
WHERE ARE THE BATHS? THERE'S A BATHER PLAY IN WHICH A CHARACTER SAYS TO PEOPLE ACCUSED SEXUALLY OF THE CRIME (HE THINKS THAT HIS ACCUSERS HAVE A "FEAR OF CONVERSATION"). AND THE BATHS DID OR DO OFFER AT LEAST THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PRIVACY, THAT THEIR TIME AND MONEY WOULD BE WORTH IT.
“Come! To Man’s Country”:
Counterpublic Space, Sexuality, and Identity of
the Gay Clone in New York City

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Student Number: 0505552
MA Dissertation American Studies
Course code: LAX999M20
20 ECTS Credits
Supervisor: dr. A.L. Gilroy
Date: 7 June 2012
Word Count: 16,397
I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work.

This dissertation is dedicated to the three men who gave me the inspiration, strength, and perseverance to finish what I started in 1989: Pake, Heit, and Marc.
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Preface

“If cruising plays leapfrog while conjugality plays kitty corner and house, they both originate in the same anxiety about solitude.” (Hocquenghem 73)

*Petite Mort: Recollections of a Queer Public*, published in September 2011, contains drawings and recollections of New York City spaces where the gay artists had experienced memorable sexual encounters. These spaces are virtually non-existent now due to the clean-up of New York City by the city government, which happened in concurrence with dominant LGBT politics denouncing the promiscuous image of gay men. Joshua Lubin-Levy and Carlos Motta started the *Petite Mort* project to reconnect to the pre-Internet era when gay men needed public spaces to “connect, meet, and create a sense of belonging” (8). As a resident of New York City in the 1970s, author Edmund White recently said that he only felt a connection to the gay community when he was cruising the streets (Lubin-Levy and Motta 10). Moving beyond nostalgia for the sexual freedom of a newly-liberated community, the book joins the criticism on current gay culture that is fixated on domesticity and consumption instead of sexuality, which Lisa Duggan calls “new homonormativity”: heteronormativity sustained instead of contested (50).

In order to understand the criticism on current LGBT politics and the shift of gay culture from the public to the private sphere, it is important to study the formation of this public identity in post-Stonewall New York City. In *Publics and Counterpublics*, Michael Warner builds on Jürgen Habermas’ public sphere theory, applying it to queer theory in a series of essays. Warner argues that a public enables the forming of social relationships between strangers through the circulation of texts. In my BA thesis, I studied how films reveal key characteristics of a collection of publics, namely the gay subculture of New York. The
thesis shows that underground cinema connected closeted gay men in the 1960s; the film *Cruising* (1980) and its troubled production exposed polarized views within the gay ghetto, while self-produced cinema helped the community to deal with the trauma of AIDS.

In this dissertation, I will focus on the most influential gay public of New York in the late 1970s, namely the public of the gay clone. The clone is characterized by a homogeneous, masculine appearance, a high focus on sexuality and an eagerness for social and sexual connections in the gay neighborhoods of New York. The gay politics of the clone are generally practiced through sexuality instead of activism. I will revisit the depiction of this archetype in film, while expanding my analysis to gay literature. In the late 1970s, gay authors like Edmund White, Felice Picano and Andrew Holleran managed to get their gay-themed books published, successfully finding global gay audiences. The social and artistic circulation of the clone archetype determined actual appearances of gay men around the world for a short time, representations of gay lives for a much longer period, and proved to be inspirational for popular culture. The impact of the clone counterpublic demonstrates the possibility of cultural change through social movements instead of politics.

Although the uniform appearance of the clone makes it tempting to generalize, gay clones were not identical in all respects and not all gay men in the late 1970s were gay clones. Furthermore, many of the artists of the texts in this dissertation will not consider their artworks to be clone texts. Yet if a text contained the markers of clone culture and was widely circulated, it did contribute to a growth of the clone counterpublic. I will use Warner’s definition of publics to explain how the gay clone became the archetype of gay men. Caught between Stonewall and AIDS, the clone community of New York used their identity, sexuality, and spaces to create new forms of sexual citizenship. Their collective efforts created a counterpublic of books, films, music, and fashion, which generated global templates for gay identity, mainstream tastes, and inspiration for post-clone counterpublics.
Chapter 1: Publics

“Since American gays seem more conspicuously gay than members of other nationalities, European homosexuals sometimes adopt American fashions as a badge of their gayness: sneakers, jeans, leather jackets, T-shirts or whatever else happens to be the current gay look in the States.” (Silverstein and White 124)

The distinction between public and private is vital for the development of the identity of a gay man or woman. This identity issue is visualized by the modern metaphor of the closet. Preceded by the struggle between private thoughts and contrasting dominant public ideas, the act of coming out of the closet is a literal continuation of this mental confrontation with the public. The moment when gay identity came out of the closet in American culture is usually pinpointed at the Stonewall Riots of 1969. From that point forward, individual gay men were tied together in a public of their own, creating a counterpublic. As the public plays such a vital part in the forming of gay identity, the term with its different meanings invites further analysis. Michael Warner performed this analysis in *Publics and Counterpublics* in the form of a series of essays, which highlight the theme from a general historical and theoretical perspective. While many of the essays deal directly or indirectly with queer issues, the book provides a broader perspective than queer theory. I will use Warner’s seven dimensions of publics to illustrate the working of the gay clone counterpublic of New York City in the 1970s. Subsequent chapters will offer both a more narrow and wider focus: while my case study will concern the gay clone of New York City and the circulation of diverse texts, the concept of publics will be explained by examples from the general gay community of New York and its connection to gay literature in its heyday, as this relationship is widely researched and reflected upon. When a gay identity was made public by the gay liberation
movement of the 1970s, it united strangers with this identity into a counterpublic, which gave birth to a literary movement of gay writers describing their identity. Their texts created a less concrete gay counterpublic, unbound by time and geography.

The conscious distinctions between public and private for gay men and women led to the shaping of a community of former strangers based on common identity. The most common distinction between private and public is based on their spatial definition (Warner, Publics 26). The private sphere often offers legal protection against interference, in contrast with public space. People behave differently in public and private space. In modern culture the gap between the public and private self or role is preferably as minimal as possible due to a “Romantic longing for unity” (25). For those with homosexual desires before Stonewall, the gap between the dominant public opinion about homosexuality and their private illicit desires seemed unbridgeable. The 1970s saw the rise of identity politics, which gave gay men and women “an assertive and affirmative concept of identity,” offering the possibility of “a correspondence between public existence and private self” (26). Even as the rift between the private and public self was decreasing, the display of same-sex affections in public still seemed to disturb “deep and unwritten rules about the kinds of behavior and eroticism,” as witnessed by the continuous restrictions on open homosexual behavior in American society (25). This led to an increased gay migration to urban centers, for example Greenwich Village in New York City. The concentration of initial strangers into an alternative public is reminiscent of the development of Habermas’ “public sphere of civil society” in which print culture created opposition between civil society and the state (qtd in Warner, Publics 47). Similarly, the gay urban concentration also created a “realm of civil society” as an “object of discussion and debate” (47). In this realm, the opposition between public and private could be transformed into a joint effort against the dominant public. This counterpublic has the potential to create new forms of sexual citizenship through “active participation in collective
world making” (57). While the workings of the gay counterpublic were often abstract and unfathomable, they were usually propelled by actual groups of people.

At the end of the 1970s a group of New York-based gay writers switched to fiction with gay content, which created a new literary movement and made use of a new infrastructure to find a public for their books. The Violet Quill was a self-named group of seven writers who used the group to support each other in their literary efforts (Bergman, Hour 1). Their actual meetings were few and the last meeting was held within a year after the first at the start of the 1980s (1). Due to extensive research on the short-lived history of the Violet Quill by David Bergman, regular reflections by the surviving members of the group on their membership, and fierce debates on the output of the Violet Quill, it is a concrete example of a public in practice. The writers of the Violet Quill did not invent gay literature, they would have depended on existing literature to recognize their own sexuality, as the gay community, like no other group, has always been reliant on literature for its social formation (38). Edmund White simplified gay literary history before Stonewall by dividing gay novels in two categories: “the apology” in which gay men were doomed from the start, and the “pornographic rag” sold under the counter (qtd in Bergman, Hour 43). A more sophisticated take suggests that the Violet Quill writers built on the foundation of earlier fiction, yet by working within their “historical and cultural context” were able to expand “the form and the resources of language” (79). The Violet Quill writers only dared to switch to gay subject matter after the arrival of a gay-friendly publishing infrastructure in the 1970s. Gay books could only be profitable and therefore viable if audiences could be reached (53). After gay literature found its way to its audience, or concrete public, it created the last precondition for the forming of a more abstract public, which Michael Warner defines on the basis of seven characteristics.
1. **A public is self-organized.** Warner defines a public as an autotelic space, existing “by virtue of being addressed” (*Publics* 67). This definition implies an unsolvable circularity, as a public speech cannot be held without the existence of a public, yet a public is only formed as a result of being addressed. A public must not be confused with a concrete audience as a public is text-based, severing it from a specific place and time (67-68). Due to its autotelic circularity, a public is not and should not be organized by state or other institutions, making it a self-organized “public of discourse” (68). As a public does not have to abide by pre-defined frameworks, it thrives on imagination and spontaneity. In the self-creation and self-organization of the public “lies its power, as well as its elusive strangeness” (69). In the case of the publics of gay New York in the late 1970s, the shift of New York-based writers from conventional literary themes to gay themes is a watershed moment. They shared impulses to change their work and thus create a public: desires to “write works that reflected their gay experiences,” to write for a gay audience, and to write in “the language really used by gay men” (Bergman, *Reader* xvi). The shift to gay themes was opposed by literary institutions like *The New York Times Book Review*. In a 1978 review, John Yohalem expressed the hope that Edmund White would “disguise his own sexuality… to give his art a nervous, mysterious charm” (qtd in Bergman, *Reader* xv). On the other hand, there was a hunger from the gay community for open and positive texts about gay experience (xv). Although it could be argued that the gay public was created by gay pamphlets, newspapers and magazines, the limited time span and geographical reach of these publications could not be compared to the influence of the systematic publishing and distribution of gay literature.

