

"*Gai Pied* and the rhetorics of identity in the French gay community, 1979-83"

Proposal for the "Rhetorical Construction of Identities: Place, Race, Sex and the Person" Conference, University of Redlands, 20-23 January, 2005

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The late 1970s were difficult years for the French gay community: in 1978 (on the eve of a general election widely held as difficult for the incumbent parliamentary majority), a moralistic about turn led the right-wing government to ban the handful of gay periodicals that had managed to emerge in the relatively more tolerant post-1968 context and to strengthen judicial repression of homosexual relations between minors and adults. However, the publication in April 1979 of the first issue of *Gai Pied* magazine heralded something of a change. *Gai Pied* was a militant, community-orientated monthly, run by an editorial team seasoned in the late-1960s, early 1970s political debates. Its structure was sensibly different from the previous gay magazines on the market, with less emphasis on soft porn pictures and more in-depth articles; especially noticeable were those dealing with legal aspects (how to deal with police harassment or judicial entanglements to develop a harmonious, steady life). In 1980-1, in the context of the impending French presidential election, *Gai Pied* promoted the idea of a 'pink vote' and, after toying with various ideas, finally supported the socialist candidate François Mitterrand, whose program adopted a firm anti-discriminative stance. Indeed, when he was elected, he helped introducing some measures, such as putting an end to police harassment (1981) or lowering of the age of consent (1982). In 1983, the magazine turned weekly and adopted a more commercially-oriented line, which was both a sign and the consequence of the liberalization that had taken place; it closed an era and opened another.

This paper will be a case study of the strategies implemented by *Gai Pied* during these highly important formative years (1979-83) to promote a sense of identity in the French (male) gay population.

***Gai Pied* and the rhetorics of identity in the French gay community, 1979-83**

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October 25, 2004, saw the launching in France of Pink Television, the first cable and satellite TV channel in the world to aim at a gay and gay-friendly audience. A little more than twenty five years had elapsed since *Gai Pied*, the first, specific, large-scale circulation medium aiming at a gay readership, was originally published in April, 1979, and a lot of things had changed in the meantime¹. *Gai Pied*, which could be compared to the American *Advocate* or the British *Gay News*, holds a special position in French gay history: it was originally published in a difficult period and its editorial agenda was at the time rather innovative. The editorial of the first issue is worth quoting at some length:

“‘*Le Gai Pied*’² [heralds] the launching of a new kind of paper, a monthly magazine, informing and thought-provoking, written by homosexuals. Our aim: to give back to the gays, to nowadays homosexuals, a place to express themselves, to discuss. And also to utter an alternative discourse to everything the media write and say about homosexuality, much too often to support outdated moralization campaigns. Because our contribution to the reflection on today’s world cannot be done without us [*sic*]. Because also – various reports prove it in this issue – we are too often the scapegoats of uncertain periods in history, and death awaits us too often in the pale dawn of revolution and dictatorship alike. The homosexual press virtually disappeared last year under the strains of censorship. It wants to rise again today, new, better informed, more ironical. *Gai Pied* also wants to establish a new relationship with its readers. This is why, without waiting any longer, a large party will be thrown at the Bataclan³ on April 30, to meet each other, talk together, dance together. Because, every month, *Gai Pied* will from now on express its hope in a gayer, keener life: an other life”.

A monthly from April 1979 to November 1982, *Gai Pied* turned weekly on November 27, 1982, a decision which reflected the editorial team’s desire to capitalize on a more favorable context, with the coming to power, the previous year, of President François Mitterrand and the subsequent liberalization of legislation and, globally, of public attitudes towards homosexuality.

¹ An overview of this history can be found in Martel 2000.

² The definite article was dropped in May 1980.

³ Trendy Parisian night-club and concert hall, located on boulevard Voltaire, in the 11th *arrondissement*.

There are many reasons to focus on the period 1979-1982, when *Gai Pied* was a monthly magazine: first, and maybe foremost, it was France's only openly gay magazine on sale to the general public – other titles were either not for public display or relying largely on innuendo and *double entendre* to be recognized by their intended public while pretending to cater for a general audience. Buying *Gai Pied*, even in Paris and even more in a provincial city was actually an act requiring some degree of temerity; not all newsagents were selling it, and, even then, displaying it openly in their shop window. It was more often than not relegated with the pornographic magazines, erecting yet another obstacle for the potential buyer. Second, it was a militant magazine, waging an open identity fight and wanting to foster such a sense among its readers – hence, right from the very first (see quote, *supra*), the editorial team referred to their readers as 'gays', used as an equivalent to 'homosexuals'. Third, the change from a monthly to a weekly basis was substantial enough, casting *Gai Pied* in the mould of 'standard' news magazine, even if still addressing a gay readership. I will then present the magazine and its context in some details before studying the strategies which were implemented by *Gai Pied* during these highly important formative years (1979-83) to promote a sense of identity in the French (male) gay population.

The birth of the magazine and its context

1978 was a disaster year for a French gay press of already limited scope. Just two years before (February, 1976), *Dialogues homophiles* had been the first such magazine to be available in the newsstands. It was followed by a few others : *Don*, *Andros*, *Gaie Presse*... In the run up to the March 1978 general election, widely considered as difficult for the incumbent right-wing majority, the government decided to play the public morality card and cracked down on 'immoral publications', withdrawing a batch of erotic – or deemed so – magazines from public sale: *Lui*, a French *Playboy*, and the abovementioned gay magazines faced this decision which equaled for most of them to a *de facto* death sentence⁴.

⁴ Magazines facing such a decision could no longer be advertised in newsstands; they could not be sold to under 18s; since they were no longer dispatched by the *Nouvelles messageries de la presse parisienne* (NMPP), which enjoyed since 1945 the virtual monopoly of press distribution, they had to find their own ways of reaching the

By the time *Gai Pied* first issue was in the newsstand, the ‘homosexual press’ was very restricted in scope: there were porn mags (*Homosexual Man*, *Alter Ego...*), offering mainly pictures and very little text; there was *Arcadie*, published since 1954 by the eponymous association led by André Baudry, but it was sold to the public since 1976 only (it was previously by subscription only); there were those who, in order to escape censorship, presented themselves as ‘showbiz’ or ‘entertainment’ magazines (*Off*, *Hommes*), even if this alibi was wearing thin, given the number of male nude shots (but of ‘artistic’ value...) spreading from page to page; *Man* (in fact, a revamp of the deceased *Don*) and *Trois Millions* (subtitle: “*Si tous les gars du monde se donnaient la main*”) struggled through legal difficulties to exist, before they were suppressed in the summer of 1979. Of all of these, *Arcadie*, an institution by itself, was the only one selling a substantial number of copies (c. 30,000 in the mid-70s⁵). This is to say how *Gai Pied*’s release was at the same time heroic and precarious.

