, because the crowd has invaded the podium and because the homosexuals ...

A SHOUT IN THE MICROPHONE (PIERRE HAHN): Liberty! Liberty!

MÉNIE GRÉGOIRE: Homosexuals of all sorts, men and women ...

A SHOUT: We want liberty for us and for you!

ANOTHER SHOUT: Fight! Fight!

*[At this point, the sound was cut off and the studio played the show's theme music.]*

About thirty people had stormed the podium, overturned tables, chairs and microphones and roughed up the participants. Hahn (himself homosexual) joined the protesters, who were in fact there at his invitation. One young woman took hold of the priest's head and pounded it repeatedly against the table. A little later in her dressing room, a serene Grégoire sipped on her scotch and remarked to a reporter: "I wasn't mistaken, the subject is hot. I would do the same broadcast again, but in a [closed]

studio.”<sup>4</sup>

What happened on March 10 marked a new departure for homosexual militancy in France. The dominant leader of the homosexual cause there in the 1950s and 1960s was André Baudry (born in 1922), a former seminarian and philosophy teacher who launched the homosexual review *Arcadie* in January 1954. It sold at least ten thousand copies a month (Baudry claimed thirty thousand). In 1957 Baudry also founded the Club Littéraire et Scientifique des Pays Latins (Literary and Scientific Club of the Latin Countries) or CLESPALA, a social group (often also called *Arcadie*) that held dances, sponsored lectures and generally defended the cause of France’s “homophiles.” The homophile movement—which disliked the word “homosexual” for stressing sex rather than love—was predominantly middle-class, conformist and politically and socially conservative. It argued that public hostility to homosexuals resulted largely from their outrageous and promiscuous behaviour; homophiles would win the good opinion of the public and the authorities by showing themselves to be discreet, dignified, virtuous and respectable.<sup>5</sup>

*Arcadie*’s emphasis on discretion was very much in tune with public attitudes toward homosexuality in France under the Fourth Republic (1946-58) and the early Fifth Republic that succeeded it. France was certainly one of the freest countries for homosexuals to live in, and Paris was still the European capital of homosexuality until displaced by Amsterdam in the 1970s, but at the same time the post World War II government, medical establishment and media preached the values of social conformity and family life, which many homosexuals themselves internalized as shame.<sup>6</sup> Although same-sex relations were fully legal in France ever since 1791, the police could always use the laws against indecent acts performed in public to harass and entrap those homosexuals who looked for sexual partners in parks and around street urinals.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, by the Ordinance of 6 August 1942, the collaborationist government of Marshal Pétain had reintroduced into French jurisprudence the insidious distinction between natural and unnatural sexual acts when it criminalized “shameless or unnatural acts” committed by an adult with a minor (under twenty-one) of the same sex; de Gaulle’s provisional government reaffirmed this law in February 1945 and prosecutions for the so-called “crime of homosexuality” (i.e. sexual relations with a minor) rose steadily year after year. In addition, in July 1960

<sup>4</sup> “Des homosexuels en colère interrompent une émission publique sur leurs problèmes,” *France-Soir*, 12 Mar. 1971 (not published in all editions of this daily newspaper). See also Jacques Girard, *Le mouvement homosexuel en France 1945-1980* (Paris, 1981), 82; Frédéric Martel, *Le rose et le noir: Les homosexuels en France depuis 1968*, 2d ed., (Paris, 2000), 35-7; and Françoise d’Eaubonne, “Le FHAR, origines et illustrations,” *La revue h 2* (Autumn 1996): 18-30.

<sup>5</sup> Julian Jackson is writing a history of *Arcadie*. In the meantime, see Olivier Jablonski, “Baudry, André (Émile),” in *Who’s Who in Contemporary Gay & Lesbian History: From World War II to the Present Day*, eds. Robert Aldrich and Garry Wotherspoon (London, 2001), 32-5; Girard, *Le mouvement homosexuel*, 39-80; and Martel, *Le rose et le noir*, 98-111.

<sup>6</sup> Georges Sidéris, “Des folles de Saint-Germain-des-Prés au ‘Fléau social.’ Le discours homophile contre l’efféminement dans les années 1950,” in *La haine de soi. Difficiles identités*, eds. E. Benbassa and J.-C. Attias (Brussels, 2000), 121-42; and “*Folles*, Swells, Effeminate, and Homophiles in Saint-Germain-des-Prés of the 1950s: A New ‘Precious’ Society?” in *Homosexuality in French History and Culture*, eds. Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibalis (New York, London and Oxford, 2001), 219-31.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Sibalis, “The Regulation of Male Homosexuality in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, 1789-1815,” in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, eds. Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan (New York, 1996), 80-101.