2. **A public is a relation among strangers.** A public cannot consist of merely a group of friends; it needs to include strangers, as “reaching strangers is its primary orientation” (Warner, *Publics* 74). This seems quite logical, as a modern definition of publics transcends a personal gathering on a market square and is usually formed by print or other forms of media.
The notion of the stranger is reminiscent of older societies in which the stranger is an exotic, mysterious, disturbing invader, while the modern stranger already belongs to our world and thus the public, as “a normal feature of the social” (75). New York City has always thrived on the invasion of strangers and became especially attractive for gay men after World War II, becoming a “literal gay metropolis for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from within and without the United States” (Kaiser xii). This attraction would grow explosively after the Stonewall Riots as children all over America would recognize their “mystery within” in the images from cities like New York, effectively ending “cultural invisibility” (206). In its infancy, gay publics already attracted newly-out gay men and women to the city. Most of the gay immigrants in New York came alone and knew very few if any other gay men in the city. Unlike other immigrants, they saw the potential of the stranger. Judging by the numbers and concentration of gay men in New York City, the barrier for making social connections with other gay men was minimal. Due to these high numbers, Edmund White refers to Greenwich Village as a gay ghetto, “though in a city where one out of every four men is homosexual the term doesn’t mean much” (States 265). As a magnet for gay men and a breeding ground for social contact, New York offered the ideal territory for blossoming gay publics.

3. The address of public speech is both personal and impersonal. As a public consists of strangers, members of the public will not automatically feel addressed by public speech. Although public speech is inherently impersonal, at some time the addressee will find resonance within the speech, the speech will turn personal and the addressee will feel less like a stranger (Warner, Publics 76-77). As personal ideas become relevant to strangers, the public address provides “a general social relevance to private thought and life” (77). In public speech, the addressee realizes that the speech is not just directed at him, but at many others.¹ The speech doesn’t single out people on their “concrete identity,” but on the basis of “participation in the discourse” (78). The rise of gay publics after Stonewall had important
repercussions for gay men who would often not feel addressed by the heteronormative public speech of other publics. Even if they were not personally addressed, suddenly there was a voice which seemed to know their inner feelings and thoughts. When author David Leavitt read a book of gay fiction for the first time in 1977 he described the sensation as: “Finally, after judicious effort, I had located a work of fiction that described the ‘first time’ experience I suspected (hoped) I would someday have” (xvi). The comment by Leavitt reveals that representations of gay identity were rare in the 1970s and that it took substantial conscious effort to join the gay public. The personal experiences of gay writers felt relevant to many readers and connected them to others like them.

4. A public is constituted through mere attention. As a public only exists on the basis of public address, it needs some form of attention to feed itself (Warner, Publics 87). How addressees absorb the information is not relevant, since “the cognitive quality of that attention” is less important than “the active uptake” (87). Yet to get any amount of attention is easier than it sounds in modernity. As publics cease to exist when interest has faded, they must “continually predicate renewed attention” (88). In civil society, this means that publics are historical instead of timeless and depend on active participation instead of ascriptive belonging (89). In this world order, consciousness is decisive and the direction of glances constitutes the social world (89). In joining forces with other gay writers in the Violet Quill, Felice Picano confirms the importance of promotion: “besides utilizing the gay media, we insinuated ourselves into mainstream newspapers and journals, again with articles, reviews, and interviews wherever an opening presented itself” (“Real” 314). The constant need for attention does not bode well for traditional gay publics in the twenty-first century, while “many publishers, whether mainstream or gay, don’t believe that there’s a market for gay literary fiction” (Woelz ix). Whether this statement is true or not, only two decades after the Violet Quill it seems that “the days of the well-read homosexual are over” (327). Although
new publics and counterpublics have arisen in the internet age, the gay reading public shares the same fate as other print cultures in their steady demise due to a lack of interest.

5. **A public is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse.** Rising beyond the simplified definition of a public as an event with a speaker and addressees, the “ongoing space of encounter for discourse” creates a public (Warner, *Publics* 90). Public discourse is interactive, not just as a response to a speech, but also the interaction with passive onlookers (90). It is not just a conversation or discussion, but a “multigenre lifeworld” organized by “potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization” (91). While this may seem overly abstract, a public always has a concrete connection to the world as known and unknown elements of the lives of addressees are used to communicate, with the known element as “a scene of practical possibility” and the unknown as “a hope of transformation” (91). Edmund White believes that gay literature offers the opportunity for gay men to tell each other “the stories of their lives,” that report the past and shape the future and will ultimately contribute to “forging an identity as much as revealing it” (qtd in Bergman, *Hour* 73). He continues that gay consciousness feeds on the struggle against “outside forces of a hostile world,” which produces internal resistance that benefits the next generation of gay people (73). White shares with Christopher Isherwood the viewpoint that books should guide the readers’ process of “their own continual construction” (73).

6. **Publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation.** Warner claims that the degree of activity of a public depends on the rate of circulation: “The more punctual and abbreviated the circulation, and the more discourse indexes the punctuality of its own circulation, the closer a public stands to politics” (*Publics* 96-97). A public exists because texts circulate through time, travelling through “an intertextual environment of citation and implication” (97). Within this intertextual environment, the reflexivity of publics is linked to market reflexivity (101). In a working public, circulation is based on the demands
of the addressee, or the market, but the demands are also determined by the discourse. Participants in the discourse understand that they are “directly and actively belonging to a social entity that exists historically in secular time and has consciousness of itself” (105).

While the gay community had previously been a subculture in New York, by the late 1970s Felice Picano observed that “fashion, design, and pop music worlds were almost completely dominated by gays and gay values” (“Real” 314). Being very aware of these new social realities, Picano was inspired to write about “the people and places and the new modes of behavior and relationships” as they seemed to be “fresh and different” (314). Picano and other writers felt inspired by the state of gay culture at that particular time and actively contributed to the growth of this culture and its publics.

7. A public is poetic world making. A public address always reveals the “lifeworld of its circulation” in its content and style and if it connects with the public, further attempts to “cite, circulate, and realize the world understanding it articulates” (Warner, Publics 114). Just as a public is often misunderstood as a group of concrete people, publics are also falsely considered as part of the public, a “unitary space” (116). While some publics choose to simply use an alternative kind of address for a subculture with a minority interest, subordinated social groups often create alternative publics with confrontational tactics towards the dominant public (117-118). Such a counterpublic always has “an awareness of its subordinate status” (119). Circulation is possible until a point of “intense resistance” (120). Although a counterpublic works in the same way as a general public, it is characterized by the hope that the “poesis of scene making will be transformative, not replicative merely” (122). The writers of the Violet Quill were very aware of the confrontational character of their work, as many believed that they should include as much sex as possible “to push it in straights’ faces” (Picano, “Real” 314). Most straight critics indeed rejected the gay content of the books, as they claimed that gay characters lacked “the universality’ of heterosexual characters”
(Bergman, *Hour 21*). Yet the books presented a vision of gay life that spoke to “a large number of gay men and formed the fantasies of even more” (19). Edmund White confesses that this vision was utopian as his characters were often more balanced and self-accepting than himself in an effort to “authenticate my gay readers if not myself” (qtd in Bergman, *Hour 73*).

