A review-essay on Marc Daniel and André Baudry, _Les homosexuels_ by Pier Paolo Pasolini translated by Stephen Wayne Foster

Two studious Frenchmen have written a pedagogic book on homosexuals, destined to replace on the newstands (certainly in a utopian manner) the similar works of an erotic, scandalous or commercial nature. It is a book that presents itself as honest, clear, exhaustive, democratic, moderate. And in effect it is. Contrary to my critical habits (but it is clear that here I do not present myself in my condition of literary critic), I shall commence by mentioning a series of quotes particularly efficacious to introduce to the reader on a theme that is always "taboo", as Daniel and Baudry, the authors of the "booklet", justly maintain.

1. "It is therefore necessary, at all costs, to unblock the taboo. This is not now the epoch in which -- all shall doubtless agree -- sad or delicate problems could be passed over in silence or suffocated... Themes considered prohibited for a long time, like contraceptives, abortion, adolescent sexual relations, now are the subject of radio and television shows, of journalistic investigations. It would be exaggerated to say that the same happens -- at least in France -- with homosexuality."

2. "At the origin of all of it one perhaps encounters a brief phrase of Saint Paul, contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians: 'For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret'". [Ephesians 5:12]

3. "Also the organs of the press known for their liberalism and intelligence observe on this point attitudes surprising and conformist."

4. "In other societies that have also been liberated from Christianism, the old religious condemnation, much too profoundly rooted to disappear, has taken the form of a false rationalism and conserves all of its vigor: the Soviet Union, Cuba, have severe laws against homosexuals in the name of the defense of the public against the vices of decadent capitalism."

5. "It is significant in this sense that Hitler had sent three categories of minorities to the concentration camps for the purpose of exterminating them, with the same motive of safeguard of the purity of the race: the Jews, the Gypsies, the homosexuals (the homosexuals, distinguished by a pink triangle, were the object of
particularly abominable treatment. They are still unique in never having obtained the right to an indemnity after the war."

Better still, we can add, they are still unique in that things have continued substantially as before, without the least glimpse of any form of rehabilitation whatever.

6. "Statistically speaking, it is therefore probable that, among fifteen persons frequently seen by our reader, at least one may be homosexual. It is evidence about which it is worth the trouble of meditating."

7. "... No examples exist of boys who, having suffered sexual violence, have become permanently homosexual because of this violence. To suppose it, even for an instant, is an obvious absurdity. On the contrary, even better, the trauma might be able to remove him forever from homosexuality. At least the violence may not have been more than a pretended violence and, consciously or not, the boy may have provoked that which has happened to him."

8. "Nothing permits us ... to either affirm or to suspect that there may be the most minimal cause-and-effect relationship between homosexuality and neurosis: the nexus, if it exists, is in the fact that the social condemnation of homosexuality is neurotizing."

9. "Judges give a surprising indulgence to small evidence with relation to boys accused of having brutally wounded, at times also murdered, a homosexual: as if at heart they think: 'He had it coming'. At the same time, it is frequent for a homosexual, accused of any sort of crime, to see himself condemned for the simple reason that, being homosexual, he is guilty by definition."

10. "It is necessary to take into account an unconscious reaction, although well-observed by psychologists: many, who insult homosexuals, are motivated only by the refusal to admit their own latent homosexuality. Jean-Paul Sartre has expressed himself clearly on this point: 'With relation to those who very severely condemn Genet, I am convinced that homosexuality is their constant temptation and constantly denied, the object of their most profound hatred: they are happy to detest it in another because in this way they have the possibility to distract the gaze away from themselves."

11. "The covering of homosexuality or of drugs [notice the significant pairing] never has anything to do with the worker movement, according to Pierre Juquin, member of the central committee of the French Communist Party (Nouvel Observateur, May 5, 1972)."
"... The happiness of a fifteenth part of humanity is not a gamble in which one can be disinterested with a joyful soul."

Here are a dozen quotes bound by common sense, to the least and most obvious degree that can be possessed on the theme. The "booklet" of Daniel and Baudry is not all here. It is a work of divulgance, but of scientific character and therefore complex.