Parliament voted a law (the “Mirguet Amendment,” named for the deputy who proposed it) declaring homosexuality a “social scourge” along with alcoholism and tuberculosis and authorizing the government to take appropriate measures to check its spread. On November 25, 1960, the cabinet used this authority to double the existing penalties for acts of public indecency when these involved homosexuals.<sup>8</sup> No wonder, then, that Grégoire and undoubtedly many of her listeners considered homosexuality to be a “painful problem” in France.

The participants in the commando action against Grégoire’s broadcast were almost all lesbians—a photograph taken minutes after the incident shows a dozen or so jubilant women celebrating on the sidewalk outside the theatre<sup>9</sup>—and their action that day grew out of several months of feminist militancy. In 1970, a number of lesbians, under the leadership of Anne-Marie Fauret and Françoise d’Eaubonne (herself a heterosexual) and influenced by the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes (Women’s Liberation Movement) or MLF, attempted to set up a feminist group within Arcadie. Baudry expelled them for talking politics, but they continued meeting elsewhere, along with several supportive males. On March 5, 1971—only five days before the events related above—this group, which included Hahn (who would be on the podium at Grégoire’s broadcast), disrupted an anti-abortion meeting held by the association *Laissez-les-vivre* (Let Them Live) at the Mutualité in Paris’s fifth arrondissement.<sup>10</sup> They then learned about Grégoire’s upcoming broadcast and decided to sabotage it. Hahn himself arranged for their invitations to the show, and the producers, thrilled to have genuine homosexuals and lesbians in the audience, even seated them in the front row.<sup>11</sup>

The evening after the broadcast, the triumphant militants met and formalized their group under the name Front Homosexuel d’Action Révolutionnaire (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action) or FHAR.<sup>12</sup> Three different people have since claimed to have come up with the name, which only goes to prove that the term was very much in the air in those days of revolutionary fronts of all kinds.<sup>13</sup> More cautiously, however, the group registered itself at the Prefecture of Police as the Front Humanitaire Anti-Raciste (Humanitarian Anti-Racist Front).<sup>14</sup> But the members almost immediately gave their association and its real goals wide publicity with a set of manifestos published in a special edition of the Maoist newspaper *Tout!* (April 23,

<sup>8</sup> Michael Sibalís, “Homophobia, Vichy France and the ‘Crime of Homosexuality:’ The Origins of the Ordinance of 6 August 1942,” *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 8 (2002): 301-18; idem, “Mirguet, Paul,” in Aldrich and Wotherspoon, *Who’s Who in Contemporary Gay & Lesbian History*, 285-6; Daniel Guérin, *Shakespeare et Gide en correctionnelle?* (Paris, 1959), 94-106; and Janine Mossuz-Lavau, *Les lois de l’amour. Les politiques de la sexualité en France (1950-1990)* (Paris, 1991), 233-40.

<sup>9</sup> Martel, *La longue marche*, 107.

<sup>10</sup> See Eaubonne, “Le FHAR, origines et illustrations,” 18-30; and “5 mars 1971: Le future FHAR attaque Laissez-les-vivre,” *Prochoix* 5 (Apr.-May 1998): 24-6 (interview with Françoise d’Eaubonne and Marie-Jo Bonnet).

<sup>11</sup> Anne-Marie Fauret, “A l’origine, des femmes,” *Gai pied* 25 (Apr. 1981): 36; “Pierre Hahn: L’itinéraire d’un pionnier” [interview], *Gai pied* 26 (May 1981): 38.

<sup>12</sup> Francis Lacombe [Franck Arnal], “Les Années lumière,” *Gai pied hebdo* 460 (7 Mar. 1991): 54-6.

<sup>13</sup> Guy Rey [Guy Chevalier], “FHAR, Le témoignage,” *Mec magazine* 2 (Apr. 1988): 30-2 (interview by Jean Le Bitoux and Guy Vandemborghe; I have used the original tape, kindly provided to me by Le Bitoux); Laurent Dispot, “Aventuriers de la liberté,” *Gai pied hebdo* 460 (7 Mar. 1991), 60; and Eaubonne, “Le FHAR, origines et illustrations,” 21.

<sup>14</sup> Girard, *Le mouvement homosexuel*, 82.

1971). Jean-Paul Sartre was the periodical's nominal director, but twenty-five-year-old Guy Hocquenghem coordinated this particular issue (entitled "Libre Disposition de Notre Corps"—"The Free Use of Our Bodies"):

*Address to those who think themselves "normal:"* You do not feel like oppressors. ... You are individually responsible for the shameful mutilation that you inflict on us in reproaching us for our desire. You who want the revolution, you have wanted to impose your repression on us. ... You ask: "What can we do for you?" You can do nothing for us as long as each of you remains the representative of normal society.

