

was surely a healthy reaction to the neglect of health and the body that the hippie style and the drug culture had fostered. Not surprisingly, the clone look was taken up in Europe and other places where local homosexuals eagerly followed changes in American gay fashions.

Jean-Paul Sartre has identified "seriation" as a key aspect of modern society—the tendency of individuals to assort themselves into "sets" characterized by homologous features. Sartre gives the example of passengers taking a ticket and falling into line in numerical order at a bus stop. This social trend represents, of course, a symbolic mimicry of industrial mass production. In this light the "cloning" of the male homosexual may be viewed as part of a larger social process whereby a "nonconformist" subgroup fosters conformity in its own realm. Among the members of the subgroup behavioral norms are rigidly enforced by group consensus. Similar phenomena have been observed among the pachuco ("zoot suit") youth of the 1940s, the beatniks of the 1960s, and the skinheads of the 1980s. Such phenomena are not limited to groups usually seen as marginalized; Harold Rosenberg sardonically, but perhaps not unjustly styled American intellectuals as "a herd of independent minds."

The gay clone vogue also has a psychological dimension. One made oneself over as a clone in order to attract other clones, and success in cruising meant possessing someone similar to oneself. This quest for one's double is a major recurrent aspect of homosexual consciousness. It was perhaps first set forth in the *Symposium* where Plato posits that all homosexuals are sundered halves of a once whole being. One's goal therefore is to find the mirror image who will dovetail with oneself and then to unite with him. To be sure, such aspirations have sometimes been stigmatized as egocentric narcissism, the wish of someone who does not truly seek an interpersonal relationship but only to mate with himself. A fascinating explora-

tion of this concept appears in David Gerrold's science fiction novel *The Man Who Folded Himself* (1973). Yet it is essential to recognize that the quest for the double usually operates in tandem with a simultaneous search for difference—for complementation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Nicholas Howe, "Further Thoughts on *Clone*," *American Speech*, 57 (1983), 61-68.

Wayne R. Dynes

CLOSET

Until the late 1970s the term closet was restricted to gay jargon, where it meant a state of concealment in which one immured one's homosexuality. Some individuals were said to be remaining "in the closet," and thus passing for heterosexual—or so they hoped. Some were chastised for their illusions by being labeled "closet queens," the idea being that they remained what they were no matter how elaborate and seemingly successful their impersonation of heterosexuality might seem. Others emerged from the closet, or were urged to do so, by coming out. Then mainstream journalists appropriated and extended the usage so that they could speak of "closet conservatives" and "closet gourmets" with no sexual connotation.

Semantics of the Closet. All these connotations of *closet* depend on an underlying metaphor. In American usage, the architectural space designated in the primary meaning is typically small and confined, essentially an alcove secured by a door for the storage of clothing. Older English usage treats a closet as any private room or chamber. Through a combination of these meanings, the verb "to closet oneself" came to merge the idea of privacy and remoteness, on the one hand, with narrow confinement, on the other. For the element of secrecy occasioned by the suspect character of what is being hidden, compare the proverbial expression: a skeleton in the closet. Historians of literature

also speak of a "closet drama," that is one never intended for public performance. An ecclesiastical writer of the reign of James I of England penned the expression "closet sins," so that the adjectival use of the word has a long history. Sometimes gay writers and speakers reactivate the metaphor, so that the expression is taken in a literal, architectural sense, as in "stifling closet" or "his closet is nailed shut." Assisting in the process of coming out has been dubbed, by Philadelphia activist Barbara Gittings, as "oiling the hinges of the closet door." It is also possible to speak of "returning to the closet" with respect to those who have come to feel uncomfortable with their homosexuality out in the open or to sense that it is imprudent to advertise their sexual orientation.

Sociology of the Closet. Sociologists, preeminently Erving Goffman, have written of seemingly analogous tendencies among other groups, as ex-prisoners and former mental patients, to "manage spoiled identity" by editing their presentation of self. It is doubtful, however, that closeted gay people think of themselves in quite the same way. Unencumbered as most of them are by stigmatizing documentation of official origin and convinced that their cover has not been blown, they rarely give consideration to their own self-concealment. When pressed, they appeal to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of the separation of public business from private lives. Many heterosexuals would agree that sexuality is a private matter.

In the view of gay activists, closeted persons can have a negative impact on the welfare of other homosexuals. "[A] truism to people active in the gay movement [is] that the greatest impediments to homosexuals' progress often [are] not heterosexuals, but closeted homosexuals. . . . By definition, the homosexual in the closet [has] surrendered his integrity. This makes closeted people very useful to the establishment: once empowered, such people are guaranteed to support the most subtle nuances of anti-gay prejudice. A

closeted homosexual has the keenest understanding of these nuances, having chosen to live under the subjugation of prejudice. The closeted homosexual is far less likely to demand fair or just treatment for his kind, because to do so would call attention to himself." (Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On*, New York, 1987, p. 406).

