

"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.

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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.

During the 1920s lesbians were stereotyped as affecting a severe version of male formal dress, and indeed some prominent figures such as Radclyffe Hall did adopt this mode, while Marlene Dietrich offered a subtle variant of it in the movies. More recently lesbians have been perceived as preferring somewhat shapeless garments and no makeup. While this look does correspond to the type sometimes known as the "granola dyke," other gay women prefer more elegant dress, of which there are several versions.

Nudism began in Europe in the early twentieth century, and is still more widespread there than in the United States. It is often thought of as being sexually provocative, but in practice nudism is ascetic. The removal of clothes, as in striptease, suggests sexual activity to follow; without clothes one lacks an important means of communication, enticement, and bodily enhancement.

See also **Dandyism; Transvestism.**

Daniel Eisenberg

COCTEAU, JEAN (1889–1963)

French playwright, poet, novelist, filmmaker, actor, and artist. Cocteau was one of the most famous, controversial, and perplexing of twentieth-century cultural figures.

By 1908 Jean Cocteau was corresponding with Marcel Proust and well on his way to self-promotion in the art world. He became an important contributor to Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Cocteau lived openly with male companions at many times in his life. Grief at the death of the young novelist Raymond Radiguet in 1923 was one cause of his famous turn to opium in the 1920s. During the period 1937–50 his creativity was spurred by his relationship with the actor Jean Marais. Later he adopted the painter Edouard Dermit. Throughout his life, Cocteau was surrounded by a coterie of gay male artists

and celebrities. His homosexuality kept him at a distance from André Breton's Surrealists, who championed heterosexuality.

Cocteau tended not to deal directly with homosexuality in his public work, generally choosing either indirect, displaced, or universal approaches to sexuality. Yet one of his first dramatic works was an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In his three earliest collections of poems Cocteau treated narcissism and the "love that dare not speak its name." In 1928 he published without signing his name to it *The White Paper*, a story which begins with an open declaration of homosexuality. His first film, *The Blood of a Poet* (1930), has an overall homoerotic and autoerotic ambience. Throughout his career, he made many drawings, including some for Jean Genet's novel *Querelle of Brest* (1947). The frequent themes of doubling, monstrosity, and punishment for love in his work can be linked to his experiences as a sexual outsider, but more rigorous scholarship is needed to go beyond the old clichés.

Cocteau created one of the most extraordinary private mythologies of the twentieth century. Of his voluminous works, some of the best include the films *Beauty and the Beast* (1946) and *Orpheus* (1950), the novel *The Terrible Children* (1929), the plays *The Infernal Machine* (1934), *The Knights of the Round Table* (1937), *The Eagle with Two Heads* (1947), and *Bacchus* (1951), the poetry collections *Opera* (1927) and *Requiem* (1962), and the essay "Opium" (1930). Publication of Cocteau's multivolume diary (1951–63) is now in progress. In 1987 his letters to Jean Marais were published, as earlier his poetry for him had been appended to Marais' *Stories of My Life*. Marais continues to direct Cocteau's plays and preserve the legacy of his friend.

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