Gai Pied was the brainchild of Jean Le Bitoux, the son of an admiral and a professor of music, born in the South of France and deeply impressed by the gay liberation movement taking place in Paris in the wake of the 1968 ‘events’⁶. Moving from Nice to Paris, he frayed with the FAHR (*Front Homosexuel d’action d’action révolutionnaire*⁷) and then the GLH (*Groupe de libération homosexuelle*) and was a left-wing candidate to the 1978 general election in Paris. Le Bitoux gathered a team of would-be journalists, set up the Editions du Triangle Rose, a limited liability company, and went into publishing *Le Gai Pied*. According to his own words, Le Bitoux wanted to “invent a new discourse, create a discussion, even a thunderous one, with the far left”. A substantial part of the original editorial team had belonged to various early-1970s militant organizations (FHAR, GLH, Les Gazolines⁸, etc.). It was also rather closely acquainted with the extreme-left daily *Liberation*, not only on a very practical level (the magazine was printed on the same printing machines, and some of the typesetters were the same) but also in the rebellious

potential buying public. X rated, confined to the sex shop circuit, they were literally stifled and could not last very long, excepted when, like *Lui. Le Magazine de l’homme moderne*, they were supported by a press group strong enough to allow it to wait for better days.

⁵ Martel 2000: 103.

⁶ His autobiography has been published (Le Bitoux 2003) but is too self hagiographic to be of any real value.

⁷ Or Revolutionary Action Homosexual Front; a left-wing organization established in the wake of 1968.

⁸ Les Gazolines were a radical group of drag queens/transvestites known for their theatrical actions.

sprit and tone, and, more generally, with the extreme-left political scene – mainly the Trotskyite *Ligue communiste révolutionnaire* (LCR). This gave *Gai Pied* a distinctive flavor right from the start, just like the fact that it was published by a limited liability company and not by an association. The sales figures showed that it answered a need: the first issue sold 6,000 copies, and the figures soared rapidly: 10,000 in July, i.e. 3 months later, 15,000 on its first anniversary. It is true that the offer was rather limited, since *Man* and *Trois Millions* quickly disappeared; in May 1979, Jean-Pierre Joeker's review *Masques* published its first issue, but it was a quarterly and, adopting a high-aiming cultural approach, it was less accessible and did not provide the same kind of information than *Gai Pied*.

1979-81: fighting for defining an identity

If the first issue of a magazine (or newspaper) is deeply revealing about the aims and objectives of its founders, it is then worth taking a closer look at *Gai Pied's numero uno*: printed on a nasty paper that was to turn yellow fairly rapidly and creak after a few years, it was 15 pages long, printed on broadsheet, folding in two and opening as a portfolio – for more discretion? The front cover was adorned by a picture of what epitomized at the time the ultimate French gay fantasy: the torso of a young guy, bare-chested, thin and lean (picture 1). The articles, arranged rather randomly on the pages, with an obvious desire to use the printable surface to the max, and ripe with spelling mistakes (even sometimes in the spelling of their author's name!) can be grouped in five broad categories: current affairs; news from France and from the world; politics; gay history; culture (books, movies, records and theatre reviews); “*fiches pratiques*”, dealing with judicial and health matters. There were also two comic strips of mildly erotic value (one can see male nude bodies drawn from afar, and a pair of testicles!). Commercial ads were few and came mostly from publishers of pornographic material. The editorial team stuck globally to this formula even if, from very material point of view, there were a few changes: the quality of the paper improved after a few months and, in April 1981, the magazine was divided in two fascicles, the central one being more exclusively devoted to

‘culture’. There were less spelling mistakes (but still quite a few), and the initial impression of amateurism globally decreased, albeit slowly.

The original idea of the editorial team was to denounce homophobia and to stir up the conscience of their readers; having been, for most of them, acquainted with the radical movements of the early 1970s, they wanted the French homosexuals to assert themselves, to stand up and speak up and, consequently, envisaged the magazine as a conscience-raising medium. In order to do so, it used various means.

The rhetorics of community

The first element was language. The journalists of *Gai Pied* used systematically the word ‘gai’ (the direct translation in French of ‘gay’) as an equivalent to ‘homosexual’; this was put explicitly in one of the very opening sentences of the first editorial: “Our aim: to give back to the gays, to nowadays homosexuals, a place to express themselves, to discuss”. They worked actively to spread its usage while it was still parsimoniously used by the French homosexuals and virtually not by the public at large. It has been said that when the time had come to choose a title, Le Bitoux, following a suggestion made by philosopher Michel Foucault, settled for “*Le Gai Pied*” against other tentative titles (*Outrage*, or *Guet-apens*) because of the literal inclusion of “gai” in it⁹. Another version is that the title *Le Gai Pied* was derived from that of the recently published satirical novel *Le Pied*, by homosexual author Jean-Louis Bory¹⁰, which had enjoyed its fair share of success; a popular expression, “(c’est) le pied” meant something like “it’s great fun”, while “prendre son pied” was a byword for “to come”; *Le Le “Gai” Pied* was then a very clear statement. Whichever, if any, is accurate, the ultimate meaning remains the same. However, the word ‘homosexual’ remained largely used (63% of the occurrences in the first three issues of *Le Gai Pied*¹¹); ‘gai’ came second, with 23%, and finally ‘pédé’ (*queer*), with 14%.

⁹ An account in Martel 2000 : 188.

¹⁰ A prolific writer, cinema critic and relentless spokesman for gay rights, the regular host of TV and radio shows when dealing with this topic; he committed suicide in June 1979.

¹¹ According a very statistical-minded reader, who included these statistics in his letter to the editor, published in issue n°3.