*Address to those who are like us:* Our Front will be what you and we make of it. We want to destroy the family and this society because they have always oppressed us. ... We lay claim to our status as a social scourge until the destruction of all imperialism. ... For a homosexual front which will have the task of taking by assault and destroying "fascist sexual normality."<sup>15</sup>

As these quotations suggest, FHAR derived its rhetorical style (and much else besides) from the student movement and the so-called "events"—the strikes and demonstrations—of May 1968 that shook up conservative Gaullist France and also transformed left-wing politics in the country. In FHAR's own words:

Unfortunately, until May '68, the revolutionary camp was one of moral order, inherited from Stalin. Everything there was gray, puritanical, deplorable. ... But suddenly, that clap of thunder: the May explosion, the joy of living, of fighting. ... Dancing, laughter, celebration! ... And so, faced with this new situation, we homosexuals in revolt—and certain among us were already politicized—discovered that our homosexuality—to the extent that we could affirm it in the face of and against everything—made us into authentic revolutionaries, because in this way we called into question everything that was forbidden in Euro-American civilization. ... Don't doubt it: we want the annihilation of this world. Nothing less. ... The freedom of everybody, by everybody, for everybody is in the offing.<sup>16</sup>

A former FHAR militant (Alain Prique, who was twenty-four in 1971) later described FHAR as "the child of May '68, with a big sister or stepmother (according to your tastes), the feminist movement."<sup>17</sup> For another (Jean Le Bitoux, twenty-three in 1971), FHAR was "this ripening of shame into anger, which was able to emerge politically in the aftermath of May '68."<sup>18</sup> "The spirit of May '68 had rooted itself deeply among a number of young intellectuals [and] students," according to one (non-professional) historian, and even the oldest members of FHAR, like Daniel Guérin (born in 1904) and Eaubonne (born in 1920), "had in common with the youth of 1968 the rejection of [both] bourgeois ideals and Marxist political cant."<sup>19</sup>

May '68 had also seen the first, albeit short-lived, expression of gay liberation in France, when twenty-seven-year-old Guy Chevalier established the Comité

<sup>15</sup> *Tout!* 12 (23 Apr. 1971): 6-7. These, and other manifestos and tracts, were collected and published in FHAR, *Rapport contre la normalité* (Paris, 1971).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>17</sup> Alain Prique, "L'herbe folle de mai 68," *La revue h* 2 (Autumn 1996), 32.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Le Bitoux, "Le groupe de libération homosexuelle (1975-1978)," *La revue h* 5/6 (Spring/Summer 1998), 43.

<sup>19</sup> Lacombe, "Les années lumière," 54.

d'Action Pédérastique Révolutionnaire (Committee for Revolutionary Pederastic Action) or CAPR. It did little aside from distributing a single tract in the streets of the Latin Quarter and holding a few meetings in an auditorium at the Sorbonne to propagate an ideology cobbled together out of scraps of Herbert Marcuse and William Reich. The Committee evaporated once the agitation died down, and Chevalier himself left for the United States in June 1969.<sup>20</sup> But CAPR left a legacy. May '68 raised homosexuality as a political question and made homosexual liberation a left-wing cause that challenged the political and social status quo. 1968 marked a shift away from what Hocquenghem called "a movement to defend and justify homosexuality"—he was here thinking essentially of Arcadie—to a "homosexual struggle" that sought neither to justify homosexuals nor to integrate them into existing society, but rather to challenge and transform that society.<sup>21</sup>

The lesbians who founded FHAR came to gay activism via May '68 and the MLF, another child of May '68.<sup>22</sup> This was, for example, the case of Marie-Jo Bonnet or the American Margaret Stephenson, both involved (along with many other women) at one and the same time in militant feminism, radical lesbianism and (at least in its early days) FHAR.<sup>23</sup> The men, too, were children of '68, but they tended to look as well to the American gay liberation movement. "I had learned everything in the USA," Chevalier remarked in the 1990s, a particularly strange statement coming from the man who had already founded CAPR.<sup>24</sup> Chevalier arrived in New York City just in time to witness the Stonewall Riots and then spent fifteen months teaching there and in Los Angeles while also attending gay liberation meetings. This period was (he has said) his "apprenticeship," which taught him to conceive of a political homosexual meeting and a homosexual protest with slogans: "while finding again what I had clumsily tried to formulate in CAPR at the Sorbonne, ... I Americanized my experience of liberation." In Paris once again in October 1970, he met up with other gay and lesbian radicals and helped to found FHAR the following spring: "And so I, at the time, contributed all the American experience."<sup>25</sup> Gilles Châtelet, another FHAR militant, who later became a university professor, took part as a student in the May 1968 protests ("In '68, I did what everybody did, I followed the movement"), but what turned him into a gay activist was the time he spent in California in 1969 ("France, in comparison, was a provincial asteroid"). He went to meetings of FHAR in Paris, he later said, as "a way of finding again the ambiance of the United States."<sup>26</sup>