By the publication of literature about the identity, sexuality and spaces of gay men in New York, the writers of the Violet Quill made a substantial contribution to the creation of gay publics. A few key novels had substantial commercial success, not only within the New York area, but throughout the country and the world. Various reprints gave these personal views on New York gay life longevity, surviving the existence of the world they described. Due to the realism of the settings, language, and desires, many readers failed to see the literary distortions, ironies, and exaggerations. A public does not need to tell the truth: its texts need to feel relevant to its audience. Even as the publics of the Violet Quill are autotelic, the writers did not magically appear in New York at that specific point in time, feeling the urge to write about their identity. These gay publics were preceded by other publics, which shaped the writers and the gay men around them.
Chapter 2: Counterpublic Identity

“Much to the activists’ chagrin, liberation turned the ‘Boys in the Band’ into doped-up, sexed-out, Marlboro men.” (Levine 7)

In the early 1970s gay visibility in the U.S. media revolved around the archetypical drag queen performer and the political protester in gay pride marches. Visitors to urban gay neighborhoods around 1980 saw a completely different kind of gay man: the gay clone. Australian author Dennis Altman visited these neighborhoods which “seem at first sight to be populated almost entirely by men under the age of forty-five, dressed in a uniform and carefully calculated style and dedicated to a hedonistic and high consumption life style” (qtd in Levine 7). From the outside, the gay clone was easy to describe due to that uniform appearance, as Martin Levine did in his study of the clone based on field work in the late 1970s:

The clone was, in many ways, the manliest of men. He had a gym-defined body; after hours of rigorous body building, his physique rippled with bulging muscles, looking more like competitive body builders than hairdressers or florists. He wore blue-collar garb--flannel shirts over muscle-T-shirts, Levi 501s over work boots, bomber jackets over hooded sweatshirts. He kept his hair short and had a thick mustache or closely cropped beard. (7)

The inner workings of the clone are not as clear-cut and surprisingly not always in accordance with the masculine exterior. I will use the concept of publics and key texts of those publics to illustrate how different and conflicting publics shaped the clone identity, and in turn perpetuated the image of the clone through a seminal literary work, Andrew Holleran’s 1978 novel Dancer from the Dance. Driven by the masculine publics of youth, the gay clone
rejected the political public of post-Stonewall gay liberation and the feminine public of pre-Stonewall homosexuality, and adopted a hypermasculine role inspired by authentic working-class masculinity and iconic male imagery. The unique identity of the New York gay clone was mainly distributed through literary texts within a counterpublic.

The generation of the gay clone experienced in their youth a conscious struggle to live up to the social norms of masculinity. While researching the use of the word “faggot” in high schools, C.J. Pascoe discovered that the word is used as a “generic insult for incompetence,” or more specifically “any sort of behavior defined as unmasculine” (57). Although this broad use of the word entails that boys do not use the word “fag” exclusively to imply that the other is homosexual, it does reveal a link between homosexuality and a failure to live up to masculine social norms. Ian Harris claims that in any modern society, “dominant cultural norms” are translated in “gender-role messages” (12). These social norms are internalized by boys in a masculine gender identity as members of “particular social clans with traditions that define right and wrong” (10). In a definition similar to Warner’s definition of publics, Harris speaks of a “masculine ideology generated by news media, artists, teachers, historians, parents, priests, and public figures” (10). The gender-role messages from these mass publics are “like scripts an actor follows in a play” (14). When a boy or man feels that he is not able to live up to the masculine norms, he will experience “gender-role strain” (17). What will feel like an unconscious script for most men, will turn into a conscious performance for boys and men who feel that they have to conform to the dominant masculine norms. Masculine norms in U.S. society were quite rigid until the 1970s, when there was room to “redefine dominant male messages” (19). But for the gay clone of the 1970s, growing up in the 1960s meant that they often failed to meet classic American masculine expectations of mainstream publics.

The strain of traditional masculine gender roles in adulthood is illustrated by one of the first gay-narrative films. *A Very Natural Thing* explores “the impact of gay liberation on
traditional romantic ideals” and the subsequent identity crisis of non-political gay men in New York in the early 1970s (Benshoff and Griffin, Queer 171). The protagonist David, who recently outed himself and relocated to New York City, meets Mark and tries to imitate heterosexual marriage with a reluctant Mark. The similarity to straight romance is enhanced by visual and textual references to Love Story (171). Mark grows increasingly frustrated with the restrictions of monogamy and after several frustrated attempts to restrain or copy Mark in this behavior, David ends the relationship. David suggests that Mark is addicted to validation by anonymous sexual encounters due to masculinity issues. David then meets Jason, who previously was in a traditional heterosexual relationship and seems eager to copy the norms of this model to his relationship with David. But David is seeking for a radical new definition of masculinity and decides to reformulate the rules of their coupling, seemingly relieved with the perceived lack of relational norms for gay men. The film ends with a joyous slow-motion beach scene of David and Jason, enjoying their time together and “leaving the exact nature of gay relationships open for discussion” (171). While the director of the film tried to depict the “freedom from the assumption of roles in an unstructured relationship,” the romantic undertones of the film infuriated the gay activists who fought for such a redefinition politically (Russo 208). The reaction to the film illustrates the rise of conflicting publics within the gay community of the 1970s.

After gay liberation, the gay movement grew increasingly polarized in the 1970s on the subject of politics, symbolized in the evolution of the gay pride march. The Stonewall Riots of 1969 unleashed a “Revolution” with gay participants such as Jim Kepner who wanted to end oppression for gay men by “reconstituting society, banishing gender roles, capitalism, religion, and the military-industrial complex” (qtd in Thompson 33). This culminated in Gay Pride Day marches in major U.S. cities from 1970 onwards. As these first marches were a very public manifestation of gay identity, they were an eager object of news reports and gay-
themed films. The documentary *Gay USA* deals exclusively with these nationwide marches. One of the participants observes that the parades turn ever less political and turn more and more into a carnival. In *A Very Natural Thing*, the fictional story of David is intercut with interviews with actual participants in a New York parade. David rejects taking part in the parade, as he claims to be non-political. The Jason character objects, as he regards the festival as a celebration of being gay and an opportunity to be in the company of many other gay people. Looking at the people in the parades in both films, they show a variety in appearance in contrast with the later uniform clone look. This variety seems to be the aim of the 1978 documentary *Word Is Out*, which is a sort of parade in its own right, as it is based around twenty-six gays and lesbians in a politically-correct mix of gender, race, and age. In an interview about the film on the DVD, a gay businessman admits that he was approached for the documentary to balance out the many “lesbians in the woods.” The documentary has a clear message denouncing a uniform masculine gay culture. One of the interviewed men who contests gender roles realizes that effeminate men are seen as less worthy in the contemporary gay climate, while another man regrets the restrictive labels and boundaries in gay culture. When one of the interviewees confesses a preference for anonymous sex, the interviewer hastily questions the doubtful healthiness of that kind of behavior. While the gay parades of the 1970s were a way to publically reveal a newfound gay identity, the communality of the parades obscured the increasingly fragmented gay community with many conflicting and normative counterpublics.

The gay liberation movement of the 1970s caused gay style to evolve from the dichotomy of femininity and butch to individuality to the clone look. Martin Levine argues that gay men construct their culture from mass culture. Gay male identity is constructed from “the artifacts and materials that gay men find in their culture” (56). Before Stonewall, closeted gay men did not contest the “equation of homosexuality with effeminacy,” and thus used
“feminine presentational strategies” to express their hidden gay identity (56). A minority of gay men rejected this image and adopted a hypermasculine macho role in an act of overconformity to traditional male gender roles (57). The gay liberation movement of the 1970s rejected the feminized closet culture, claiming that gay men were not deviant, not failed, but real men “demonstrating their newfound and hard-fought conformity to traditional norms of masculinity” (57). By joining the general denunciation of effeminacy, gay men wanted to demonstrate the improved value of their identity (28). Initially gay culture joined the contemporary rejection of strict masculine and female norms in society, combining masculine and feminine styles (58). In a rejection of the strict gendered norms of U.S. society, they searched for individuality in their appearance. Eventually this “gender fuck” style was rejected by trendy gay circles in New York, which embraced the manliness of homosexuals and created a stylized version of the dated butch hypermasculinity (58). The urban uniform clone look brought “a gay sensibility to a gendered attire” (61). The dominant publics of U.S. society were contested by the counterpublic of gay liberationists, which was in turn challenged by the clone counterpublic. While many gay men felt they had only performed masculinity in their youths, now they wholeheartedly embraced the masculinity of the clone style and slipped into a different performance, that of the New York gay clone.

While it is impossible to pinpoint the origins of the appearance of the clone, it has strong links to the Marlboro Man. As the iconic symbol of masculinity in advertising, it seems almost inevitable that gay men on the lookout for a masculine outfit would turn to the Marlboro Man. The relationship between gay men and the Marlboro Man is not just accidental: the Philip Morris company was well aware of the impact of their advertising on gay men. In a 1994 marketing study, research company Guiles & Associates explored the impact of the Marlboro brand on the gay market:
Maintaining the highest share of the gay market, Marlboro imagery is fairly instant and clearly dominated by the Marlboro Man. Among gay consumers, this image has particular importance as an overt cue to masculinity/sexuality. Marlboro’s success in this context depends wholly on the relevance of this cowboy image to the world (fantasy and real) of these gay consumers. (5-6)

As gay men in the 1970s were embracing masculine publics, the iconic Marlboro Man felt particularly relevant. Gay consumers valued the positive cues of the Marlboro Man as rugged/masculine/sexy, independent/strong, not arrogant, authentic/well-rounded and enduring, while they downplayed negative cues such as common/ordinary, distant, false masculinity, redneck and overbearing (5). While the masculinity of the Marlboro Man as part of a macho mass-media public would seem unreachable in the childhood of the gay clone, in adulthood they could copy the appearance of the masculine icon and become its facsimile.

The market research shows that Marlboro is a “cue to manhood” for gay customers in a society, “where male homosexuality is often interpreted to mean non-masculinity” (19). Gay men not only reacted to Marlboro advertising, they appropriated the imagery for their own counterpublic. Levine describes advertising billboards in the New York gay neighborhood for a gay steam bath, which showed “a drawing of a cowboy and the message, ‘Come! To Man’s Country’” (39). Using the double entendre of the word “come” and the reference to Marlboro Country, the ad transformed counterpublic space into a world populated by real men.

