



Baudry, André Émile (b. 1922)

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André Baudry, as leader of the French homophile movement from the early 1950s into the 1980s, was the principal spokesman for homosexuals in France before the rise of gay liberation in the 1970s.

Born in Rethonde, France, on August 22, 1922, Baudry grew up in Senlis, where his father was a notary. After the death of his mother, Baudry, then eight years old, was sent to a Jesuit-run boarding school in Laval. He came down with tuberculosis soon after graduation and spent the first years of World War II in hospital and then in a sanatorium in eastern France.

Baudry entered the Roman Catholic seminary at Versailles in 1943, but abandoned his plans for the priesthood in late 1945 or early 1946 because of what he considered an irreconcilable conflict between his religious vocation and his homosexuality. He went on to teach philosophy in a Catholic private school in Paris until the mid-1950s.

In 1946, Baudry began frequenting a circle of conservative Catholic homosexual writers that included Roger Peyrefitte, André du Dognon, and Jacques de Ricaumont.

Ricaumont introduced Baudry to the Swiss homophile review *Der Kreis* (*The Circle*). He became its French correspondent in 1951 under the pseudonym André Romane.

The homophile movement, which was international in scope, disliked the term "homosexual" because it seemed to stress sex over love, whereas "homophile," as Baudry observed, more broadly "designates those persons who can find their erotic fulfilment (. . . physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual) only with another person of the same sex."

Baudry began holding meetings of *Der Kreis's* Paris subscribers in his apartment. In January 1954, he launched his own monthly periodical, named *Arcadie* after the mythical Ancient Greek paradise peopled by happy shepherds. *Arcadie* contained short works of fiction, as well as scientific, literary, and historical articles that focused on (and defended) homosexuality.

Despite the review's austere tone and drab appearance (with no illustrations), the government banned its sale at newsstands; and in 1956 the courts fined Baudry forty thousand francs for offending morals. *Arcadie* nonetheless survived and eventually reached ten thousand subscribers throughout France and perhaps three or four times as many readers. Baudry also sent free copies to politicians, magistrates, doctors, and clergymen, in hopes of changing their negative attitude toward homosexuality.

In 1957 Baudry founded a homophile association, Clespala (Club Littéraire et Scientifique des Pays Latins, or Literary and Scientific Club of the Latin Countries), often also called "Arcadie" for short, headquartered in Paris, first on the rue Béranger, then on the rue du Château-d'Eau from 1969.

The club held weekend dances for members (overwhelmingly male) and sponsored occasional banquets,

cultural activities, and conferences. Once a month, Baudry addressed those members present in the clubhouse with his "Word of the Month," a speech that some sarcastically called a "sermon" because of Baudry's preachiness.

Baudry once said: "I was a happy, well-adjusted homophile; in any case I had never been . . . a complicated, tortured, traumatized, and anxious homosexual worried by the anathema of the Church, by the family or by my surroundings." He wanted other homosexuals to accept themselves in the same way and live happy, full, and productive lives.

Dubbed "His Holiness" and "the Pope" because of his authoritarian tendencies, his sententious moralizing, and his political and social conservatism, Baudry claimed that "[h]omophile groups need one man, a leader, at their head, not a dictator, of course, but someone who has support, who is not alone, of course, and I have never been alone."

Baudry advocated a normalizing ideology--homosexuals should accept society as it existed--that stressed discretion, dignity, and respectability. Apart from their particular erotic interests, homosexuals should look and behave like everybody else. Baudry condemned public displays of affection, sexual promiscuity, and effeminacy.

As late as 1982, Baudry still insisted that "the homosexual must live in the society within which he finds himself" and reproached young American gay liberationists for their "excesses": "They make me want to vomit. I pray . . . that this never reaches France."

Baudry eschewed political agitation and demonstrations for equal rights, because, as one Arcadian put it, "we [homosexuals] are a minority and always will be a minority. The only policy possible for us is to educate intelligent people. . . . They are the ones who, little by little, shape public opinion."

By the late 1970s, this position seemed hopelessly outdated to the younger generation. France changed dramatically after the "May events" of 1968 and, as one of Baudry's critics commented, "Try talking about 'dignity' and 'morals' to the children of the barricades and of the permissive society!"

French gay liberationists of the 1970s were left-wing radicals, who tried to advance their cause through anti-establishment rhetoric, provocative behavior, and clamorous street demonstrations, all anathema to Baudry. Gay liberationists returned his contempt, and (paraphrasing Karl Marx) declared that "Arcadie is the opium of the homosexuals."

They floated damaging rumors about Baudry, including the persistent (albeit unfounded) claim that he was a police informant. But, as Baudry recently told the historian Julian Jackson: "I have always drawn inspiration from a phrase the Jesuits inculcated in me, . . . 'all your life let an air of mystery float around you.' . . . I never responded to their accusations. I let them think what they wanted."

In the 1970s, as homosexuality came into the open in France, Baudry (who was an eloquent speaker) appeared frequently on radio and television and gave numerous interviews to the press, but he declined to work with other gay groups.

In 1982, Baudry abruptly ceased publication of *Arcadie*, closed down Clespala, and retired with his life partner, Giuseppe Adamo (who had worked as barman in the club), to the latter's native village near Naples, Italy. He still lives there, alone (Adamo having died) and almost blind, but always intellectually active.

Baudry's contribution to the gay cause in France should not be minimized, as gay liberationists have tended

to do. Jacques Girard recognized in 1981 that "to establish a [homosexual] group in [the 1950s], a man was needed who believed in the cause, but who also understood the mood of the times. That man was Baudry." Unfortunately for Baudry, Girard added, "the times have changed, while the director of Arcadie remains the same."

Or, as philosopher Michel Foucault pointed out in 1982: "It would be naïve to reproach [Arcadie] for its conservatism: since it is in the nature of a movement of this kind to want . . . to bring [homosexuality] into the existing institutional structures. . . . Baudry's prophetic madness was to want to get homosexuality admitted into the bosom of the values that condemn it."

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