The publicity in *Tout!* drew so many newcomers to FHAR that within a month

<sup>20</sup> Guy Rey [Guy Chevalier], "Mai 68, dans la Sorbonne occupée," *Mec magazine* 1 (Mar. 1988): 30-3 (interview by Jean Le Bitoux and Guy Vandemborghe; I quote from the original recording kindly supplied to me by Le Bitoux). A more recent interview is "Guy Chevalier: Le sacerdoce de l'activiste," *Têtu* 54 (Mar. 2001): 97-99.

<sup>21</sup> Guy Hocquenghem, *Le désir homosexuel*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1972), 101.

<sup>22</sup> "Mais quand reviendra-t-il le joli mois de mai?," *Lesbia* 171 (May 1998): 22-9 (interviews with lesbian militants).

<sup>23</sup> See "5 mars 1971," 24 (on Bonnet and Stephenson); Françoise Picq, *Libération des femmes. Les années-mouvement* (Paris, 1993), 12-23 (for Stephenson's rôle in MLF); also "Bonnet, Marie-Jo," in Aldrich and Wotherspoon, *Who's Who in Contemporary Gay & Lesbian History*, 46-7.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Martel, *Le rose et le noir*, 35.

<sup>25</sup> "Mai 68, dans la Sorbonne occupée," and "FHAR, le témoignage." See also "Guy Chevalier: Le sacerdoce de l'activiste."

<sup>26</sup> Gilles Châtelet, interviewed by Anne Rousseau, in "Mai 68: Le pink bang," 3 *Keller* 38 (May 1998), 12.

attendance at the weekly general assemblies—held in an amphitheatre at the *École des Beaux-Arts* on the Rue Bonaparte every Thursday evening—had climbed to three or four hundred (and sometimes more) men, and a few women. Indeed, most new recruits were men, and their attitude toward sexuality and love was very different from the women's. To take one telling incident, during a weekend retreat in the country by some members of FHAR in its first days, the men went off into town in the evening to look for sex with the locals, while the women stayed behind to discuss whether sexual liberation really meant no more than having multiple partners.<sup>27</sup> The men's behaviour strained their relations with the women. In addition and more importantly, the women were dismayed at the men's male chauvinism and their domination of the movement; the women soon felt "dispossessed" of an organization that they had founded and, exasperated by an ambient misogyny, they began deserting FHAR for the Gouines Rouges (Red Dykes) formed in July 1971.<sup>28</sup>

The Thursday general assemblies, however, went on for almost three years, with fewer and fewer women present. They were "le happening de la rue Bonaparte," and, it has been said, "the image that came to mind [in seeing them] was that of the clubs during the Revolution of 1789."<sup>29</sup> This was because the meetings lacked any real order or even cohesion from the very start, and they deteriorated into chaos over time. One young man rushed up from Marseilles after reading the April 1971 issue of *Tout!*: "I met a lot of boys and girls. ... They asked questions that I had never even asked myself: the place of the fag in society, the fag in politics, the emancipation of the fag and the dyke." When he returned a few months later, however, "I discovered a FHAR completely changed. I noticed that everybody was smoking [pot]. The notion of the group was in the process of fraying into clans. ... After a year, the *folles* [effeminate] hung out with *folles*, the pederasts with pederasts, the dykes among themselves, the politicians [and] the Marxists among themselves."<sup>30</sup> Another description of a typical meeting dates from late 1972: "A few boys make an announcement or give out some information, somebody writes a slogan on the blackboard, photos of the last demonstration in which FHAR participated are passed around, someone gives the formula for make-up."<sup>31</sup> "In one year," complained another observer, "FHAR's general assemblies have become a kind of misshapen monster. ... The general assemblies have now been transformed into a boundless shambles, [a] closed terrain for confrontations of incredible [verbal] violence."<sup>32</sup> Although he was apparently referring to screaming matches between political factions, the French word that he used for shambles ("bordel," or brothel) was particularly appropriate here, because most of the men in fact came not for the meetings in the auditorium, but rather to hunt for sexual adventure in the hallways and classrooms upstairs. "It was chaos," Gilles Châtelet later recalled, "a permanent sleeping around."<sup>33</sup> Hocquenghem quoted the reaction of an American friend whom

<sup>27</sup> Oral testimony by Cathy Bernheim (Mar. 2001), cited in Julian Bourg, "'Your Sexual Revolution is Not Ours': French Feminist 'Moralism' and the Limits of Desire," (unpublished paper). Cf. Guy Hocquenghem, *L'après-mai des faunes* (Paris, 1974), 190.

