Clothing. (See also *Transvestism.*) 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.

Gays have often used clothing to indicate that they were potential sexual partners for other gays. Of course any type of clothing associated with the opposite gender can be so used, but more subtle signals are often desired. 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; extracted in Katz's Gay American History, p. 52), 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 1970’s 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 in a work environment. Leather garments, for example, are used

\footnote{1 See confirmation in Christopher St. No. 128 (RECD. 1/89), p. 43}
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. [p. 247]

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 nudism is actually 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.

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