The gay clone appropriated working class style for its outward masculinity, used the uniform appearance as a disguise for actual living conditions, but was ultimately unable to achieve the authentic masculinity of the working class man. Levine claims that the clone wanted to prove his masculinity by embracing “the rougher, coarser masculinity of the common laborer” (60). By putting together outfits of typical working-class occupations, the clone signified the working-class laborer (61). Edmund White notices that as elements of
working-class dress, the uniform of the clone had “the virtue of being cheap” (States 268). This meant that the gay clone look was accessible for men of all means and thereby smoothed out class differences within the gay community. Whereas homosexuality used to be seen as “an aristocratic or bohemian phenomenon,” modern gays after Stonewall were “openly gay surfers, athletes, bartenders, butchers, carpenters, therapists, ranchers and bankers” (Silverstein and White 11). White concludes that the clone costume hides poverty and conceals the rise of “a whole class of gay indigents” (States 268). While the clone seems as masculine and poor as a member of the working-class, he could never fully ascertain the status of the lower classes. The clone look did not have the nonchalance of straight masculine appearance (Levine 61). In the short story “Hardhats,” Ethan Mordden stages a confrontation between gay clones and an actual ironworker. Ironworker Gene is “young, handsome, and clean-cut,” but also “riffraff,” in other words: “sex is class” (Buddies 19). The narrator takes Gene to gay club The Eagle, a “showcase for tough men,” but he soon realizes that the bar was “a place of sculpted hunks” in contrast to Gene who was “lewd” (26). Gene is not approached by anyone in the bar, which makes the narrator wonder if men like Gene are maybe “too authentic to be hot” (28). A further example was shown in one of the rare fiction films about clone culture, Cruising. The main character is an undercover cop trying to infiltrate in the clone scene. The cop is initially rejected by the men in the gay clubs, even when he visits a bar during a cop theme night. The clone was not interested in the real deal, only the idealized signified version. Only after transforming his body into the clone ideal, the cop becomes desirable to other clones. While aiming to appear as masculine as working-class men, counterpublic texts show that the clone is conscious of the role-playing of the part, not able or willing to become like their model.

While the clone rejected feminized styles in favor of masculinity, the social practices of the clone integrated feminine and masculine forms of interaction. Social interaction in the
pre-Stonewall era was based on “gender-inappropriate practices” such as art, opera, fashion and celebrity gossip (Levine 68). The move of clone culture towards masculinity did not mean a transition towards typical masculine emotional unavailability. While the topics changed towards the masculine pastimes of the clone, the importance of social relationships remained (69). Typical clone conversations were grouped in three categories: “dirt,” “dish” and “dick” (72-73). The first two categories are remnants of the feminized gay culture, with “dirt” as gossip about the activities of other people and “dish” as sharp criticism on acquaintances behind their backs (72). Due to the typical use of cross-gendered pro-nouns (she) and nouns (girl, queen), the conversations threatened the masculine image of the clone (72). In contrast, “dick” was very much modeled on heterosexual “locker room conversations,” discussing sexual exploits, sexually-themed jokes, and the “sexual prowess and predilections” of others (73-74). For straight and gay men alike, sex is used to “articulate their manhood to other men” (73). Talking “dick” was also the basis of “boy watching,” in which friends objectified passersby and smiled and whistled to them (74). By the use of the objectifying behavior of construction workers, clones copied another masculine feature of the men they based their appearance on. The intermingling of typically masculine and feminine conversations, confirms that “masculinity and femininity were a form of drag” for the clone (63). Despite the enthusiastic embrace of masculinity and the constructed social interaction, the clone still performed a script provided by the clone counterpublic.

In New York the exterior of the clone was not an individual response to contemporary gay culture; it was part of the rituals of gay urban life. As a member of the culture he was describing, Edmund White analyzed the workings of the New York clone counterpublic in his 1980 book States of Desire: “Finally, the adoration of machismo is intermittent, interchangeable, between parentheses. Tonight’s top is tomorrow’s bottom. We’re all more interested that the ritual be enacted than concerned about which particular role we assume”
White believes that the masculinity of the clone is a role. He also connects the state of gay relationships to the temporality of fashion. The seventies saw the rise of masculinity, the decline of fidelity and finally the ideal of “sexless intimacy and raunchy anonymity” (265). The dispersal of the fashion ideals of gay culture was made possible by the public nature of gay urban life in New York. White writes that he is always struck by the “responsive and observing public” in the city (286). Yet public life was not just an attraction, it also offered friendship which was more important than romantic love for many New York inhabitants (286). White’s words describe an ideal breeding ground for the clone counterpublic, circulating through the New York gay neighborhoods and throughout the country: “New York gays are justifiably proud of their status as taste-makers for the rest of the country, at least the young and up-to-date segment of the population. Our clothes and haircuts and records and dance steps and decor--our restlessly evolving style--soon enough become theirs” (259). While the clone uniform was a way to appear more masculine, for the New York gay man it was only part of an effort to impress the men and the world around them.

The clone counterpublic was further distributed through space and time by its signature novel *Dancer from the Dance*. Published in 1978, the novel by Andrew Holleran introduced colorful characters who lived on dirt, dish, dick: “Although I had no idea who the two strangers on my left were, nor had even been introduced to Archer Prentiss, I knew, to the quarter inch, the length and diameter of each one’s penis, and exactly what they liked to do in bed. But then so did everyone else in that room” (44). The men in the book prepared for their nights out by calling each other to “dissect, judge, memorialize the previous night and forecast the one to come” (114). Then they would go through numerous combinations of clothing “before she settles on her costume” (115). Before going out, they would take one last look in the mirror, “like an actor going onstage” (115). In 1994, Ethan Mordden called the book an “attempt to forge a mythology out of the icons and ceremonies of gay culture”
(Waves xix). In 2012, Christopher Bram writes about the enduring commercial success of the book, claiming that the book is about “looking for love, living for love” (186). Due to its longevity, it also provided a yardstick for generations of gay men when the clone was long gone. To a young David Leavitt, the novel forebode a future of “relegation to some marginal role in a world where supermen possessed of almost blinding physical perfection preen, parade, ignore, dismiss” (xviii). Writing in 1994, Leavitt further vilifies the book by quoting an anonymous friend who believes that Dancer from the Dance damaged many young gay Americans for which the book was the first encounter with gay life (xix). Leavitt’s comments substantiate the iconic status of the book in gay literature and the wide reaching effect of the clone counterpublic.

For many gay men who moved to New York in the 1970s, the uniform of masculinity was a central theme as an unreachable ideal in their youths, a way to oppose gay politics and femininity in the early 1970s, as the object of desire and finally as a fashion statement. Masculinity did not play this central role for every gay man, nor was it as inauthentic for all gay clones. White stresses that like no other city, New York offers gay men “an unparalleled chance to assemble a mix-and-match life” (States 254). Levine admits that some clones appeared “inarticulate, inexpressive, and unemotional,” making them “just like any other men” (68). Yet the image of masculinity as a role was so omnipresent in gay public life and gay film and literature that this gay identity became part of a unique clone counterpublic, transcending the location of New York and the time of the late 1970s. While this public may seem superficial and narcissistic at times, the clone way of life also offered friendships, often in the form of alternative families which replaced the families of blood by which the men were rejected. The clone exterior smoothed over differences between men and it enhanced their central denominator: their sexuality.
Chapter 3: Counterpublic Sexuality

“In daily life, the relations between these men are filled with tenderness, with communitarian practices of life and of sexuality. Beneath the sign and under the shelter of these masculine theatrical displays, the sexual relations that take place reveal themselves to be, rather, valorizations of a masochist sort.” (Michel Foucault qtd in Halperin 89)

While the Stonewall Riots made it possible to publically display a gay identity, they did not provide a manual for the enactment of this identity. The gay neighborhoods in cities like New York were packed to the brim with hormone-filled men who were eager to invent new rules for appropriate sexual behavior, which caused a belated sexual revolution. Although most of this revolution took place outside the eye of spectators or the camera, a mediated version was caught on film in the booming business of pornography in the early 1970s. The rise of the gay clone meant an increased focus on sexuality, which was an integral part of clone identity. The counterpublic sexuality of the gay clone was circulated by three diverse key texts: the gay sex manual *The Joy of Gay Sex*, the thriller novel *The Lure* and the satirical novel *Faggots*. *The Joy of Gay Sex* was translated into German, Italian, Swedish, and French, while the American edition was exported throughout the world (Silverstein 159). *The Lure* was the third of Felice Picano’s successful psychological thrillers, but the first with a gay theme, which made it a lasting “gay fiction favorite” (Davidson 25). *Faggots* sold 340,000 copies in the 1970s and it has led a long and controversial life since its first publication (Bram 186). While all three books were written to either educate or entertain the reader, they have a secondary effect of showing late 1970s gay sexuality in New York City from all sides with its potential for ecstasy and agony. By discarding mass-public sexual morality, a counterpublic of gay pornography facilitated a freedom in sexuality for gay men. The gay clone used this freedom
to push the moral borders of forms of sexuality and the amount of sexual contact, which was both stimulated and criticized by the publics of gay books and philosophers.