<sup>28</sup> On lesbianism and FHAR, see Marie-Jo Bonnet, *Les relations amoureuses entre les femmes* (Paris, 1995), 332-40; also Picq, *Libération des femmes*, 94-5, 104-11.

<sup>29</sup> Marc Roy, "La provocation comme un des Beaux-Arts," *Gai pied* 25 (Apr. 1981), 33.

<sup>30</sup> "Toujours une ouvrière," *Gai pied* 9 (Dec. 1979), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Françoise Travelet, "Prolétaires de tous les pays, caressez-vous!," *Gulliver* 1 (Nov. 1972), 21.

<sup>32</sup> Alain, "A propos des A.G.," *Le fléau social* 1 (Summer 1972), 4.

<sup>33</sup> Châtelet, in "Mai 68: Le pink bang," 12.

he took to the Beaux-Arts for “what is still conventionally called the General Assembly of FHAR (a gigantic cruising place spread over six floors of a university building, probably the biggest cruising space in Paris, if not in Europe),” and who, agog at what he saw, asked his host: “What is this supposed to be?”<sup>34</sup> The sixty-seven-year-old Guérin, a veteran political and labour activist, embraced the brazen spirit of FHAR enough to strip naked (along with Eaubonne) at one general assembly in order to make a point, but he was sufficiently concerned by the endemic disorder to draft a plan, entitled “For the constitution and organization of a political current in the heart of FHAR,” intended to create some semblance of structure and endow the association with concrete political goals.<sup>35</sup> Nothing ever came of it, and by 1973-1974, the weekly general assemblies at the Beaux-Arts had long ceased to have any political meaning or significance whatsoever. When the police moved in at the request of the school’s administration to expel the gays from the premises in February 1974, it was amidst general indifference.<sup>36</sup>

Whatever actual organizational work FHAR achieved occurred in a number of spontaneously formed working groups of six to thirty persons in Paris (there were another fifteen provincial groups).<sup>37</sup> “Group No. 5,” for example, in Paris’s fifth arrondissement, published an irregular periodical, *Le fléau social* (“The Social Scourge,” an ironic reference to the Mirguet Amendment), five issues of which appeared from 1972 to 1974. The newspaper, according to its editors, “was conceived by a group ... which, totally fed up with the pandemonium and shambles consciously kept up [at the general assemblies], has decided to give itself a tool for work and for the dissemination of this work.”<sup>38</sup> Group No. 5 sought to escape from what it called “a [homosexual] ghetto” and tried (but failed) to enter into contact with other (heterosexual) groups on the far left: “Homosexuality ought to lead to a coming to a wider political consciousness. ... We had the intention, before, to spread the idea of sexual liberation in the leftist groups. We had to give it up.”<sup>39</sup>

But what, concretely, did FHAR manage to achieve? Its actions seem timid today, but were quite daring in their time. FHAR garnered a little publicity for the gay movement in the alternative press (the established press, with occasional exceptions, tended to ignore it). It distributed a number of tracts, like one handed out to the movie-goers leaving a showing of “Death in Venice” on the Rue du Dragon in June 1971: “People freely insult [homosexuals] in the street and pay ten francs to admire them at the cinema.”<sup>40</sup> Members published two short-lived periodicals (*Le fléau social* and *L’antinorm*, both 1972-74); joined in protests staged by others (like the one by the MLF against Mother’s Day on June 21, 1971); held occasional rallies on their own (for example, celebrating Gay Pride in the Tuileries garden on June 27, 1971);

<sup>34</sup> Hocquenghem, *L’après-mai des faunes*, 196.

<sup>35</sup> Université de Nanterre, Bibliothèque de la documentation internationale contemporaine, Fonds Guérin, F° ) 721/15, “Pour la constitution et l’organisation d’une tendance ‘politique’ au sein du FHAR.”

<sup>36</sup> Lacombe, “Les années lumière,” 56.

<sup>37</sup> Travelet, “Prolétaires de tous les pays, caressez-vous!” 21-2.

<sup>38</sup> “Cours camarade, le vieux monde est derrière toi,” *Le fléau social* 1 [Summer 1972], 2. On this periodical, see Girard, *Le mouvement homosexuel*, 109-10.

<sup>39</sup> Yves Frémion and Daniel Riche, “La parole au fléau social: Groupe no 5 du FHAR,” *Actuel* 25 (Nov. 1972): 9.