Many articles referred to a collective ‘we’ supposed to embrace all the homosexuals, or at least all the self-conscious ones, and to foster a sense of belonging. But this ‘we’ was also a means to overcome the cleavages within the gay population, cleavages fairly perceptible in the classified ads, with the ever longer list of ‘please abstain’ (queers, effeminate, overweight, bearded, etc.). Since most of the founding fathers of the magazine were former members of the *Gazettes*, they must have found this anti-queen stance rather infuriating. Pedophiles were another ‘minority within the minority’ and the question of boy love was recurrent in virtually every issue. With the reform of the Penal Code under discussion in Parliament and the possible lowering of the age of consent for gays (see below), the magazine devoted at least one article per issue to the question. However, the question of sexual relations between adults and teenagers was amalgamated with that of sexual relations between adults and younger boys: *Gai Pied* opened regularly its columns to the most open advocates of pedophilia, such as novelists Tony Duvert and Gabriel Matzneff, or philosopher René Scherer¹² (see picture 2). While unambiguously condemning any *physical* violence exerted on children, they – and other *Gai Pied* journalists – were completely oblivious to the question of *moral* violence, or at least pressure, and argued that a loving relationship between an adult and a child based on full mutual consent was indeed possible. A regular ‘debate’ on pedophilia lasted for months and months, fuelled by regular accounts of trials for sexual relations with underage boys. December 1979 issue featured, under the title “One year of blind persecution”, a chronology of the judicial affairs of the year. Its author, Xavier Deschamps, wrote

“1979, the year of the child. To those who love children, those who love them most, who love them to caresses and to non-violent relations of love, of sexual games, of friendship, of initiation to the senses, the PEDERASTS, this was not their year [...] Repression of one of the shapes of homosexuality, of one of the possible ways of expressing human love and sexuality”¹³

¹² Tony Duvert, born in 1945, laureate of the prestigious Medis literary prize in 1973, had published several books advocating the right for young boys to a free sexuality, among them *Le Bon sexe illustré* (1974) and *L’Enfant au masculine* (1980). Gabriel Matzneff, born in 1936, had published *Les Moins de 16 ans* in 1974. René Scherer, born in 1922, Professor of philosophy at the notoriously avant-garde university of Vincennes (now Paris 8-Saint-Denis), had published *Emile perversi* in 1974.

¹³ “La phobie de la pédophilie”, *Gai Pied*, 9, December 1979, p. 12.

The publication of a couple of books by psychologist and sociologists taking a strong stance against pedophilia¹⁴ led to a series of articles aggressing violently

“the new anti-pederasts. You know well that it is fashionable to be ‘new’, ‘never said before’¹⁵. How could it be possible to criticize a certain way of being a pederast? You got it: it had to take two”¹⁶

denouncing the “hunt to the lovers of the under 16s” waged by these “scum books” (“*dégueulasseries*”), and openly accusing their authors to act as auxiliaries for the police by legitimating further repression. Another line of defense was to say that the pedophiles were in fact the scapegoats designated as such by the repressive institutions “in this period of social tensions” and in order to “moralize the poor classes”, and to argue that working 8 hours a day was a greater violence made on children than that of the pedophile¹⁷.

This ‘collective we’ was under many threats – and this was another way of creating a sense of belonging. Reading the first 20 something issues of *Gai Pied* is a powerful reminder of the difficulties, and even the dangers, that awaited homosexual men in their daily – and nightly – life. Mugging, police harassment and judicial troubles were everyday realities and the articles published in *Gai Pied* reflected it acutely. The first issue featured a report on the aggression of the Austrian minister of Foreign Affairs on an open-air cruising ground in Strasbourg, and a “*fiche juridique*” on the articles of the Penal Code which criminalized ‘gross indecency’ among adults (article 330, with paragraph 2 [hereafter article 330-2] repressing more severely homosexual acts) and with under-18s (article article 331, with paragraph 3 [hereafter 331-3] discriminating against homosexual relationships). These articles could be used against men cruising in public grounds or in porn cinemas (a brief report on page 3 relates how a police raid in a then notorious cinema, located rue du Dragon, resulted in two men being tried under article 330-2, for being caught in the act). In the following issues, *Gai Pied* reported repeatedly instances of gay men assaulted in public spaces and could occasionally devote more space to a single affair: for instance, the Fourniols case (Robert Fourniols, a social worker, was indicted in

¹⁴ Huston 1979, Sebar 1979 and Pinard-Legrès and Lapouge 1979.

¹⁵ The French had recently discovered the ‘new philosophers’, the ‘new right’ and even the ‘new cuisine’...

¹⁶ “Pédoquoi? Pédéraste”, *Gai Pied*, 13, April 1980, p. 6.

¹⁷ “Enfants-adultes... rien ne va plus”, *Gai Pied*, 1, April 1979, p. 11. The fact that it was published in the first issue is revealing of the line of thought followed throughout. The obvious Foucauldian-cum-Marxist influences were very much in fashion at the time.

October 1978 for gross indecency and sexual relations with a 15-year-old guy, tried and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment and forfeited of his civil rights for 10 years) is referred to in issues 3, 4 and 7 of *Gai Pied*, and Fourniols himself published an open letter in issue n°7. “*Fiches pratiques*” dealing with judicial matters were published more or less regularly in the magazine: the very first one, published in the first issue, was a state-of-the-art of the current legislation (with particular emphasis placed on articles 330-2 and 331-3); the second one (issue number 14, May 1980) dealt with the “rights of the young” (i.e. under the age of consent); the third one (issue 16/17, Summer 1980) was on the rights and duties of the police in case of an arrest – an expanded version of that published in April 1979, its publication was quite timely at the moment when a lot, if not most, of *Gai Pied* readers were about to go away on holiday and enjoy it to the full). The last two “*fiches*” published during that period addressed legal topics more relevant to gay couples: how to provide one’s partner with an inheritance and bypass both the family and the inland revenue administration (tontine and life insurance were judged the best two systems, or how to obtain certificates of cohabitation).

It is then by no means surprising that the discussions around the reform of the articles of the Penal Code referred to above received important coverage. To cut the story short, a couple of parliamentarians belonging to the left-wing opposition had presented in 1978-9 bills aiming at bringing the homosexual age of consent (then 18) in line with the heterosexual one. The right-wing government was viewing it more or less favorably¹⁸, but the debate in the National Assembly turned very differently from what was expected: on November 19, 1980, the right-wing majority adopted an amendment put forward by former minister Jean Foyer perpetuating the “*délit d’homosexualité*” (“homosexuality misdemeanor”) for relationships between adults and 15-18 year-olds¹⁹. The ultimate appeal to the French Constitutional court supreme presented by the Socialist Party failed (December 1980). The consequences of this legal and political battle (the idea of a ‘pink vote’) will be dealt with below.

¹⁸ President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing had initiated in 1974-6 a couple of liberal reforms, such as the legalizing of abortion or the liberalization of divorce.

¹⁹ It became article 331-2 in the Penal Code, but was still widely referred to in the columns of the magazine as “article 331-3”.

Gai Pied also gave ample coverage to the question of censorship. It must be kept in mind that the magazine saw the light of day at the time when most of the rest of the gay press had been suppressed and that the risk of censorship was very ripe: the magazine had twice to censor a comic strip likely to threaten its very existence; if the first one, “Lycaons”, by Alex Barbier, was only suspended for 1 episode (issue n°4/5, Summer 1979), the second (“Star Queers”, by Stella Blenneau – a pun withy ‘*blenno*’, the French word for ‘gonorrhoea’) was purely and simply withdrawn from the magazine in October 1980. In both cases, the litigious picture was that of a male sex, seen in full erection, and likely to fall under article 14 of the 1949 law on publications destined for the young, which gave the Home Minister the power to suspend or suppress “publications of every nature being a danger for the young because of their lewd or pornographic nature”.