The concentration of gay men in urban areas and the normalization of homosexuality in the 1970s gave way to a rejection of contemporary heterosexual moralities and a counterpublic sexual revolution. The authors of *The Joy of Gay Sex* instructed readers to “cast aside all worries about why you like to have sex in one way rather than another and concentrate on pinpointing exactly what you like and how to get it” (Silverstein and White 14). This led to a late sexual revolution of freedom and experimentation, which encouraged the revolutionaries “to sample every kind of erotic experience” (Kaiser 212). In many ways, the aims of this sexual revolution were similar to its heterosexual counterpart, as it rejected “straight marriage, with its vows of fidelity, its role-playing, its power struggles,” seeking the “exciting frontier” of “more open and varied forms of relationship” (Silverstein and White 15). The gay sexual revolution would promise an easy road to fulfillment, as “one man knows fully the body of another man” (14). Despite its warnings against the ideology of monogamy, *The Joy of Gay Sex* is careful in avoiding strict dogmas for its readers. When meeting a new man there is always the choice between immediate sex or an “attempt to launch an affair” (196). Even when a gay man chooses the relationship route, the lack of social pressure to conform to convention means that gay couples have “an advantageous position for devising new relationships that truly suit their needs” (139). *The Joy of Gay Sex* propagates a counterpublic sexuality formed by an alternative (homo)sexual revolution in the 1970s.

Counterpublic sexuality thrived on gay pornography in the 1970s, most notably the 1971 classic *Boys in the Sand*, the gay counterpart of *Deep Throat*. The gay sexual revolution coincided with the repeal of obscenity laws, which made it possible to distribute hardcore pornography in New York cinemas (Benshoff and Griffin 158). One of the first gay-porn features was *Boys in the Sand*. Roger Edmonson claims that the film helped gay sex out of the
closet, a “how-to-do-it piece that helped to define the era’s hedonism” (72). Similar to *The Joy of Gay Sex*, the film aims to show its audience more than just gay sex. The film was shot on location on Fire Island, the summer getaway for New York’s gay men. A large part of the film comprises shots of the characters walking around the beaches, houses, and shops of Fire Island, which makes the film feel like a travelogue of Fire Island. When the film does show sex scenes, they include leather cock straps and poppers (amyl nitrate), which were just introduced in the gay shops of New York. In the DVD commentary, the director admits that he included these sex toys as advertisement, probably in one of the first instances of gay product placement. The film further features an interracial sex scene, which due to its rarity was described as “salt ‘n’ pepa” in the business, according to the director’s commentary. The film’s main star confirms that the pairing of a blond “preppie” with a black man outraged many viewers (Edmonson 78). From the comments of the director and the main star, and the amateur feel of the film, it becomes clear that the business of producing gay hardcore films in the early 1970s still had a paradoxical innocence which it would soon lose. With a smart promotional campaign, including ads in the *New York Times* and *Variety*, the film was a huge cross-over hit, with critics who reviewed it as an art film (83). The introduction of gay hardcore pornography in cinemas created a new social space for counterpublic sexuality.

The reflections of Michel Foucault on homosexuality moved counterpublic sexuality away from its traditional psychoanalytical framework in the 1970s. Foucault conceptualizes sexuality “as a device whose operation can be analyzed rather than as a thing whose nature can be known” (Halperin 121). By depsychologizing sexuality, Foucault offers alternatives to the conventional psychoanalytical approaches to homosexuality (121). Foucault claims that psychoanalysis maintains the “gigantic moral imprisonment” of the homosexual as he “takes on the ‘outside’ guilt and shame produced by bourgeois morality as the ‘inner’ condition that separates him definitively from a society of others” (qtd in Huffer 161). The definition of
homosexuality as a mental illness was discarded in 1974 by its removal from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (Kaiser 239). *The Joy of Gay Sex* warns of the “indignity” of a discussion about the origins of homosexuality, as such conversations have as the “underlying premise the idea that homosexuality is an abnormality and should be ‘cured’” (Silverstein and White 168). Foucault explains promiscuity as a product of the ban on homosexuality in Western culture, which disallowed homosexuals to “elaborate a system of courtship” (qt. in Kaiser 291). As Foucault’s ideas were centered around the concept of power, he was fascinated by sadomasochism, in which power produces effects of pleasure instead of domination (Halperin 85). Foucault saw S/M within a city like New York as “part of a wider practice of subcultural community formation” (Halperin 87). Foucault combined his philosophical work with observations of gay urban life in the 1970s to redefine counterpublic sexuality, a process which Warner refers to as “poetic world making” (*Publics* 114).

In their attempts to seek the borders of counterpublic masculinity and sexuality, many clones experimented with sadomasochism and drugs. In *The Joy of Gay Sex*, Silverstein and White seem surprised by the “surge of fascination” with sadomasochism in the gay world of the 1970s (187). The clone had an ambivalent relationship with S/M. As an extension of the performance of masculinity, many clones utilized the clothing and props of S/M without engaging in S/M practices (Levine 95). While S/M fantasies were becoming increasingly popular in clone sexuality, Silverstein and White estimate that “fewer than half the men strutting into leather bars” were sadomasochistic and solely used the S/M signifiers as fashion. However, many clones would additionally engage in “light S/M behaviors,” such as bondage, urophilia, anal fisting, humiliation, light spanking, role playing, and the performance of hypermasculine erotic fantasy scenes (Levine 95). While some clones enjoyed group sex, most clones would use drugs while having sex, such as cocaine, Quaaludes, MDA, and marijuana (96). Clones rejected the traditional perception of homosexual role playing in sex,
with the masculine homosexual in the “active ‘inserter’ role” and effeminate homosexuals in the “passive ‘receptive’ role” (97). Clones classified themselves as either top, bottom, or versatile on the basis of preference rather than masculinity (97). In a further inversion of traditional sexual norms, the S/M community regarded a “superb bottom” as “highly masculine” (98). True to its main function as a sex manual, *The Joy of Gay Sex* explains both traditional and exotic forms of sexual behavior, the different effects of narcotics, and appropriate social behavior before, during and after sex. Silverstein and White encourage the experimentation drift of the gay “unattached” clone, as “there’s no harm in his having as much sexual experience as he wants” (178). Due to its educational content and popularity, *The Joy of Gay Sex* was a prime source of useful information for newcomers to the urban clone scene, thereby propagating counterpublic sexuality.

Both *The Lure* and *Faggots* have characters without any prior knowledge of the gay scene of New York, which gives the readers the opportunity to be educated together with these characters as they encounter the overwhelming gay sexuality of the city in the late 1970s. The protagonist of *The Lure*, Noel Cummings, infiltrates the gay ghetto of New York to catch a serial killer of gay men. Although Noel claims to be heterosexual, he feels that he has to have sex with men to maintain his cover. His first homosexual contact in the book is initiated by his sexual partner as follows: “What are you into? Kink? Fists? Scat? Tell me man! If I haven’t done it, I’ll try it. I want to please you. What is it? S and M? Bondage? Come on. Tell me. It’s cool” (112). Noel takes up the blunt invitation of his sexual partner, since “anyone, everyone” does it anyway and the thought of sex with another man excited him and “any boy or man he’d ever known” (112). Another lover explains to Noel the art of sadomasochism, which alters a participant from the inside and reveals “his attitudes, his fears, his desires, his thresholds” (197). In contrast to the sociological approach of Noel Cummings, sixteen year-old Timmy Purvis came to New York simply to “have fun” in *Faggots* (91).
Already at his arrival at the Port Authority, Timmy is picked up by Yootha Truth and Miss Rollarette, two self-proclaimed “faggot talent scouts” (95). Before long, Timmy was invited to “the last city orgy of the spring season,” attended by “about eighty single gentlemen” (123-125). At the orgy, the young virgin was “devoured” by multiple men, “worshipped like a god,” and being watched by eighty naked bodies, “naked witnesses now coalesced into one huge grabbing organism” (131-133).

He winced at first because he thought he might be hallucinating from the drugs. He winced at second because he was suddenly frightened to have yet another dream metamorphose into reality--too many dreams were coming true too quickly today in New York, things he hadn’t even known he was dreaming about. (132)

Counterpublic sexuality would connect strangers on the pages of the novels and, regardless of their opinion on the ubiquitous experimental sexuality, the countless readers of these popular books.