<sup>40</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 4-Wz-10838, tract entitled “Les homosexuels, ça n’existe pas qu’au cinéma.”



interpolated an enraged Jacques Duclos, leader of the French Communist Party, about the party's policy on homosexuality at a public meeting on 21 January 1972; teamed up with FHAR's Italian equivalent (FUORI) to sabotage a congress of sexologists in San Remo in April 1972; organized a group of vigilantes to take action against young men who were attacking homosexuals at a public urinal near the Buttes-Chaumont; forced their way into a Fourteenth-of-July ball that had refused entry to homosexuals; invaded Parisian cafés where they kissed in public, and so on.<sup>41</sup> Fifty members of FHAR also became the first gays and lesbians to demonstrate publicly in France when, in 1971, they joined Paris's annual May 1 march held by trade unions and left-wing political parties (a practice gays kept up until 1977, after which date they preferred to stage their own Gay Pride parades in late June). Many on the traditional left opposed this presence on May Day; the Communists characteristically declared in 1972 (in reference to FHAR and other extreme left groups in the demonstration) that "this disorder does not represent the advance guard of society, but the rot of capitalism in its decline."<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, what most shocked the traditional left were the Gazolines, a group of (mainly) transvestite males formed in early 1972 and initially dubbed "Camping Gaz Girls," because at the general assemblies they served tea made on camping gas stoves. A former Gazoline (the journalist Hélène Hazera) has recently described their ideas as "a sort of psychedelic homosexual Dadaism, an ideology of derision, violently anti-authoritarian." The Gazolines shouted down anyone who tried to give meetings direction—they refused to accept either structure or hierarchy—and at political demonstrations they cried out slogans and held up banners that both amused and shocked people: "Proletarians of all countries, caress each other!" "Sodom and Gomorrah, the struggle goes on!" "Ah, it's nice to be buggered!" Some critics have charged that such tactics helped bring about the collapse of FHAR, to which Hazera replies: "It's flattering, but exaggerated."<sup>43</sup> In fact, the Gazolines' behaviour was no more than the extreme expression of FHAR's general ideological stance.

FHAR was always deliberately provocative in its strategy and tactics, and this undoubtedly detracted from its political effectiveness, something that some militants eventually came to regret. One wrote, some ten years after the founding of FHAR, that "to a great extent we let ourselves be swept away by the flood-tide of the ideologizing, revolutionary, and marginalizing movement that characterized the infantile phase of this homosexual movement."<sup>44</sup> For Hocquenghem, FHAR was a "Brownian movement [composed] of several hundred fags" (Brownian motion is the erratic, random movement of particles in a liquid or gas) that "always maintained an

<sup>41</sup> For these various actions, see "Les quarantes insolences du FHAR: Quelques dates héroïques," *Gai pied* 25 (Apr. 1981), 34-5; Fauret, "A l'origine des femmes," 36; Girard, *Le mouvement homosexuel*, 86ff.

<sup>42</sup> Martel, *Le rose et le noir*, 46-8; "Chronique d'une marcheuse," *Gai pied* 325 (16 June 1988), 31; and Roland Leroy, "L'ordre démocratique et révolutionnaire," *l'Humanité*, 5 May 1972. See also Michael Sibalís, "'La Lesbian and Gay Pride' in Paris: Community, Commerce and Carnival," in *Gay and Lesbian Cultures in France*, ed. Lucille Cairns (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt and New York, 2002), 51-66.

<sup>43</sup> Hélène Hazera, "Rouge à lèvres et slogans: Souvenirs gazogènes," *Gai pied hebdo* 460 (7 Mar. 1991): 57-8; and idem, "Gazolines," in *Dictionnaire des cultures gays et lesbiennes*, ed. Didier Eribon (Paris, 2003), 213 (for recent quotations).

<sup>44</sup> Jean Boyer, "Le mouvement homosexuel dix ans après," *Rouge* 976 (3/9 July 1981), 23.

irresponsible side; an incapacity to think strategically.”<sup>45</sup> Of course, FHAR rejected leaders or any form of leadership on principle, despite the presence in its ranks of charismatic personalities like Hocquenghem and Eaubonne. According to the latter, “The originality of FHAR, like the MLF, was that for the first time we got away from the ‘star system’ [*vedettariat*], ... centralized structures. For the first time, one saw spontaneous movements that took action, that got results [*marquaient des points*]. This was new, the realization of the old anarchist ideal that had never been concretized.”<sup>46</sup> FHAR saw itself as a collectively lived experience: “FHAR doesn’t belong to anyone, it isn’t anyone. It is only homosexuality on the march. All [politically] conscious homosexuals are FHAR: all discussion between two or three persons is FHAR. ... Yes, we are a nebula of feelings and actions.”<sup>47</sup> This attitude was in great part due to the influence of the Situationists, transmitted to FHAR through the student movement of May ’68. The Situationists (a small group of artists and intellectuals that emerged in the 1950s) “wanted the imagination, not a group of men, to seize power.” They accepted “neither disciples nor leadership,” and, refusing to wait for a far-off political revolution, sought instead “to reinvent life here and now.”<sup>48</sup> As one member of FHAR (twenty-year-old Alain, aka Marlène) remarked in 1972: “What we want is the total transformation of life. One does not make the revolution unless one lives it permanently, daily. We are not social revolutionaries, we are revolutionaries of the present moment.”<sup>49</sup>