Venereal diseases were another peril lurking in the dark for any sexually active homosexual man (and more often than not quite literally!) and this is reflected in the “*fiches médicales*”: between issue 1 and 26, 4 “*fiches*” dealt with syphilis (issue 1 – significantly -, issues 7, 24 and 25), 2 with gonorrhea (issues 3 and 13) and cockscombs (issues 4 and 22), while the range of the others went from crabs to scabies, through hepatitis, or foreskin pathologies. Other topics dealt with were anal diseases (issue 6), poppers (issue 9), sun tanning (issue 23), lubricants (issue 26) or vaccination against tropical diseases (issue 25). Ample coverage was also given to the *Association des médecins gais* (Gay Medics Association, whose founder was Dr Claude Lejeune, the author of the “*fiches médicales*” under the pen name of “*Gai Toubib*”, or “Gay Doc”) which came progressively into being, as a means of providing gay people with reliable interlocutors: doctors had to declare the cases of venereal diseases they came across with and, although this declaration was anonymous, there were widespread fears that the police used them to make up a ‘gay register’; choosing a ‘gay doctor’ was presented as a way of avoiding this. However, in this pre-AIDS era, VD’s were not taken too seriously, more as an inevitable burden, the flip side of a sexually active life, more than a real health hazard.

To take things on a broader level, this gives a hint of what *Gai Pied*’s discourse on sex was at the time. In a typical post-1968 stance, it advocated an unrestricted sexual activity as the

trademark of gay liberation, and most of the editorial team practiced what they preached. The “*Chronique du moi*” (“The Me Chronicle”, here again a play of words between “moi” – me – and “mois” – month – “Chronique du moi” sounded just like “*Chronique du mois*” and was the personal account of the past month) was more often than not a chronicle of sexual encounters; some of the journalists were known for their liberated sexual habits, often dating back to the glorious days of the FHAR and the famous meetings at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, where the said Ecole was turned into a large scale back-room. By the way, this was not limited to sex: along with drinking and smoking (whatever the substance), it was the trademark of a liberated gay of the late-1970s.

Gai Pied wanted also to foster a sense of identity by getting their readers to understand they shared a common past. Right from the very first issue, ‘history’ (in the broadest sense) played an important part, with paper on three column on “the silent holocaust”, i.e. that of the ‘men with the pink triangle’ in the Nazi death camps, reflecting the importance of the subject to Jean Le Bitoux, who had made friends with Alsatian-born and former ‘pink triangle’ Pierre Seel²⁰. It was supplemented by a paper on Marinus van der Lubbe (the young Dutch whom the Nazis had accused of setting fire to the Reichstag in February 1933), underlining that the fact that he was homosexual had been carefully withdrawn from all history books, plus the serialized publication of the *Novel of a born-inverted*, or the autobiographical narrative of a 19th-century homosexual man. Presented by journalist-historian Pierre Hahn, who had just published *Nos Ancêtres les pervers*, an evocation of gay life in Second Empire France, it was to run for the three following issues (n° 2 to 5/6). In later issues, these topics were represented by a lengthy review of Lionel Soukaz and Guy Hocquenghem’s movie *Race d’Ep* (from “*rastdep*”, slang word for “*pédéraste*”)²¹, recounting “one century of homosexual history”; an “irregular serial” on “the psychiatrist and the homosexual”, written by Serge Hefez and presenting “the dawn of sexology” (issues 8-11); a 4-page description of gay life in 1925 Paris (issue 13); the

²⁰ One remembers that *Gai Pied* was published by the Editions du Triangle rose.

²¹ This film, made in 1978 and released amidst many difficulties the following year because of censorship, presented various periods of the history of homosexuality: baron von Gloeden and Belle Epoque sexual tourism in Sicily ; Magnus Hirschfeld and the extermination of homosexuals under the Third Reich ; the hopes and lures of the 1960s sexual liberation. Guy Hocquenghem published an accompanying book (Hocquenghem 1979).

“silent holocaust” was graced with a second article in issue 14; in issue 18, there was a retrospect of Parisian ‘*tasses*’ (slang word for urinals, or ‘cottages’)...

Culture was obviously understood as being part of that common ‘history’. Every issue featured numerous reviews of films, novels or essays dealing with homosexuality; and from issue 9 (December 1979, see picture 3) on, *Gai Pied* featured every three months a special literary/cultural column, entitled “*Le Gai Savoir*” – one can reasonably assume that the presence of ‘*gai*’ in the Nietzschean title was the major reason behind this choice –, which soon turned into a four-page pull-out (easy to archive) printed on coloured paper (easy to identify in the pages of the magazine). It dealt mainly with well-known figures of the literary scene, since, as it was stated in its first issue,

“books remain for the homosexual the ultimate means of expression and reflection [...] With words spoken or unspoken, it is our media [sic] *par excellence*. Literary production on homosexuality has been increasing for some time. As a consequence, we have created *Gai Savoir*, this quarterly literary supplement, to give it all its place in our columns”.

The first “*Gai Savoir*” was a collection of papers on various subjects: pedophilia, with an interview of René Scherer, but also the recently deceased Jean-Louis Bory, or Pasolini; it then focused on a single theme, and Colette, Barthes, Proust, Gide, or “le roman gai” (“the gay novel”) were the subjects of subsequent “*Gai Savoir*”.

Finally, the sense of identity could not go without a certain amount of knowledge about where to go to meet other gay persons. The late 1970s- early 1980s French gay scene was to a large extent still an ‘outdoor scene’, could we say, with – at least outside Paris – few bars, clubs or restaurants, and a lot of cruising taking place in the open air, with all the risks that it implied. If the judicial advice offered in some “*fiches pratiques*” was helpful, as we have seen above, other “*fiches*” listed all the gay meeting/cruising places in cities, especially provincial ones. They offered both the isolated local reader and the occasional visitor information about where to go. This ‘Tour de France’ started with Bordeaux (issue 1), to go on with Tours (issue 2), Toulouse (issue 3), Rouen (issue 6), Nantes (issue 7), Lille (issue 8), Lorient (issue 9), Marseille (issue 11), Montbeliard (issue 15), Nice (issue 23), Carcassone (issue 24), Lyon (issue 25) or Poitiers (issue 26). Paris was only dealt with in the fourth issue, although probably less because of a reasonable “*anti-parisianisme*” than an astute commercial move: the 6 page fold-out of the

Summer of 1979 issue could be extremely useful to provincial readers likely to spend some time on vacation in the capital. Each time, open air cruising places were duly located, as well as the addresses of the local GLH (*Groupe de libération homosexuelle*, Gay Liberation Front) and gay or gay-friendly clubs or restaurants. There were also reports along similar lines on foreign cities: London, NYC, San Francisco, Toronto, Barcelona or Amsterdam, all of them favorite destinations of the gay traveler.

