

let occurred. A remarkable group of innovative women, including Loie Fuller, Ruth Duncan, Mary Wigman, Ruth St. Denis, and Martha Graham, created modern dance. The homosexual impresario Sergei Diaghilev introduced the Russian ballet to the West. Inspired by his love, Diaghilev repeatedly shaped his erotic protégés into world-class dancers: Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Anton Dolin (born Patrick Healey Kay), and Serge Lifar. Ironically, in Russia, perhaps because boys were sent to ballet schools for economic reasons, most dancers remained heterosexual. It is perhaps of interest that of the two great male dancers to have left the Soviet Union after World War II, one is gay, the other heterosexual.

Several homosexual composers achieved notable success in writing ballets, including Jean-Baptiste Lully, Peter Ilitch Tchaikovsky, and Aaron Copland. Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and *Swan Lake* (1877) are particular favorites of gay audiences.

A pivotal figure in American ballet was Ted Shawn, who formed the Denishawn company with Ruth St. Denis. Perhaps because he himself was bisexual, Shawn went to considerable lengths to dispell dance's sissy reputation. He employed athletes to provide an aggressive show of masculinity. Hollywood dancers—at least those who became famous as distinct from the chorus boys—were heterosexual, but belonged to different genres: tapdancers and jazz dancers.

In the more liberal climate of the 1960s all-male dances began to be common. The avant-garde Merce Cunningham, who has shared his life with the composer John Cage, was the inspirer of the unisex trend in "postmodern" dance. In Brussels Maurice Béjart innovated with shifts in sex roles in his company at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels; in 1987 he was succeeded there by Mark Morris, who continues the tradition, though in an entirely different way. A documentary film, *Nik and Murray*, tells the story of dance-

world luminaries Alwin Nikolais and Murray Louis, treating their long-term relationship simply as a matter of fact.

Understandably, dancers are anxious to protect their reputation from imputations of homosexuality, which would make their performances in classic male-female roles less credible. One group which has no such problem is New York's transvestite Les Ballets Trockadero de Montecarlo, which spoofs not only gender roles, but art dance itself.

*Conclusion.* What are the reasons for the affinity of gay men and dance? In part they are economic: the poor income can be borne by a single man more easily than a married one with children (women dancers are often married to a male breadwinner). Then there is the appeal of a "chameleon" role, a successful simulation before a demanding audience; the satisfaction that is gained in this way is not unlike that of the actor, the diplomat, and the spy. Professional dancing allows gay men to indulge a love of colorful costume and makeup during periods of gray social conformity. It may be also that the exhibitionism inherent in the profession is sexual sublimation. The performances are suffused with eroticism and emotion in a setting of simulated and unconsummated heterosexuality. This profession may be regarded as a haven from the harsh worlds of commerce and masculine competition, a haven in which one may nonetheless show one's excellence. Finally there is the social magnetism inherent in stereotyping itself: because dance was thought to be "faggy," impressionable young gay men were drawn to it.

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## DANDYISM

The dandy has been since antiquity the man who prides himself on being

the incarnation of elegance and of male fashion. The word itself stems from the Romantic period in the nineteenth century, when the character type reached its apogee; England and France were the principal countries in which it flourished. Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) was one of the first to perceive that the type was not limited to the age just preceding his own, but had emerged across the centuries in some celebrated historical figures. Jules Barbey d'Aureville (1808–1889) wrote an *Essay on Dandyism and George Brummel* (1845), dealing with Beau Brummell (1778–1840), the most famous English representative of the dandy in the London of George IV.

*History of the Type.* Ancient Greece saw two classical specimens of the dandy: Agathon and Alcibiades. In Plato's *Symposium* Agathon is a poet and tragedian, not merely handsome, but obsessed with the most trivial details of his wardrobe. Aristophanes shows him using a razor to keep his cheeks as smooth and glistening as marble, wearing sumptuous clothing in the latest Ionian fashion. Later in the same dialogue Alcibiades also enters the stage, the most dazzling figure of the *jeunesse dorée* of Athens, richer and more influential than Agathon, and never sparing any expenditure that would enhance his renown.