Anyway I would like to make a series of observations, which the reader shall be able to understand only after having read the text in question: a thing that I likewise warmly recommend to him.

The first refers precisely to Freud. It is well-known that only psychoanalysis is in a position to explicate what homosexuality is. Daniel and Baudry know it too; anyway, for one thing, they declare their dissatisfaction with the Freudian explications, basing themselves too much on good sense; for another thing, they indicate in Freud the principle guilty of the instituting of homosexuality as "abnormal" with relation to a "normality" — that of bourgeois society — that Freud accepts passively and perhaps vilely. This does not seem just to me. When Freud says "normality" (which is always a formal and schematic conclusion), he means substantially "normality" as ordo naturae [order of nature] that has no loosening of continuity in history and in the various societies. Even in societies favorable to homosexuality, "normality" was the "average", that is, the sexual habits of the majority. "Abnormality" is a word like any other when its sense is rational (and not positive or negative).

This "residue" of respect for the ideas of the "normal world" that remains in the hearts of the two authors who, even while remaining moderates, accept in substance the "revolutionary" report of PHAR (the Homosexual Revolutionary Action Front), is also demonstrated by another act: they condemn, almost flattering the indignation of the majority, the irresponsibility of the "libertine pederast" who exercises his erotic interests on "ephebes", adolescents in the shadow of childhood. The accusation is the habitual one: that of tilting an uncertain adolescent (bisexual: number three on the Kinsey scale) toward the homosexual life. But that contradicts all that the authors have said. That is, if a bisexual is bisexual, he shall remain so in some form: if, merely as an hypothesis, one may have to give a certain preference to homosexuality, that would not be an evil thing.

Moreover, libertinage does not exclude for any reason the pedagogic vocation. Socrates was a libertine: from Lycidas to Phaedrus, his affairs with boys were innumerable. Moreover, he who loves boys
cannot do more than love all boys (and this is precisely the reason for his pedagogic vocation).

But, apart from this, to induce a boy (until this moment innocent: which is only an amusing hypothesis) to a homosexual relation, to separate it from heterosexuality doesn't matter. There exists an "autonomous" moment of sexual life that is autoeroticism, not only psychological, but also physical. A young male alone on a desert island shall not be able to have a sexual life. With regard to the definition of the age of the "minor", Daniel and Baudry fight bravely. An amendment to the French code brought in during the Fascist Vichy period, establishes the age of the minor at twenty-one years. A thing plainly crazy. In Italy, where the Napoleonic code rules (in this field miraculously), the limit of minority is sixteen years (and not eighteen as Daniel and Baudry affirm). This "datum" conducts me to another consideration (polemical in that it refers to this booklet, which wisdom would have to advise me to recommend without polemics).

It deals with this: Daniel and Baudry try to circumscribe the problem of homosexuality -- believing sincerely in the goodness of the ideas and in the efficacy of the effects -- within the context of the masnet tolerance (existentially, in practice now affirmed, although the laws, as is habitual, are backward): tolerance that concerns heterosexual relations (contraceptives, abortion, extramarital relations, divorce -- in that it refers to Italy, sexual relations between adolescents); binding then all of this to the (political) problem of the minorities.

I do not believe that the actual form of tolerance may be real. It has been decided "from above": it is the tolerance of the consum- erist powers, which need a formal absolute elasticity in the "exist- ences" so that the unmarried are converted into good consumers. An unprejudiced society, free, in which the couples and (hetero)sexual exigencies are multiplied and, in consequence, avid for consumer goods. For a liberal French mentality it is certainly more difficult to understand and individualise this fact, than for an Italian pro- gressive, who emerges from Fascism and from a type of agricultural and paleo-industrial society, being found therefore "defenseless" before this monstrous phenomenon. To have a partner is today not a liberty but an obligation for a youth, because of fear of not being at peace with the liberty that is conceded to him. Thus more age
limits cannot exist. The codes that establish age limits are ridiculed (and therefore are valid only for homosexual relations). The rightminded and romantic fathers (so afraid of the idea of being repressive) have no illusions: among two adolescents of different sex, although very young, but more unpubescent, the erotic relation today is the same as among two adults.