Reading *Gai Pied* offers also an invaluable inventory of the burgeoning gay commercial scene: in spite of booming sales (20,000 copies in April 1981) *Gai Pied* depended on announcers; these commercial ads, mostly of gay clubs and restaurants, were of course as many rallying points to readers but also map out the – or, at any rate, a substantial part of it – gay underworld of late 1970s Paris (provincial announcers were extremely rare, and most of the time confined to those of the city described in the current issue). Commercial ads, other than those from the publishers of erotic/pornographic magazines, were few in the first issues of *Gai Pied*, but became more frequent at the end of 1979/beginning of 1980 (see picture 4). They depict a scene then less geographically concentrated than might have been said in the 1st and 4th ‘arrondissements’ (the rue Ste Anne-Opéra axis on the one hand, made popular in the 1970s thanks to places such as Le Pimm’s, Le Sept, Le Bronx or Le Colony, and the emerging Halles-Marais area on the other), with a still substantial sprinkling of places in the more popular areas of Montmartre and Pigalle (a major scene in the interwar years) or in the area of Saint-Germain-des Près (on the left bank), extremely busy in the late 1940s-early 1950s (restaurant Le Petit Prince, rue de Lanneau, just round the corner of Polytechnique and the College de France, and still working, and well, today, was one of the very first announcers).

The politics of identity: the temptation of the ‘pink vote’ (June 1980-1981)

Gai Pied’s first issue was published right in the middle of the protracted legislative battle about article 331-3 (see above). The outcome was a bitter disappointment for the magazine, as well as for the French gays. As early as May 1980, editor-in-chief Jacky Fougeray had led a scathing attack on the right-wing majority, which anti-gay position had become apparent, and

denounced it as “closed to every evolution”. In the following issue, Fougeray and director Jean Le Bitoux co-signed a leader calling for a “counter-attack” (this was the very title of their leader – see picture 5) in the perspective of the presidential election laying than a year ahead: “It is time, for *Gai Pied*, and from this very issue, to discuss together of the best way to remind ourselves to the political power and to the political parties. By a vote, for instance”. The idea of taking the homosexuals to the polls was not entirely new: there had been a few candidates (in Lille, Paris, or Aix-en-Provence) running for the 1978 general election under the GLH flag, but they had cast only a handful of the votes. But this time it was something different, as could be read in the open letter novelist Yves Navarre²² published in the same page:

“I dream of slipping into the envelope, on the first ballot of the presidential election, a pink triangle with ‘article 331, paragraph 3’ written on it, or simply ‘We do exist’. Dream takes me from ‘I’ to ‘us’. It is indeed question of ‘us’. All of us. If we were doing it, all of us? They could at least count us, even if they don’t count us [sic – did he mean “if we don’t count for us”?]. Pink would blossom and the triangle would scratch in every polling station. Dreams sometimes have a sense of experience long forgotten by the theorists of power, and even of counter-powers’.

Navarre’s proposal fuelled a long debate about the ‘pink vote’ – as it soon became to be labeled – which lasted until the very eve of the presidential election. Its many phases which can be summarized as such:

- ⌚ June–December 1980: following Yves Navarre’s call for a ‘pink vote’, a heated debate took place within the magazine about its proprieties; ample space was given to the readers’ reactions; the idea of a candidate running under specifically gay colors was also aired; a couple of articles examined ‘gay power’ in various foreign countries, especially Germany (September 1980) and the States (November 1980);
- ⌚ December 1980: French humorist Coluche announced his candidature, stating in his original declaration that he wanted to run for “the lazy, the dirty, the drug addicts, the alcoholics, the queers [*pédés*], the women, the scroungers, the young, the old, the artists, the convicts, the dykes, the apprentices, the Black, the footmen, the Arabs, the French, the

²² Yves Navarre, who was to receive the Goncourt literary prize the following autumn for his *Jardin d’acclimatation*, was not by then extremely well-known outside the circles of the gay community. A prolific writer since 1971, his first ‘public’ appearance had been a notorious TV debate on homosexuality broadcast on the second channel in 1975. Since the death of fellow-writer Jean-Louis Bory in June 1979, he had more or less succeeded him as *the* advocate of homosexuality for the media.

long-haired, the mad, the transvestites, the former communists, the dyed-in-the-wood abstentionists, all those who do not rely on political men, to vote for me”, urging them to register and to spread the news. His slogan was “to put it up their arse with Coluche, the one candidate who has no reason to lie”. In the same issue, Huguette Bouchardeau, candidate for the left-wing Parti socialiste unifié (PSU), was interviewed and brought full support to most of the gay movement propositions;

- ⌚ January-March 1981: each issue featured a regular ‘presidential election’ rubric where readers, editors and columnists could speak their mind; opinions ranged from supporting Coluche to playing the pink vote card, presenting an official gay candidate, or supporting a candidate presented by a ‘small party’ (PSU was the favorite in this case), or to not voting at all; if the Coluche solution appealed to those with avowed or not anarchist leanings, who were sensitive to his ‘libertarian’ discourse (i.e. presenting his candidature as focusing mainly on the individual liberties question), it was repugnant to those who found it catch-all or even reactionary, because of his anti-party stance, verging on antiparlamentarism;
- ⌚ April-May 1981: with the stakes getting closer (the first round of the residential election took place on April 21, 1981, and the second round on May 10), *Gai Pied* rallied more or less openly to François Mitterrand’s candidature; the Socialist party’s position during the recent debate on the reform of the Penal Code benefited from a full-length report (April 1981) and Mitterrand’s spokesman during the campaign, Pierre Bérégovoy, granted *Gai Pied* an interview, published in the May 1981 issue, while other major political parties (either from the incumbent majority or the Communist Party) hardly agreed to have someone answering a few questions over the phone; a message from Mitterrand had been read by Yves Navarre to the audience of *Gai Pied*’s anniversary party at Le Palace on April 13 (“I ask Yves Navarre to bear to you the esteem and attention I bring to your to the way of life that you wish and which has to be made possible”²³); ten days later, he reportedly said that “homosexual gross indecency cases

²³ On its genesis, and the possibility that it be a fake, see Martel 2000: 213-4.

should not be treated more severely than heterosexual ones”, giving the gays one more reason to vote for him.