Inspired by 1970s neo-Marxism and postmodernism, gay philosophers debated the pros and cons of counterpublic promiscuity. In the 1970s homosexual promiscuity was often seen as “an impossibility of desire unique to the homosexual by virtue of his or her supposed immaturity and inauthenticity” (Dollimore 295). Silverstein and White reject the use of the word promiscuity, as “the word is always used pejoratively; it is a moral condemnation, not a neutral description” (178). John Rechy saw the revolutionary potential of promiscuous homosexuality, a sexual revolution in which “the streets are the battleground, the revolution is the sexhunt, [and] a radical statement is made each time a man has sex with another on a street”; a revolution in which death is replaced by the orgasm and the battles are fought with “cum-smeared tanks” (qtd in Dollimore 297). In contrast, Guy Hocquenghem uses the same Marxist vocabulary to highlight the danger of promiscuity.
Constructed like capitalism against death, the cruising machine carries death within it just like capitalism, for instead of being madly in love with what is present, it desires what is absent, it always desires the next object, it constructs itself on the establishment and sacred assumption of lack, according to the absolute criteria of consumption. (75) The gay man of Hocquenghem’s no longer knows the joy of gay sex, but is “a proletarian of my desire who no longer enjoys the air on the earth and whose masochism is reduced to an assembly line” (76). The gay clone is the ultimate cultural construct of this “postmodern consumer capitalism,” as he references seriality, standardization, and commodification, as “the simulacral gay man, a copy for which there is no original” (Davidson 47). The clone is a composite of elements in body and clothing which are deemed most desirable. For the clone desire has become automatic if the other has the typical features. Encounters between clones are interchangeable and easily repeatable due to their similarity. In 1970s gay slang an attractive man was even referred to as a “number” (47). Deleuze and Guattari claim that under late capitalism “there is always something statistical in our loves” (qtd in Davidson 47). The postmodern discussions on promiscuity would constitute a reflexive circulation of discourse and intensified counterpublic sexuality.

The darker side of counterpublic sexuality is a major theme in The Lure and Faggots. Noel Cummings had a hard time dealing with the omnipresence of sexuality in The Lure’s New York. He felt that “every step he took was watched,” which made him wish that “he were crippled, hunchbacked, deformed, ugly” (295). After he stepped into a “postdawn orgy,” Noel felt as if he was “stranded on another planet--everything alien and incomprehensible” (298). After Timmy Purvis lost someone he loved in Faggots, his sudden loneliness made him “frightened that his bite of the Big Apple is more than he can chew” (250). For New York gay men of the 1970s, desire and death would be literally linked by the fire at the Everard Baths in May 1977, in which nine people died (Thompson 147). When the protagonist of Dancer from
the Dance disappears at the end of the novel, “lots of people in New York are convinced he
died at the Everard Baths” (241). A character in Faggots departed the baths “safely and only
shortly before the famous Everhard fire” (Kramer 172). Through the mouths of his characters,
Kramer addresses the reader about the dangers of anal fisting, which “could punch a hole in
your stomach” and supposedly caused “twenty deaths last year from holes in the stomach at
St. Vincent’s in the Village alone” (335). In the midst of the satirical descriptions of graphic
counterpublic sexuality, the novel again speaks directly to the reader to warn against the era’s
unbridled sexual experimentation, “before you fuck yourself to death” (316). In the first years
after their publication, both The Lure and Faggots defied the dominantly positive
counterpublics of sexual freedom.

The Joy of Gay Sex, The Lure and Faggots reveal the sexuality of the gay clone and
show its multifaceted representations within the gay neighborhood of New York in the late
1970s. At the same time these texts are considered to be enduring key elements of the
counterpublics of clone sexuality. Despite the commercial success of Faggots, the reviews
were scathing, especially by Violet Quill member George Whitmore, who believed the book
should be burned (Bram 186). The attitudes towards these books changed considerably after
the onset of the AIDS epidemic. Many aspects of The Joy of Gay Sex were considered to
inspire irresponsible behavior, which led to a series of revised safe-sex editions. Faggots is
seen as an eerie prophecy of the deadly force of promiscuous sexuality. The Lure encapsulates
a lost world of sexual freedom, and its voyeuristic themes highlight the importance of
cruising, of watching and being watched as a form of social cohesion in the gay urban
neighborhoods of the 1970s.
Chapter 4: Counterpublic Space

“Taken in the right spirit (which is playful and adventurous, a gambler’s spirit), cruising can be rewarding and fun. Moreover, it needn’t be a full-time occupation. You’re meeting new people, you’re getting plenty of exercise and from time to time you strike it rich.”

(Silverstein and White 79)

“So we came to the ghetto,” Carl Wittman wrote in 1969 as he described the massive urban migration of gay men and women (qtd in Wilson 105). Despite the negative connotations of the word ghetto, the term stuck in the 1970s as a fitting description of the concentrated urban areas in which gay men performed a multitude of social interactions. In The Lure, the “voluntary ghetto” is “a place where teenagers can’t gang up on one drunken queen” (Picano 260). On the other hand, in Faggots “all we do is live in our Ghetto and dance and drug and fuck” (Kramer 314). The way gay men regard their spatial surroundings is decided by their inner feelings, by absorption of communication with their family and friends, and by the sensory selection of less personalized sources, respectively the “queer body,” “queer community,” and “queer planet” (Ingram 5-6). Ingram’s queer planet is similar to Warner’s notion of the counterpublic. Counterpublic space has a twofold definition: it is the literal space for the circulation of counterpublic texts, created by demonstrations, social gatherings, and gay media, while counterpublic space in this chapter also refers to the descriptions of the ghetto and the ways that gay men relate to their surroundings within counterpublic texts. The study of the feelings and behaviors of people towards their urban space is termed “psychogeography” by Debord (qtd in Ingram 7). The psychogeography of New York gay clones in their counterpublic space reveals an urgent desire for social contact in the form of public cruising, public friendships, and public sexual encounters. This urgency caused
intensely emotional bonds of clones with their homes, bars, discos, saunas, adult cinemas, and the outdoors.

While clones typically designed their apartments to accommodate sexual encounters, the counterpublic texts suggest that clones were restless when they were home alone. Levine claims that clone apartments typically contained mirrored bedroom walls, large stashes of drugs, lubricants and sex toys in close proximity to the bed, and sufficient towels and toothbrushes in the bathrooms (67). Silverstein and White add features like dimmed lighting, a terrific sound system, a low, immense bed with bolsters, a soft and inviting rug, fully curtained windows, and soundproof rooms, which made the apartments “so seductive no one can resist” (196-197). Despite these carefully designed living spaces, the characters in the texts of the counterpublic seem to spend very little time at their homes. For people who saw each other only in bars and discos, the crowd “seemed to have no existence at all outside this room” (Holleran 38). When characters are at home, the urge to go outside is palpable. In Dancer from the Dance, an exhausted Malone would rise “completely against his will,” as there could be men outside looking for love (126). As a prisoner of love, “the entire realm of daytime existence became meaningless to Malone” (127). Perhaps typical for the genre, in hardcore film A Night at the Adonis the pull of adult cinema Adonis is too strong for one of the characters who had tried to stay home to read a book. Silverstein and White warn of the nightmare of “compulsive cruising,” caused by lust, boredom, loneliness, fear of “missing the Perfect Man,” or a downward-spiralling cycle of guilt and gay sex (78). The counterpublic home seems intertwined with sexual activity or desire for new social and sexual encounters.

As prime mode of communication in the gay ghetto, the act of cruising in counterpublic texts both appeals, repels, and transcends conscious behavior for the clone. Cruising is described by Levine as “the vehicle by which the clone either signaled sexual attraction or characterized the search for erotic partners” (79). It consists of four stages:
searching, stalking, signaling, and negotiating (80). These stages of cruising contain spatial components, namely the move towards a cruising area and the object of desire, and communicative components, namely the establishment of contact and the concretizing of the sexual encounter. The protagonist of The Lure has ambivalent feelings about cruising. When he is on Fire Island, he cruises a surfer and they share “a moment, another perspective, an intimacy unconnected with lust, an invitation” (Picano 307). Yet at other times, he despairs of the constant gazes of other gay men, who cruise, touch, talk, invite, ask for the time or a light, and proposition him (295). Silverstein and White claim that cruising happens “all the time, everywhere” (74). Due to the constant stares, the ghetto with its omnipresent gazes could feel like a Foucauldian panopticon prison with “cultural institutions and the individual as self-surveying mechanisms” (Miller 2). Although Foucault uses the panopticon as metaphor for modern surveillance, it can be similarly applied to a closed culture in which the gaze is not only ingrained, but also possesses the power to pass judgment on the desirability of its inhabitants. Within the ghetto as a panopticon, the object of cruising is alienated from his body and senses, “as both an aspect of the system of classification’s dominance and an integral feature of the episteme of the modern state’s functioning” as it “interjects an internalized sense of being watched into its objects of surveillance” (148). Cruising is omnipresent in the counterpublic ghetto, which makes the gaze the primary form of social control for the New York gay clone.

The rise of gay bars gave gay men protected playgrounds for heterogeneous cruising experiences. The Stonewall Riots effectively ended police harassment for gay bars. By the rejection of anti-gay legislation like the law that prohibited same-sex dancing, “homosexual sociability was effectively decriminalized” (Echols 52). Gay men acted boldly instead of furtively in public spaces of bars and the mafia lost their grip on the gay nightlife of New York (52). Gay enterprise boomed, with an explosive growth of gay bars. Some bars were
new and some straight establishments went gay overnight, like the Ninth Circle Steakhouse which became “the hottest gay bar in Manhattan” for most of the 1970s (Kaiser 241). Bars like the Ninth Circle were primary spaces for cruising, a stage for a ritual in which “each movement was designed to signal an intention, a fear, a question; to attract or repel; an elaborate, silent mating dance” (Picano, *Lure* 66). For clones who grew tired of traditional cruising, the S/M club Mineshaft in the Meat District “epitomized the sexual frontier” (Moore 19). The bar was a “theatrical construct” which offered S/M rituals for “grim-faced men who knew in their hearts that they were embarking on a journey from which they might never return” (23). In the Mineshaft, “masculinity replaced beauty, and brutality was a kind of love” (26). The Mineshaft, like many other less extreme bars, introduced spaces for men to have sex in public, or in the semi-privacy of dark rooms. In *The Lure*, protagonist Noel is perplexed as “two guys next to him progressed from necking to heavy petting into full sex,” which leads to other men who gather to join the men or just watch the men make love (Picano 235). In a literal version of his theory on counterpublics, Michael Warner describes the importance of these experiences:

> The phenomenology of a sex club encounter is an experience of world making. It’s an experience of being connected not just to this person but to potentially limitless numbers of people, and that is why it’s important that it be with a stranger. Sex with a stranger is like a metonym. (qtd in Horowitz 346)

Bar protocol shifted dramatically after Stonewall, which turned counterpublic bars into spaces to connect freely with other gay men on many different well-defined levels, dependent on the concept of the particular bar.