In conclusion, there remain two questions for consideration. First, how did FHAR differ from Arcadie? And secondly, what was its legacy to the contemporary gay movement?

Most observers have explained the difference between Arcadie and FHAR as essentially between Arcadie’s social and political conservatism and FHAR’s revolutionary ideals. According to *Le monde* in 1972, for instance, FHAR saw Arcadie as “integrated into the bourgeois system” and wanted instead to “to blow up all the blockages.”<sup>50</sup> This, of course, was FHAR’s own view of things. As Eaubonne famously put it, in her lapidary quip, which was either thrown in André Baudry’s face or pronounced at a general assembly of FHAR (the story varies): “It’s not a question of integrating homosexuals into society, but of disintegrating society through homosexuality.”<sup>51</sup> Even more aggressively, several FHAR militants published a sharp critique of Arcadie in 1973 in which they did not hesitate to call for a “fratricidal struggle to be led against those among us who refuse their liberation and prefer integration into bourgeois society. The latter remains repressive by its very construction, the immemorial and oppressive presence of the family cell (which homosexuals do not recreate) with its subjugation to reproduction, patriarchal power and legal marriage.”<sup>52</sup> In other words, in contrast to André Baudry, who said that homosexuals should behave like respectable members of society the radical activists in FHAR wanted homosexuals to transform society, and indeed believed that

<sup>45</sup> Hocquenghem, *L’après-mai des faunes*, 189.

<sup>46</sup> Alain Sanzio, “Rencontre: Françoise d’Eaubonne,” *Masques* 9-10 (Summer 1981): 22.

<sup>47</sup> FHAR, *Rapport contre la normalité*, 72.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London, 1992), 549-53.

<sup>49</sup> Travelet, “Prolétaires de tous les pays, caressez-vous!” 22.

<sup>50</sup> Brunot Frappat, “Le banquet d’Arcadie,” *Le monde*, 14 Nov. 1972.

<sup>51</sup> Letter by Françoise d’Eaubonne, *Gai pied* 44 (Nov. 1982), 3; Martel, *Le rose et le noir*, 37.

<sup>52</sup> Guy Maës and Eric Michel, “L’homosexualité révolutionnaire. L’antinorm répond à Jean-Louis Bory,” *Libération*, 13 Nov. 1973, 9.

their homosexuality was in and of itself a revolutionary force. An anonymous gay militant summed it up this way in 1977: “what we had to say was subversive: that to assert our homosexuality was to want to destroy the essential foundations of our patriarchal society, but also to completely redefine relations between bodies because the dominant sexuality, heterosexual and capitalist, was the cult of the phallus.”<sup>53</sup> Hocquenghem put it more crudely: “Our assholes are revolutionary.”<sup>54</sup>

And yet, in another respect, Arcadie and FHAR represented two sides of the same coin. In contrast to most gay activist groups today, they both refused to conceive of homosexuals as a minority that required specific civil rights. They both rejected the so-called “ghetto”—specialized bars, institutions and even neighbourhoods dominated by gays and lesbians—and instead wanted homosexuals to be an integral part of the wider world. For Arcadie, this was the existing middle-class world, while FHAR longed for a new world transformed by leftist revolution. It was a big difference, of course, but at the same time both Arcadie and FHAR refused categorically to confine homosexuals within the limits of a particular sexual identity. Their politics were thus a far cry from the “identity politics” and “communitarianism” that French gays are frequently accused of promoting today.<sup>55</sup>

As for its legacy, it is true that the militants of the 1980s and 1990s were all (as they put it in 1991) the “children of FHAR,” but there had been a significant mutation: “We are at once close to FHAR in our desire to have a global and anti-institutional political discourse, but we are moving away from it in our wish to be effective.”<sup>56</sup> The mid- to late 1970s saw a shift of the gay movement away from the provocative tactics and revolutionary rhetoric characteristic of FHAR, toward reformism, the formulation of specific demands for equal rights, and sustained political lobbying. This change is evident in any study of the fragmentary Groupe de Libération Homosexuelle (Homosexual Liberation Group) or GLH that predominated in 1974-1978 and especially the federally structured Comité d’Urgence Anti-Répression Homosexuelle (Emergency Committee Against Homosexual Repression) or CUARH from 1979 to the mid-1980s.<sup>57</sup> CUARH in particular made no bones about its “pragmatic approach.” Fostering contacts with the press, trade unions and political parties and lobbying them for an end to discrimination seemed to CUARH “the most effective way to change the conditions of life that are imposed on us.”<sup>58</sup> This political evolution coincided with the expansion of gay commercialism and the proliferation of gay bars and nightclubs, not only in Paris, first along the Rue Sainte-Anne and then, from about 1980, in the Marais district, which is today the city’s acknowledged “gay