Finally, Mitterrand won the election on May 10, 1981 by 0.6 million votes over incumbent President Giscard d’Estaing. Political scientists gauged his election may have been made possible by the ‘pink vote’, either through mobilization in favor of the Socialist candidate, or through an abstention damageable to Giscard.

1981-3: new concerns

There can be little doubts that the election of François Mitterrand heralded (or dit it coincide?) a new period in *Gai Pied*’s history. At first, continuity was more apparent than change, but a new tone and style became fairly rapidly perceptible, especially in the context of a booming circulation (25,000 copies a month by mid-1981). The removal of legal and judicial discriminating measures carried out by the new, left-wing, majority in Parliament contributed to a sense of victory gained at last. *Gai Pied* reflected the carefree attitude which had then become prevalent within the French gay community, leading to a rather deliberate refusal of taking into account signs of new problems to come, such as the outbreak of the AIDS epidemics.

Editorial matters: continuity and change?

Little change was apparent in the editorial formula in the first following months. The core content of the magazine remained unchanged, with the now seasoned mix of news in brief, current affairs, culture and ads. However, their respective proportion varied somewhat and, in particular, that of culture, which tended to increase: the “*Lire, voir, écouter*” section was expanding fast, listing more music, films, books or exhibitions reviews. The “*Gai Savoir*” quarterly supplement dealt with “Italian poets”, Cocteau, Lorca or Pessoa. Not only was this conveying the idea that ‘culture’ was in some way or other a common denominator to the gay public, and a way of displaying an identity through shared centers of interest. It also reflected the increased visibility of homosexuals and homosexual themes in the world of art and culture. Most certainly, the ‘arts’ had from immemorial times a refuge for homosexuals, a *locus* where

their difference was tolerated, even expected to be part of the whole thing. However, the change in political majority had also led to the adoption of a more permissive cultural policy, relaxing the rules of censorship and allowing the presentation to wider audiences of artistic works previously strictly kept in the closet. The broadcasting, as early as June 1981, of a TV film adapted from Stefan Zweig's *La Confusion des sentiments*, where French actor Michel Piccoli (and notorious Socialist supporter) kissed on the mouth the young and beautiful Leo Malet, was an encouraging sign. Others were to follow. In November 1980, the fact that two laureates of some of the two more prestigious literary prizes (the Goncourt and the Fémina) were homosexual²⁴ had caused something of a stir; in 1982, the attribution of the Goncourt prize to Dominique Fernandez for his imaginary biography of Pasolini (*Dans la main de l'ange*) went almost unnoticed; but *Gai Pied* triumphantly headlined "*Notre Goncourt*" (*Our Goncourt*). On quite a different level, "*fiches pratiques*" were also published more frequently (up to 6 "*fiches*" per issue by the end of 1982) and dealing with more varied subjects: the "*fiches villes*" or "*région*" (Lyon, Bretagne, Avignon, Montpellier, Toulon, Grenoble, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Savoie, Alsace...) illustrated the faster rhythm at which gay clubs, bars or baths opened. "*Fiches santé*" dealt not only with various VD's (but not AIDS – see below), but with training, keeping fit, etc.; "*fiches restaurants*", or "*cuisine*", etc., addressed the various aspects of the 'gay lifestyle' which was slowly emerging. Personal ads became increasingly numerous (the 1,000 mark was reached in the February 1982 issue, and they totaled 1,200/month in the second half of the year) this section came to occupy the larger part of the pages in the main fascicle of the magazine.

There were however some signs of upcoming changes. New sections appeared, such as "*Vécu*" (≈ "Actual experience"), where readers letters on a given topic, advertised well in advance, were confronted to illustrate the diversity and variety of the homosexual experience of life. Along with the news in brief and the current affairs sections, *Gai Pied* published some in-depth articles, sometimes more or less loosely arranged as a "dossier" on a single theme: "*Folles*" (queers) in November 1981, "*Désir noir*" (Black desire) in May 1982, "*Gaie*

²⁴ They were respectively Yves Navarre, for *Le Jardin d'acclimatation* and Jocelyne François, for *Joue-nous "Espagne"*.

marine” (Gay Navy) in June 1982, etc. A new format was adopted in April that year, in time with the third anniversary of the magazine: the two fascicles were merged in one, printed on broadsheet paper and unfolded. The time was no longer to discretion but to proud self-assertiveness. The section devoted to personal ads was enlarged (from 16 to 32 pages), placed in the center of the magazine and printed on pink paper for increased visibility. Ads, art and culture came to constitute the bulk of the magazine. A regular fashion section crept in, presenting the latest news from the catwalk or... the details of the handkerchief code (October 1981), a craze which was just arriving from the States and was still puzzling a majority of French, non-traveling, gays.

All this looked conspicuously like the sign of a, at least relative, ‘*embourgeoisement*’ and, indeed, political matters seemed to be relegated to play second fiddle, compared to the very first issues of the magazine. This was the consequence of the legal changes which had taken place within the first months of the new legislature, which had in a way deprived *Gai Pied* of its number one mobilizing theme.

The rhetorics of victory?

The election of François Mitterrand to the presidency of the French Republic (May 10, 1981) meant many changes for the French homosexuals. Not that Mitterrand had adopted publicly an anti-discrimination stance, which was duly reverberated on *Gai Pied*’s cover of its June 1981 issue: it featured a close-up portrait of the Socialist candidate and a quote from one of his campaign speeches, “Homosexuality has to stop being a crime”²⁵; the title read “Seven years of happiness?” (see picture 6). In the general election which followed²⁶, the Socialist Party included in its platform the actual abolition of all discrimination against homosexuals. Even if there were, as in 1978, a few gay candidates, it has been estimated that the ‘gay vote’ went

²⁵ It seems that Mitterrand did not actually utter these words, but a more vague sentence in a meeting held on April 28, 1981: “Speaking personally, I do not accept that homosexual gross indecency cases be more severely treated than the others; it seems to me abnormal. This is denying that citizens are equal in the eyes of the law”, and, later on “No discrimination, based on the nature of manners, for me, as matter of course!”; reported in *Gai Pied*, 34, January 1982, p. 34.