In the Renaissance the aristocratic male sported colorful and ostentatious clothing that paralleled the brilliant plumage of the peacock or the flowing mane of the male lion—as can be seen from the portraits of that era. Somewhat later, the Macaroni Club in the London of George III united members of the upper class who became proverbial for their elaborate costumes—which earned them the reproach of effeminacy; it is to this assemblage that the line of “Yankee Doodle” alludes: “Stuck a feather in his cap/And called it macaroni.” It was in the period when the costume of the bourgeoisie—the merchant class—was becoming ever more somber that the dandy reached full flower. During

the first quarter of the nineteenth century dandyism was a characteristically English phenomenon, then with the mounting influence of the British aristocracy and gentry on the upper classes of the continent it spread there as well. Outfitted by the renowned tailors of the English capital, the dandy made his mark on elegant society. A Frenchman, Alfred de Grimaud, Count d'Orsay, dazzled a London struck by both his physical beauty and his stylish dress, yet a biographer of his noted that “Nature had lavished all her gifts on him but denied him the virility that enables one to conquer the fair sex.” Having become the lover of Lady Blessington, he accompanied her to Italy where they encountered Lord Byron at Genoa.

A later incarnation of the dandy was Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac (1855–1921), the “professor of beauty,” as he was styled by Marcel Proust, for whom he was the model of the Baron de Charlus in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, as he had earlier suggested Des Esseintes to Joris-Karl Huysmans in *A Rebours*. He adorned and perfumed his person in a style worthy of a *fin-de-siècle* decadent scion of the nobility. Another aesthete of this era, Oscar Wilde, affected a particularly striking costume when he made a lecture tour of the United States, capitalizing on a character featured in the Gilbert and Sullivan opera *Patience* (1881).

In the Britain of the 1960s, newly affluent youth reacted against the drabness of the postwar years and began to experiment with dress, first recycling fancy Edwardian castoffs and then donning made-to-order Carnaby Street gear. While these trends, which migrated from “swinging London” to the United States and elsewhere on a crest of enthusiasm for British popular music, were largely heterosexual, leather fashions began with gay men—originally those in the S/M subculture—and penetrated all advanced Western societies in the 1980s.

*Rationale.* The relation of the dandy to male homosexuality is compli-

cated. As a rule the homosexual—more than the male who is attracted to women—feels the need to distinguish his person in some way, is more conscious of the world of male fashion and more likely to be narcissistically preoccupied with his image. Naturally not all the dandies of the past were homosexual or bisexual, and an element of leisure class self-demarkation and snobbery enters into the picture. Since it is usually the male of the species whom nature makes physically more noteworthy, the male–female antithesis in style of dress that has prevailed in Western culture since the French Revolution reverses the immemorial state of affairs. The notion that only a woman may be preoccupied with her wardrobe and that a man should dress simply and even unobtrusively is of recent date.

The dandy is also relevant to the role of the homosexual subculture in determining male fashion. Not a few of the idols of stage and screen, and of course professional models, have been attracted to their own sex, whatever façade they maintained in deference to the prevailing heterosexual mores. In these individuals, and particularly in their public image, the perceptive eye can often discern a homoerotic element, a subtle blending of the masculine and feminine which the heterosexual cannot easily capture.

Originally a paragon of leisure-class ostentation, the dandy toward the end of the nineteenth century took on a new social identity as a type of the aesthete, of the bearer of a culture that flaunted its scorn for the humdrum way of life of the staid middle class. The convention that a gentleman could wear only custom-made clothing, never ready-made and hence mass-produced garments, also played into the hands of the dandy who could order a costume that would be his very own, shaped to stress the elegance of his figure, and even able to determine fashion.

The dandy exemplifies the symbolic value of clothing in European civilization, the use of costume for self-defini-

tion and self-affirmation, and also an expression of the aesthetic in private life, where clothes merge with the personality of the wearer and confirm his status in the eyes of others. In this scheme the homoerotic element lies chiefly in the narcissism, the attention to one's own male beauty, the pleasure in holding a mask between one's true self and the gaze of others.

*See also Theatre and Drama; Transvestism.*

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## DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265–1321)

Italian poet, critic, and political thinker. A Florentine patrician, Dante was an active member of the Guelph party. As a youth he had a profound spiritual experience in an encounter with the young Beatrice Portinari; after her death he submerged himself in the study of philosophy and poetry. In 1302 Dante was banished from Florence, pursuing his literary career in various other cities of Italy. He died and was buried in Ravenna.

Dante's masterpiece, written in exile, was the *Divina Commedia*, divided into the three major parts, the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso* that relate his imaginary voyage through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. The presence in both the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* of groups of "sodomites" has given rise to a series of debates over the centuries. These passages must be interpreted in the larger context of the great poem's situations and personnel. In his imaginary travels Dante encountered many persons of note, including one whom he named as his master: Brunetto Latini (ca. 1212–1294).