The demand for dance floors in bars and the rise of the disco genre would culminate in an all-inclusive union between and within black and gay minorities in the early counterpublic dance culture. The explosive growth of gay nightlife establishments in New York after
Stonewall would not just lead to spaces where men socialized, but it also led to spaces where men danced. Long before the distinctive disco sound, there would be gay deejays, gay audiences, and gay dance floors (Echols 40). Lured by the “black music” of R & B and soul records, the clientele would be multiracial (2). In *Dancer from the Dance*, the fictional club Twelfth Floor would be “strictly classless,” as its central principle was “erotic love” (Holleran 40-41). The combination of heavy drug use, the sophisticated light and sound systems of new discotheques like the Loft and the Sanctuary, and sonic inventions would lead to “dance orgasms” (Echols 58). In *The Lure*, music and lights would strike “like an electric force” (Picano 99). The discotheques removed all inhibitions from normal life, as hundreds of shirtless men, white, Black, and Latino, would hold each other tight, “grinding into each other’s bodies, whirling, stomping, shouting with animal pleasure” (101). Holleran compares the disco experience with religious exaltation, as “we lived on certain chords in a song, and the proximity of another individual dancing beside you, taking communion from the same hand, soaked with sweat, stroked by the same tambourines” (112). The lights, music and drugs from counterpublic discotheques would remove inhibitions, obliterate class differences, and create feelings of social cohesion within audiences.

Despite the mythical egalitarian nature of New York discotheques, they were ultimately the breeding ground for an exclusionary counterpublic class system. Even though differences in wealth were invisible through clone uniformity, the clone counterpublic texts reveal a classification, proclaimed from the balconies of the discotheques. Men of beauty were in the highest regard. Silverstein and White wrote that social, sexual, and career doors open magically for handsome gay men (37). Holleran’s discotheque is “a strange democracy whose only ticket of admission was physical beauty” (40). A beautiful man who is dancing shirtless is “adored by all the people near him” and marveled over by the men on the balcony (225). Echols claims that the heat in the clubs forced men to dance bare-chested, which made
self-conscious men run to the gym to work on their “disco tits” and contributed to the desirability of sculpted bodies (126). Although black men built the foundations of disco, they were eventually excluded from popular gay discotheques. Clubs like the Tenth Floor and Flamingo were exclusively for members, which gave their owners the possibility to shut out men of color (66). Clubs like the Paradise Garage, which played R&B-based music and catered to a multiracial clientele, were unable to attract the A-list white gays (68). At the bottom of the clone class system were men with a small penis. As the intimate details of the men of the gay ghetto were the basis of clone dish, a lesser-endowed man was quickly outcast. In Dancer from the Dance, the “queens with small cocks” are referred to as “those lepers of New York” (Holleran 54). Clone logic dictates that the position of these pitied men is sealed since “they all wear plaid shirts, and they all have moustaches, you might as well pick one with a big dick” (46). Even as the counterpublic space of discos seemed to lack the class divisions of mass-public space, clones used their own set of classifications.

While cruising could be a wordy process in bars and discos, this was not the case in baths and sex cinemas, where signaling and negotiating was done by nonverbal contact. Kramer writes in Faggots that the men at the Everhard Baths were “protected only by sarongs of towel from complete usurpation by passing eyes” (156). Nowhere was the clone caste system harsher than in these places. Men with a small penis were rejected after silent inspections “like a housewife examining eggs or squeezing cantaloupes,” while men of beauty were met with “frowns, glares, studious attempts to avoid looking,” followed by “the wonderful expression of sheer joy, and awe” (Holleran 153). The sex cinema added a dimension of the gaze by the action on the film screen, as “the pornographic text exists ubiquitously on the screen and in the soundscape of the theater and is embedded in its spatial configurations as well as in those practices of bodily engagement that spectators perform” (Capino 57). Hardcore film A Night at the Adonis was filmed on location at sex cinema the
Adonis. In the film, a new employee and the viewer get a tour of the cinema from an experienced co-worker. The viewer watches the two men, who are observing the men in the cinema below, who in turn stare at the action on the screen and survey the other men in the cinema. This sequence puts the viewer in “a classically ‘all-knowing’ voyeuristic position—a position from which the spectator can seamlessly ‘see’ all of the theater’s sexual geography” (Cante and Restivo 155). David Deitcher recalls a night at the Adonis in 1978 when the film was actually playing in what he describes as “a meta-delight” (qtd in Lubin-Levy and Motta 62). The counterpublics of sexual meeting places reveal that rejection, validation, and voyeurism by the gaze are more clear and direct in places of non-verbal cruising.

Although New York offered a multitude of commercial, legal spaces for gay men to engage in sexual contact, many men remained drawn to public sex in parks, trucks, alleys, dunes, and on piers. Ira Tattelman believes that these public spaces carry with them “a sense memory of sexual excitement for men who had previously been forced to enact their rituals in dangerous public spaces” (qtd in Moore 20). Bathhouse Man’s Country even simulated the back of a truck on the top floor, so men could reenact the sexual action in the trucks of the Meat District (Moore 21). Yet many men went for the real thing nightly in the streets of New York. In Dancer from the Dance, Holleran describes the action in a park at night, when “like ghosts, like gremlins, the derelicts, faggots, drunks, and freaks moved in” (195). When the protagonist of Faggots is led towards a truck for the first time, he “awaited his long impending ascension unto heaven, inside a truck” (Kramer 171). A sexual encounter on the abandoned docks of New York means “crawling in and into this biggest womb and void of spacious blackness, total darkness” (122). An area on Fire Island between the Pines and the Grove is called the Meat Rack, “day or night, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, we never close” (267). Lubin-Levy claims that outdoor sex was crucial in the search of gay men in New York for “a space to belong,” as “finding themselves embraced, finding their meetings
embraced by the crossing paths of the park, they also found space for sexual pleasure” (11). Counterpublic texts on outdoor sex show that the allure of public sex was widespread in the clone community of New York.

By a focus on contemporary counterpublic texts instead of retrospective recollections, this chapter is an example of “queer archaeology of the landscape” (Ingram 7). The counterpublic texts envision spaces which connect, offer opportunities for social and sexual ecstasy, but which are ultimately ruled by the gaze. The voyeuristic and narcissist themes of the New York gay ghetto are made explicit in two hardcore films. Framed within the voyeuristic experience of *A Night at the Adonis*, a film with the title *Narcissus II* is shown on the screen of the Adonis, which shows a man making love with someone who is suggested to be himself. In the film *Bijou*, the protagonist enters a completely dark room, a dreamlike world of mirrors and life-size statues of phalluses, and eventually the location of a ritualized orgy. Inspired by these literal examples, a Freudian analysis would diagnose the social behaviors of gay men in the New York ghetto as “phallic narcissism,” which is defined by Corbett as “the vigorous exhibitionism, the muscular eroticism, the arrogant domination, and the admixture of sadistic traits” as a manifestation of a man’s attachment to his body and mind (212). The theatricality of the identity, sexuality and spaces of the clone is reminiscent of Foucault’s “non-being of illusion,” or “the human subject’s immersion in a world of mirrors, reflections, and aesthetic play” (Huffer 205). A Foucauldian analysis of the perversions in the baths, sex cinemas and darkrooms would classify them as unreason, an ethical variation on “the moral valorization of reason” (qtd in Huffer 206). While both approaches seem like a classification of the clone’s behavior as illnesses of the mind, the Foucauldian approach invites an adaptation of the ethics of a society, wherein the dominant publics adopt the counterpublic morality. Silverstein and White believe that “homosexuals may be exploring ground that soon everybody will be crossing” (15).
Chapter 5: Counterpublic vs Public

“As backrooms get shut down to make way for wedding vows, and gay sexual culture morphs into ‘straight-acting dudes hangin’ out,’ we wonder if we can still envision possibilities for a flaming faggotry that challenges the assimilationist norms of a corporate-cozy lifestyle.”