²⁶ The new President immediately dissolved the National Assembly elected in March 1978, where the majority was detained by right-wing parties.

massively in favor of the candidates supported by the Socialist Party and contributed to giving it its first overall majority (300 + representatives). The new President and its parliamentary majority were enjoying a political honeymoon which was to last until the end of the year. Immediately, the government headed by Pierre Mauroy took some significant decisions:

- ⌚ June 12, 1981: France refuses to classify homosexuality as a ‘mental disease’, as the classification established by the World Health Organization wanted it;
- ⌚ July 1982: Home minister Gaston Defferre’s director of Cabinet, Maurice Grimaud, former Paris *préfet de police* in May 1968, sent a note to police superintendents urging them to put an end to anti-gay harassment and to destroy the registers they might have had listing ‘known homosexuals’²⁷;
- ⌚ Liberalization of the airwaves, with the tolerated emergence of “free” FM radios (“radios libres”) encroaching on the monopoly of long-established AM radios; at the end of the year, there were over 50 gay programmes broadcasted in France; in Paris, *Fréquence Gaie* became the first ever radio run by and for gays, listened to by an audience estimated to 100,000 at the beginning of 1982; *Fréquence Gaie* was among the radios to get a broadcasting license in July 1982, when the whole FM radio sector was rationalized;
- ⌚ December 1981-July 1982: article 331-3 abolished by the Parliament, after a long series of shuttles between an abolitionist National Assembly and the anti-abolitionist Senate, where the right-wing parties still had the majority;

Gai Pied was of course delighted by the new turn of things and this can be read in the magazine. The headline “Bleu, blanc, rose” (“Blue, White, Pink”: a pun on the French ‘three colours’ blue, white, red) opened the July 1981 issue, and Frank Arnal’s leader was titled “A beginning”. All the anti-discriminatory decisions of the government were amply publicized, such as the “Defferre circular”, facsimile of which was printed in *Gai Pied*’s September issue

²⁷ Gay militants had regularly denounced the existence, in each police district, of a ‘fichier homosexuel’ (‘register of homosexuals’) listing, at least, the identity of people arrested for ‘gross indecency’ in public places, and possibly that of the people fraying in the homosexual ‘underworld’. Police chiefs not less regularly denied it, but to no avail.

for gays “to keep on them this precious and authentic document, and to put systematically under the nose of the police”. A reminder, sent to police forces in December 1981 (old habits seemed to die hard) was equally reprinted in the February 1982 issue of the magazine. The impending abolition of article 331-3 legitimized a series of reports on the judicial situation in the reputedly more tolerant Northern countries: Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden... where sexual relations between adults and teenagers were not criminalized (November 1981-January 1982). Its actual abolition was greeted with a wealth of tongue-in-cheek titles (“*Il saute*” – “it jumps”, in fact a pun on “*se faire sauter*”, or “to get laid”; “*Vive les homos de 15 ans*” – “Long live 15 year-old queers”).

This victory strengthened the position of the supporters of boy love: it became, if not increasingly, at least more openly advocated in the pages of the magazine. Novelist Tony Duvert published columns more incensed than ever against anti-pedophiles, photographs of young, under-clad teenagers abounded from page to page, and cartoonist Jacques Laval who published regularly a comic strip in *Gai Pied* from January to July 1982 presented it occasionally as a perfectly acceptable form of homosexuality, as good as any other. When the Coral affair broke out in September 1982²⁸, *Gai Pied* denounced it as the possible sign of an impending moral backlash and a pretext for “the [right-wing] opposition ... to make a sacred union essentially against pedophilia, presented as the most direct menace to society and to family, playing the well-known tune of ‘innocent childhood’ ”²⁹.

Gai Pied did not then stop keeping a watchful eye on any case of anti-gay discrimination. The old militant flame was still there, for instance to denounce, in the January 1982 issue, the broadcasting of TV documentary “*Les trottoirs de Manille*” (Sidewalks of Manila) on teenage prostitution in the Philippines, as “presenting in a spectacular and partial way the question of pedophilia” and generating “an insidious and resounding morality

²⁸ A rather complex affair, less of pedophilia strictly speaking than of adults having sexual relations with slightly deficient teenagers, in an alternative community (le Coral) located near Montpellier. Pornographic pictures showing well-known personalities in indecent situations were spread under the blanket and the extreme-right press used it to attack violently certain government ministers.

²⁹ « Coral : la rumeur », *Gai Pied Hebdo*, 45, 27 November 1982, p. 15.

campaign”³⁰. On February 4, 1982, AM radio station Europe n° 1 had a special broadcast, “Radio libre à...”, on homosexuality interrupted after a couple of minutes because the radio officials were infuriated by what the representatives of radio *Fréquence Gaie* and *Gai Pied* were saying (it has to be remembered that at the time ‘free’ FM radios, such as *Fréquence Gaie*, were serious competitors to AM radios; the representatives of *Fréquence Gaie* were accused of unfair competition by presenting their radio on the airwaves of Europe n°1). The article relating it in the following issue of *Gai Pied* was not short of words to denounce the sham of a liberalization which left many prejudices untouched (“Media: they want clean gays”; “Europe 1: we want respectable homosexuals!”)³¹. *Gai Pied* was also unambiguous in condemning the words of Catholic archbishop of Strasbourg, Mgr Elchinger, on April 7, 1982, comparing homosexuals to “handicapped persons” (“I regard homosexuality as a handicap; I respect homosexuals as I respect handicapped persons. But if they want to change their handicap in good health, I do not agree”), and to support the International Gay Association which wanted to take the bishop to the European Court of the Rights of Man³². The magazine also supported and amply publicized the Gay Pride demonstrations, held every year in Paris in April, May or June; the first one had taken place on June 25, 1977, but had attracted a rather limited public; the march held on April 4, 1981, against homophobia (i.e. the failed abolition of article 331-3), had attracted some 10,000 demonstrators; that of June 19, 1982 (between 8,000 and 15,000 participants) was a celebration of the Socialist victory and of the impending abolition of article 331-3; it also attracted much more attention from the media than the 1981 march.

The beginning of the AIDS pandemics, or how to get blinded by militancy

Gai Pied first mentioned AIDS in its September 1981 issue, under the shape of a small article on 2 columns, titled “*Amours à risques*” (Risky love); using the material published the previous months in the CDC bulletin, it explained that about 40 cases of “the very rare Kaposi illness” had been recorded in the States, all the patients being gay. It went on on a semi-

³⁰ « Manille », *Gai Pied*, 34, January 1982, p. 6.

³¹ Issue 36, March 1982, p. 1.