Ethical and Methodological Aspects. For a variety of reasons—which may not even be clearly known to themselves—a vast number of homosexuals and lesbians in our society can and do remain "in the closet." This is so despite frequent and fervent exhortations on the part of the leadership of the gay/lesbian movement to "come out." Their reluctance makes it hard to organize gay men and lesbians politically, to estimate their true numbers, and to collect valid samples for social science research. There has been some discussion of the ethics of "forced decloseting." For example, liberal gays asserted that the late conservative politician Terry Dolan was benefiting from "playing both sides of the street": participating in fund raising for causes that included antigay planks, while personally enjoying a gay life though closeted to the general public. As it happened, Dolan died in 1987, making the issue in this particular instance moot—though the general question abides. Even in obituary notices, many newspapers refuse to mention that a lover has survived, or other aspects of gayness, presumably in order to protect the privacy of relatives. This reticence would seem to go too far. Of course the restriction on information has made it difficult to make certain of the homosexuality or lesbianism of past figures who very likely were gay. Although in the present *Encyclopedia* efforts have been made to determine this status—historical decloseting, if you will—for many individuals, editorial policy has established that no living individuals should receive biographical entries of their own. This restriction has been taken not only to avoid invidious distinctions of the

"X is more important than Y" sort, but also to protect "closet rights."

The task of the biographer who is called upon to study the evidence of the sexual proclivities of a figure of the past is a challenging one. The individuals themselves may have taken great precautions to destroy or have destroyed any "incriminating" evidence. Then there is the problem of individuals, such as the painter Theodore Géricault and Eleanor Roosevelt, for whom we have good reason to believe that there were strong elements of a homoerotic sensibility, but the interpretation cannot be fixed to everyone's satisfaction. Such twentieth-century figures as New York's Francis Cardinal Spellman and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover continue to resist any final pigeonholing. Assuredly, knowledge of the subject will advance, but it will also need to recognize many historical question marks.

Wayne R. Dynes

CLOTHING

Beyond its obvious functions of protecting and supporting the body, clothing (along with jewelry, cosmetics, tattooing, and cosmetic scarring) has been used from prehistoric times to alter bodily appearance. This has taken on two overlapping forms: to indicate social group and status, and to enhance the body's sexual appeal. Clothes are used to make the body appear more youthful, firm, and slim, or to enhance sexual characteristics. Men have used clothing to call attention to their muscles, buttocks, or "basket" (genitals; formerly the codpiece served this function); women the breasts, buttocks, and legs, formerly the abdomen, and very recently their muscles. Clothing also serves the function of retaining bodily odors, the sexual importance of which has yet to be thoroughly understood.

Gay men have often used clothing to indicate that they were potential sexual partners for other males. Of course any type of clothing associated with the

opposite gender can be so used, but more subtle signals are often desired. The Roman poet Martial, for example (I.96; III.82), points out *galbinus* (greenish-yellow) as an effeminate color in clothing; Aulus Gellius (VI.12) similarly mentions the tunic (covering the arms) as an unmasculine style of clothing, used by men seeking the recipient role in male-male sex. Havelock Ellis, in *Sexual Inversion* (1915), reports that a red tie was "almost a synonym" for homosexuality in large American cities. Greek, Roman, or Arabic clothing was formerly used in photography to suggest homosexual identification. Styles of clothing can also be used as signals: the "dandy" of the late nineteenth century was a gay style of dress, and more recently cowboy clothing—work shirt, Levi jeans, and boots—has served the same purpose. Especially favored by and associated with American gay men in the 1970's and 1980's were Levis style 501, with a button fly, making for comfortable access to or display of the penis. An elaborate system of colored rear-pocket bandannas emerged in the 1970s to signal the desired type of gay sexual activity. It was derived from the use as signal of a visible key ring, whose presence indicated interest in leather or S/M sex, and whose position (left or right) indicated the role preferred.

In affluent times it has been possible to have special clothes for sexual purposes, clothes which are not normally worn at one's daily work. The dandy is the embodiment of the aristocratic male who is obsessed with his costume and even strives to be a leader of fashion. Within the gay male subculture leather garments are used to project an image of sexual power and nonconformity; nylon lingerie to suggest weakness, tenderness, or interest in seduction. Police or military uniforms are used in sex play to indicate authority; athletic clothing, including the quintessentially gay male jockstrap, to create an imaginary locker room; white cotton briefs to suggest innocence and youth. The variety of clothes used in sex play is large.