<sup>53</sup> “Homosexualité en révolution,” in *Le catalogue des ressources 3. Santé, sexualité, psychisme, expansion de la conscience* (Paris, 1977), 665.

<sup>54</sup> Guy Hocquenghem, “Towards an Irrecoverable Pederasty,” in *Reclaiming Sodom*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (New York and London, 1994), 236.

<sup>55</sup> Philippe Mangeot, “Communautarisme,” and Michael Sibalis, “Ghetto,” in *Dictionnaire de l’homophobie*, ed. Louis-George Tin (Paris, 2003), 99-103, 194-6.

<sup>56</sup> François Lacombe [Franck Arnal] and Catherine Durand, “Les enfants du Fhar,” *Gai pied hebdo* 461 (14 Mar. 1991), 60.

<sup>57</sup> Girard, *Le mouvement homosexuel*, 127-81; Martel, *Le rose et le noir*, 139-267; Jean Le Bitoux, “The Construction of a Political and Media Presence: The Homosexual Liberation Groups in France Between 1975 and 1978,” in Merrick and Sibalis, *Homosexuality in French History and Culture*, 249-64; Jean Boyer, “Le CUARH et Homophonie. Six années de militantisme gai,” *Masques* 25/26 (Spring/Summer 1985): 87-90.

<sup>58</sup> Jacques Girard and Françoise Renaud, “Une tribune libre de CUARH-Paris,” *Gai pied* 12 (Mar. 1980), 7.

ghetto,” but also in many provincial cities. The gay press, which also began thriving in these years, and most notably *Gai Pied* from 1979 to 1992, served to promote a new, youth-oriented “gay lifestyle” focused on bars, clubs, bathhouses, travel and fashionable clothes.<sup>59</sup>

Most of the FHAR radicals who managed to survive the AIDS holocaust have made their peace with this new world, and those who did not abandon militancy to pursue their personal careers have been busy editing the periodicals or running the various gay associations that have come into existence. Many of the gay and lesbian leaders who have spoken out for their community in the years after 1972—people like Marie-Jo Bonnet, Pierre Hahn, Daniel Guérin, Guy Hocquenghem and Jean Le Bitoux—first came to prominence and public attention as members of FHAR.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, before his death from AIDS in 1988, Hocquenghem—the emblematic FHAR militant and certainly the best known to the general public—openly expressed his disdain for what he called the “new fags” (“nouveaux pédés”), who rejected marginality and sought instead the protection of the law: “This evolution towards a demand for [legal] protection, ... constitutes one of the new characteristics of French homosexuality.”<sup>61</sup> FHAR had cleared the way for dramatic change, but today’s gay movement seeks to project an image of political responsibility and FHAR’s insolent spirit survives only on its margins—for example, in the much contested tactics used since 1989 by the Paris branch of Act-Up in its fight against the AIDS epidemic.

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<sup>59</sup> Michael Sibalís, “Paris,” in *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories since 1600*, ed. David Higgs (London and New York, 1999), 30-6; idem, “Urban Space and Homosexuality: The Example of the Marais, Paris’s ‘Gay Ghetto,’” *Urban Studies* 41 (2004):1739-58; and Frank Arnal, “The Gay Press and Movement in France,” in *The Third Pink Book: A Global View of Lesbian and Gay Liberation and Oppression*, ed. Aart Hendriks, Rob Tielman and Evert van der Veen (Buffalo, N.Y., 1993), 38-45.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Sibalís, “Bonnet, Marie-Jo,” “Guérin, Daniel,” “Hahn, Pierre,” “Hocquenghem, Guy,” and “Le Bitoux, Jean,” in Aldrich and Wotherspoon, *Who’s Who in Contemporary Gay & Lesbian History*, 46-7, 171-2, 175-6, 191-3, and 240-1; and Bill Marshall, *Guy Hocquenghem: Beyond Gay Identity* (London, 1996).

<sup>61</sup> Guy Hocquenghem, “Mais qui sont les ‘nouveaux pédés?’” *Libération*, 31 May-1 June 1980, 7.