³² « L’évêque et les pédés », *Gai Pied*, 38, May 1982, p. 9.

humoristic tone, explaining that some believed the use poppers to be responsible for the contamination, and concluded with “Think of the scare in Christopher Street! In Mineshaft, these little bottles begin now being considered with suspicion”³³. In January 1982, Claude Lejeune (“Gay Medic”) signed a longer article to the “*U.S. gai cancer*”, using for the time the phrase – “gay cancer” – which was to stick to the illness for some time. Starting with the rather hackneyed statement that our “daily life [was] increasingly Americanized”, it went on explaining that the US gay community was at the crossroads, because of a “plague”, an “hydra through which all the fears are catalyzed: disease”³⁴. Lejeune presented rather briefly the situation at the beginning of the year, with 181 cases declared of this Kaposi sarcoma, 90% of them being located in NYC and in California; quoting at length journalist George Stambolian, who underlined the danger of seeing the anti-gay using this new disease to try to roll back the gay lib movement, he concluded his article by wondering whether “our present come out, still in its infancy, will abort in the fear of the microbe, of this disease that heaven sends upon us?”. Although acknowledging that this could not “be treated with indifference”, he warned his readers against giving way to an impending enterprise of moralization. The inflation in articles in the ‘general’ press about the “gay cancer” led Claude Lejeune to devote another paper to it in the April 1982 issue of the magazine. It denounced the way he “great press gloated about this disease which is falling upon us, we other poor queers”³⁵. On the one hand, the way the disease worked was more or less well presented, and particularly the fact that the people did not die a disease, but of various diseases related to an immune deficit (the phases “AIDS” and “AIDS-related diseases” had not been invented yet), the cause of which was yet unknown, but could be a virus). But, on the other hand, he assured that there were “appropriate” treatments against this immune deficit and, above all, rejected the idea of any large-scale prevention campaign among the homosexual French population (for once, this term was preferred to ‘gay’) and concluded that “fucking is dangerous? And what about crossing the road...”

³³ *Gai Pied*, 30, September 1981, p. 7.

³⁴ *Gai Pied*, 34, January 1982, p. 8.

³⁵ *Gai Pied*, 37, April 1982, p. 11.

The tone was set for the following articles published in *Gai Pied* about AIDS (another 3, in June, July and November). The general idea was that ‘something’ was indeed happening, but that there was a greater danger of seeing, to quote again an early paper, the “present come out... abort[ing]” under a moral backlash. In November 1982, Claude Lejeune announced triumphantly that “gay cancer” was “out”, that it was not specifically homosexual, hitting other categories (“women, heterosexuals, Haitians, hemophiliacs treated with blood-derived products”), that the inhalation poppers and sexual profligacy had nothing to do with the disease, and that the French cases had nothing to do with the US “AIDS” (first mention of the acronym in *Gai Pied*) since they predated the American cases. Consequently, readers could “inhale their favorite product and jump from one partner to another”, and should be “ready to denounce the smallest attempt at making us feel culpable”, proffered by “quibbling” people³⁶. The message developed there was double: first, it *can* not happen to us, because we do not live our homosexuality the same way as the American – the proof is, “our” cases are totally disconnected from the US ones; second, it *must* not happen to us, because we are enjoying liberation gained at last, and the moralistic-cum-reactionary forces will take advantage of it against us. This explains why *Gai Pied* remained oblivious to the spread of the epidemics as late as September 1984, the main preoccupation of (at least the majority of) the editorial team being to protect at all costs the freedom to have as much sex as desired (which, in some way, was seen as the main acquisition of the fights fought in the late 70s-early 80s) and to hamper the advent any moral backlash by denying that AIDS was a gay-related disease.

Gai Pied turned weekly on November 27, 1982. The new magazine was less original with less in-depth article, more, and briefer, current affairs reports, more ads and advertising. In a sense it cast itself into the mould of ‘standard’ newsmagazines, although one with a gay readership. In a sense, it was a sign that homosexuality had (at least started to) become commonplace, which had been the ultimate aim of some of the advocates of the gay cause in the 1970s (such as Jean-Louis Bory or Yves Navarre). *Gai Pied* became the newsmagazine of the

³⁶ *Gai Pied*, November 1982, 44, p. 13.

young, upwardly mobile gays, living in large cities, assiduously frequently the commercial 'ghetto'. This led to some important internal debates, leading to the departure, in July 1983, of the more radical journalists, following the extreme-left, 1970s style, position of Jean Le Bitoux³⁷, who went on for other, less successful, editorial ventures. The change to weekly format was not all too successful to *Gai Pied*: its circulation, which had peaked at 30,000 by mid-1982, slowly decreased to c. 22,000 copies in 1983-5. It then started losing readers at the pace of about 1,000 a year; partly due to the competition of other gay magazines that multiplied in the early 80s: *Samourai* (1982-6), something, like a politically moderate *Gai Pied* and rumored to be inspired by the right wing opposition to reclaim part of the 'gay vote', *GI* (1984-90) a purely commercial monthly directed by sauna and sex-club entrepreneur David Girard³⁸; its readership was 7,000 in 1992, when its publication stopped because of financial difficulties and increasing disagreement among the editorial team.

Gai Pied had changed from a militant magazine to a purely gay newsmagazine. In its very first years, the subject of this paper, it promoted a conception of a gay identity which could be summarized in a few aspects: (1) the pervasive use of a new word, "gay", to give the homosexuals a new rallying term; (2) mobilizing its readers against discrimination and homophobia; consequently (3) politically, its initial sympathies with the extreme-left, a legacy of many of its journalists militant early 70s past, gave way to a (realistic?) rallying the Socialist Party cause, after a brief flirtation with the idea of a communautarist vote for the 1981 Presidential election; (4) cementing this emerging gay identity through 'education' (publishing about history and culture) and through the careful mapping of a geographical community (in this respect, the original *Gai Pied* was in many ways rather backward-looking, very critical of the "commercial ghetto" – their expression – and nostalgic of what we could call the 'open air ghetto').

³⁷ Martel 2000 : 266.

³⁸ David Girard, a former male prostitute with an impressive record (he reckoned over 13,000 clients) owned many such places ; he distinguished himself by barring over 40s and foreign-looking (i.e. North-Africans and Blacks) customers from his clubs and saunas; he repeatedly refused to publicize any information campaign about AIDS; he was finally to die of AIDS in 1990. Published a book of souvenirs in 1986 (Girard 1986).

Finally, a question must be asked, even if it is virtually impossible to bring an answer: “Did they succeed?” *Gai Pied* maximum circulation was 30,000, on a French gay population which has been estimated between 0.5 M and 2 M persons³⁹. Its impact was then numerically rather limited, even taking into account those who read the magazine without actually buying it: 1.5-2% of the gay population (these figures are of course strictly indicative). Moreover, *Gai Pied* was made in practice by gay men for gay men, and the proportion of gay women reading it was in consequence very small. Its readers were located mainly in Paris and in the large conurbations. Even the actual impact of the magazine on its readers is impossible to gauge, and consequently its impact outside its readership is even more difficult to assess. However, its editorial team was certain that the gays shared a common idea, and they wanted to promote a political conscience. They probably succeeded more in spreading certain habits, and most certainly gave the gays a place to express themselves.

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³⁹ Martel 2000 : 537.

Rhetoric of Identity : Conference Paper
Centre for Rhetorics & Hermeneutics
January 2005, Redlands, CA