

imitated by other members of the gay community only on occasion, as **camp**.

One would expect that during earlier times of clandestinity self-protection would have fostered a sophisticated language of gesture to signal the suspected presence of plainclothesmen, dangerous individuals and the like, but in fact such warnings seem to have been expressed mainly in verbal form ("tilly," "dirt"), using **slang** known to the adepts but not to outsiders. The comparative study of gesture is still in its infancy and future studies are likely to discover a richer heritage of gay and lesbian gestures worldwide than the few now known. In our culture, non-verbal communication also takes the form of tokens and regalia, such as **lambda** pins and **pink triangle** buttons, as well as keys worn externally and colored handkerchiefs dangling from a back pocket.

Deprecatory gestures signaling the presence of gay people occur among heterosexuals. Widespread is the *limp wrist* posture connoting sissiness and affectation: the arm is kept close to one's side but bent sharply at the elbow, while the hand dangles helplessly aloft. Some gestures are quite culture-specific. In Latin America an "invert" may be signified by placing the arm along one's side with the thumb and forefinger forming a circle just below the belt; the implication is that the other person possesses a vagina rather than a penis. Also in Latin America, the suspected presence of a lesbian may be signaled by slapping the hands together, alluding to the word *tortillera*, "tortilla maker, lesbian." As this example shows, some gestures are parasitic on verbal language, which must be known in order to decipher them. Other hostile gestures seek to convey the notion of **effeminacy** through disposition of other parts of the body, as through swaying hips and supercilious smiles. Male homosexuals are traditionally thought to have a "mincing" gait, a stereotype that is reflected in such slang labels as *swish* and *flit*. By contrast lesbians are caricatured through heavy gestures and a stomping

walk. These devices of mimicry reflect the notion that homosexual persons are irresistibly drawn to adopt the conduct of the opposite sex.

Another aspect of body language studied by scholars is proxemics, the distance that people assume from one another. In social encounters Europeans prefer greater distance than Arabs and Brazilians. To come close makes the other individual feel uncomfortable, and may even be interpreted as a sexual "pass." In straight company, therefore, many homosexuals check themselves from approaching "too close" to their interlocutor—so that paradoxically the excessive distance which they maintain amounts to a giveaway.

See also Semiotics, Gay.

Wayne R. Dynes

GHETTOS, GAY

The term *ghetto* originated in Renaissance Italy, as the Venetian dialect form derived from Vulgar Latin *iectus* "foundry," the name of the enclosed area of Venice in which the Jews were not merely required to live, but even had to be after a certain hour in the evening, while conversely Christians were forbidden to enter the Jewish quarter after dark. The motive for the creation of the ghetto was to prevent sexual intercourse between Jews and Christians. In the nineteenth century the abolition of the ghetto was a significant part of the emancipation of the Jewish communities of Western and Central Europe.

In the 1960s, the survival of the word in English usage led to its being applied by analogy to areas in the inner cities of the United States in which racial minorities, especially blacks and Latinos, were concentrated by reason of poverty or of the collusion of real estate interests to prevent them from obtaining homes or apartments outside of designated neighborhoods. It also connoted the exclusion (or self-exclusion) of such minorities from the political and cultural life of the larger

society. As early as 1942, a survey of residential patterns in New York City had found similar clusters of homosexuals in three areas of Manhattan: Greenwich Village, the East Side in the 50s, and the neighborhood around 72nd Street and Broadway. Subsequently, other cities were noted to have sections largely populated by those practicing an evident homosexual lifestyle. Along with the West Village and Chelsea in New York City, Chicago's North Side and San Francisco's Castro Valley have such an ambience.

Such concentrations probably stem from the *bohémias* of the late nineteenth century, in which the sexually unconventional mingled openly with artists, writers, and political radicals, among them advocates of what was then called "free love." The gay ghettos of the present are often districts that have been reclaimed from previous decay, with neatly refurbished apartments and brownstones alongside fashionable boutiques and exotic restaurants, as well as enterprises offering wares or services specifically for a homosexual clientele. The urban homosexual can be the spearhead of gentrification in that he frequently has considerable discretionary income, no wife or children who would suffer from the initially depressed environment, and a preference for the anonymity of the metropolis over the high social visibility of the upper-middle-class suburb with its basically heterosexual lifestyle. This tendency of gay ghettos to encroach upon former working-class minority neighborhoods as part of the gentrification (and Europeanization) of American cities has at times generated social friction between the two groups. However, while the ghettos in which other minorities find themselves confined are resented as symbols of discrimination and exclusion, the gay ghetto can be a haven of toleration whose denizens enjoy liberties seldom accorded to overt homosexuals residing elsewhere.

See also Geography, Social; Subculture.

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Warren Johansson

GHULAMIYYA

This rare Arabic term (plural *ghulamiiyyat*) alludes to a girl whose appearance is as boyish as possible, and who therefore possesses a kind of boyish sensuality. Especially prominent in the ninth and tenth centuries, this phenomenon seems to have originated in the court of the Abbasid caliph Al-Amin (809-13) in Baghdad. It is said that his mother arranged for a number of girls to be disguised as boys in order to combat the caliph's preference for male eunuchs. The practice spread quickly, especially among the upper classes, where many female slaves and servants circulated dressed and coifed as boys.

A *ghulamiiyya* dressed in a short tunic with loose sleeves; her hair was worn long or short, with ornamental curls across the temples. Some girls even painted a mustache on their upper lips, using a colored perfume such as musk. ("Did you perhaps kiss the rainbow? It is just as if he is drawn on your red lips.") *Ghulamiiyyat* also tried, as much as possible, to act and speak like boys, often taking up sports or other masculine pastimes.

These girls were adept in two varieties of sexual intercourse, and therefore potentially attractive to both men who loved girls and those who loved boys. But true pederasts, naturally, would not be fooled: "But how could she, alas, plug up that deep and sombre pit, something that no boy possesses." *Abu Nuwas* once made the mistake of being attracted to a *ghulamiiyya*, "although the love of generous breasts is not my taste," but regretted this when he nearly drowned: "And I swore that for as long as I lived I would never again choose the abundant froth, but would only travel by back."

The short-lived popularity of the *ghulamiiyya* may have derived from an-