I wish to say with this that Daniel and Baudry equivocate, hoping that the tolerance includes among its objectives homosexuality too: this may occur if it might be a question of a real tolerance, forced from below. Instead it is a question of a false tolerance, which certainly preludes a period of intolerance and racism even worse than in the times of Hitler (although perhaps less ghoulish). Why? Because real tolerance (falsely assimilated and made its own by the powerful) is a social privilege of the cultured elites; while the "popular" masses enjoy today a horrible embryo of tolerance that in reality seizes it with an intolerance and a fanaticism almost neurotic (in an epoch characterized by the petit bourgeoisie).

Thus, for example, this booklet by Daniel and Baudry could not be enjoyed and understood more than by the cultured elites, cultured and therefore tolerant: only they are in a position, perhaps, made so that they are not even affected, to be liberated from the "taboo" against homosexuality. The masses instead are destined to accentuate even more their biblical phobia, if they have it: if instead they do not have it (as in Rome, southern Italy, in Sicily, in the Arab countries), they are disposed to "abjure" their popular, traditional tolerance to adopt the intolerance of the masses formally evolved in the bourgeoisie countries gratified by tolerance.

Here the discourse becomes political. Also the booklet of Daniel and Baudry dedicates some pages to the "political importance" of the question. But the analysis is dominated by a form of anticommunism that, if apropos of homosexuality is perfectly justified, anyway is equally suspicious: because it forms part of that anxiety of modernization and of integration which pathetically dominates the whole manual. But the lack of analysis by Daniel and Baudry apropos of the relation between homosexuality and politics, derives not so much from a debatable political ideology as from a debatable ideology on homosexuality. In effect; from the book of Daniel and Baudry it results, at least implicitly, that one homosexual loves or makes love to another homosexual. Meanwhile things do not happen like this at all. A homosexual, in general (the enormous majority, at least in Mediterranean countries)
loves and wishes to make love to a heterosexual disposed to a homosexual experience, but whose heterosexuality is not in the least placed in doubt. He must be "virile" (whence the lack of hostility toward the heterosexual who accepts sexual relations for simple sexual release or for money: a thing that guarantees in effect his heterosexuality). As a unique political datum of import, Daniel and Baudry point out the fact that not only the rich and the bourgeoisie are homosexuals, but that the workers and the poor are also. Homosexuality would therefore securely be a species of interclassistic ecumenicalism. It does not lack importance, because it makes a problem of homosexuality, from the classicist viewpoint, universal and therefore inevitable. The Marxism which evades or denies it, and although with scorn, is not less dangerous than the Fascist man who in the French parliament had wished to define homosexuality as a "social calamity". But this is not the point. The "political importance" of homosexuality must be investigated in another place, and it doesn't matter even if it is on the margins, on the extreme margins of public life. I shall recur to the examples of the love between Maurice and Alec, in the stupendous 1914 novel by Forster, and the love between the worker and the student in an equally stupendous (but unpublished) story by Saba.

In the first case, Maurice, a man of the English upper bourgeoisie, lives in the love of the "body" of Alec, who is a servant, an exceptional experience: the "understanding" of the other social class. And so, upsetting the relations, the worker with the student of Trieste. The class-consciousness suffices not, if it is not integrated with the "understanding" of class (as I said in an old poem of mine). Anyway -- apart from this interchange of "class understanding", practical but also enigmatic, which to me, perhaps only to me, seems of such high significance -- I would oppose to the interclassism, which I have called ecumenical, of Daniel and Baudry, this phrase by Lenin (after 1917) apropos of the Jews: "The majority of the Jews are workers, laborers. They are our brothers oppressed like ourselves by capital, they are our comrades ... The rich Jews, like our own rich, ... oppress, rob the workers and sow discord among them." Precisely if homosexuals desire to make entry into "normality", I would not know how to indicate a method better than this one of Lenin's apropos of the Jews, which certainly does not open onto a fake perspective of a tolerant togetherness. On the other hand, Daniel and Baudry seem to have forgotten the highest ideological reply of a homosexual to the
divisive and ferocious pogrom by those called "normal": it is a question of the suicide of the homosexual protagonist of Cocteau's Livre Blanc, who quits life because he has understood that it was intolerable to a man to be tolerated.