(Bernstein Sycamore 1)

After its publication in 1979, The Lure became the best-selling gay book of that year and the best-selling gay novel ever in German (Picano, Lure x-xi). Yet The Lure was considered a failure, as the publisher had expected sales in the millions (xi). Despite the commercial potential of a well-written psychological thriller, the book did not manage to cross-over to the mass public and remained within the niche of gay literature. The only truly successful assimilation of clone culture by mass culture was disco. The discotheque, its music, and its gay clone style were absorbed by global mainstream publics, with New York disco group The Village People as “the ambassadors of gay macho to the rest of the world” (Echols 122). But the 1980s brought the death of disco and the demise of the gay clone through the AIDS epidemic. While AIDS not only caused massive casualties of clones, it also destroyed the counterpublic space, sexuality, and identity of the New York clone. Subsequent gay counterpublics moved ever closer to heteronormative mass publics, but the clone has returned to gay culture in recent years with the emergence of clone counterpublic nostalgia. This nostalgia evolved into new post-clone counterpublics with elements of clone culture. In confrontations with mass publics, the clone counterpublic was in turn discarded, assimilated and ultimately destroyed. The lost counterpublic space, sexuality, and identity formed the roots of a nostalgic longing for public sex and a rebirth of clone culture as post-clone counterpublics.
By the use of a counterpublic theme in a Hollywood film, the clone counterpublic would encounter resistance from other gay counterpublics and mass publics. Picano’s novel *The Lure* and the 1980 feature film *Cruising* are remarkably similar in their central plot of a heterosexual protagonist infiltrating in the gay clone subculture to catch a serial killer. Whereas *The Lure* would only need a small audience to recoup its modest investment, *Cruising*—a big-budget Hollywood film with famous director William Friedkin and starring Al Pacino—would definitely be considered a failure if it did not manage to cross-over to the mass public. *Cruising* would uniquely transport the world of the clone counterpublic to the mass-publics of the cinema. Davidson claims that *Cruising* is “centrally if problematically concerned with the group—with the phenomenon of a significant gay minority making its presence visible” (37). The voyage of Al Pacino as undercover cop Steve Burns into the clone bars of New York is a voyeuristic experience for the audience. When Burns visits a gay bar for the first time, he is cruised by the men in the bar. As the scene is shot from the point of view of Burns, the clones look directly at the camera and thus at the viewer in the audience. The “sadistic spectatorship” of members of the audience who are “caught up in Burns’s surveillant, voyeuristic, and homophobic gaze at the gay world” is countered by the cruising look of gay men who check out the viewer (43). This collision between the clone counterpublic and the mainstream publics was an anxious encounter for both gay men and straight audiences. Men who protested against the film identified the film as “a pernicious act of violence that viewers might ‘catch’ and act on” (49). Yet by making the gay subculture visible, *Cruising* suggests to its audience “the possibility of reidentification and thus the possibility of a blurring between a homosexuality and a heterosexuality that were in other respects understood as discrete” (54). As proven by the many gay protesters against the movie and its commercial failure, the spectators of the clone felt uncomfortable with this rare portrayal of the clone counterpublic.
While the clone counterpublic was suitable for assimilation in publics if desexualized, this process would erode clone culture. Although mainstream society still struggled with the acceptance of homosexuality in the late 1970s, the gay clone style was readily assimilated from the counterpublic. The use of industrial furnishings and decoration in clone discos and homes was adopted by mainstream interior designers as the popular “high tech” style in the 1980s (Levine 64). Clone clothing served as inspiration for 1980s fashion of “Levi 501s, work boots, sweatshirts, flannel shirts, and leather bomber jackets” (64). The disco music of the clones managed to cross-over to mainstream success in New York through the trendy celebrity magnet Studio 54 and to suburban America and the rest of the world by John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* (Echols 196-197). Both *Saturday Night Fever* and the Village People’s *Can’t Stop the Music* reveal that Hollywood whitewashed gay sexuality “out of both historically queer characters and gay cultural innovations such as the urban discotheque” (Benshoff and Griffin, *America* 334). Despite their origins in the subcultural clone community, the Village People became worldwide stars. While their macho drag signified queerness in gay communities, straight audiences “largely registered it as standard-issue masculinity” (Echols 122). By the use of multivalent lyrics in their songs and the avoidance of discussion of their sexuality in interviews, the group and their record label managed to gain global commercial success (137). Yet by their continued use of clone imagery, the Village People “became a campy caricature of homosexual style rather than an affirmation of the raunchy new macho” (139). More problematic, the campy stylized outfits emphasized the performativity of clone style, thereby showing “the ludicrousness of gay macho” and turning the clone into a clown (140). As the styles of the clone became mainstream, assimilation undermined the authenticity of the gay clone.

The onset of AIDS first led to a new counterpublic fighting the disease, then to unbridled fear within the clone counterpublic, and eventually to mass public panic. As an
important part of the clone counterpublic, gay newspapers and magazines struggled with the first reports of the “gay cancer” in 1981, especially after the discovery that it was sexually transmissible (Thompson 211). Lawrence Mass, a journalist for *The Advocate*, wanted to write articles to warn gay men about the new disease, but he was accused of “formenting hysteria and trying to return to the old concepts of homosexuality as sin and sickness” (qtd in Thompson 211). This kind of resistance led to the forming of a new counterpublic under the guidance of Larry Kramer who founded the organization Gay Men’s Health Crisis (212). As clones were reluctant to give up their sexual freedom, many initially ignored the warnings from this new counterpublic (Echols 152). In the most exclusive gay club of the time, The Saint, so many of the regulars died that AIDS was initially known in New York as the “Saint’s disease” (151). Eventually the widespread belief that the drugs and the fast sex of the clone caused the disease, the “clone lifestyle theory,” led to panic within the gay ghetto (Levine 139). In 1984, Levine wrote that “we are overcome by hysteria, afraid of the consequences to our health of the way we have been living” (139). The required change in their lifestyle caused emotional problems for many clones. As Levine describes: “‘I feel so lonely and miserable,’ a friend told me. ‘Dancing at the Saint and fucking at the baths… now I’m too scared to do it. I tried dating, but it didn’t work. I’m left with nothing, just me and my hand’” (141). As the reports about the disease spread to mainstream publics, the way that the clone lived his life was questioned by his family and friends (139). After reports of non-gay AIDS casualties, the panic spread to the mass publics. While these deaths outside of the ghetto proved that there was no causal link between the clone lifestyle and AIDS, the widespread AIDS panic led to the destruction of the pillars of clonedom. In the years to come, the clone counterpublic and its spaces, sexuality, and identity would fade away.

The fear of AIDS gave health and city officials the political tools to demolish the public counterpublic spaces, which led to the demise of the gay ghetto. In the popular
imagination, gay bathhouses “figured as places of contagion and danger” (Dollimore 294). In October 1985, the state of New York passed legislation which gave the city “the power to shut down any public establishment that made facilities available for anal or oral sex” (Thompson 275). Within weeks bars like the Mineshaft and bathhouses like the St. Mark’s Baths were closed (275). The breakdown of counterpublic space was continued by Mayor Guiliani, who used the State Health Code in a new series of closures. Simultaneously he increased policing and development of the piers, and dramatically increased arrests for cruising on public lewdness charges (Warner, Trouble 154-155). A 1998 zoning law forbade adult establishments “within five hundred feet of churches, schools, or other adult businesses” (150). The effect of these combined measures was that sex was effectively driven from public spaces into the private home (170). A further effect from these measures and urban gentrification was that it eroded the gay ghetto. While many men regretted this development, for a new generation of gay men the concentration of gay life on such a small space was suffocating. David Leavitt realized that coming out in the ghetto would mean that he would be cut off from “the totality of the world I’d grown up in” (xxii). Leavitt calls for “a new level of liberation… to celebrate their identities without having to move into a gulag” (xxii). Although clones did not necessarily agree with Leavitt, the men who survived would often move away as the ghetto was a constant reminder of the grief and loss as a result of AIDS.

The fear of AIDS caused gay men to denounce counterpublic sexuality, which eventually led to a new counterpublic of gay conservatism. As a sociologist within the gay ghetto, Martin Levine noticed in 1984 that the AIDS panic led to a new clone lifestyle “with fast tricks ‘out’ wedding bands are ‘in’; men are coupling off, and lovers are popping up all over town” (140). As a philosopher within the gay ghetto, Foucault did not directly comment on AIDS, which inspired scholars like James Miller to fabricate the image of Foucault fucking himself and others to death (Halperin 170; Dollimore 311). In his fictionalized biography The
Farewell Symphony, Edmund White had Foucault retort to the American response to the disease: “Foucault laughed at me and said, ‘Don’t you realize how puritanical you’re being? You’ve invented a disease aimed just at gays to punish them for having unnatural sex’” (461). Warner claims that “the most successful tool against AIDS is a public culture of safer sex” (170). While health authorities in other countries indeed fostered safe sex policies through the counterpublic, US publics and counterpublic were saturated by the heteronormative morality of monogamy. Infection could only be prevented by abstinence from promiscuous sex. Warner calls this move “gay shame” as “AIDS gave new life to the ancient assumption that sex, and especially queer sex, had to be unethical—unhealthy, irresponsible, immature, and in short, threatening to home, church, and state” (Trouble 50). In the 1990s these attitudes caused a significant number of homosexuals to declare themselves gay conservatives, which became a forceful political and intellectual counterpublic of gay conservatism (Robinson 1). Andrew Sullivan was the figurehead of this movement in the 1990s as “the most influential gay public intellectual in the country” (44). He claimed that gay marriage was the answer to the moral crisis of gay men as the emotional orientation of married gay men would not merely be “about pleasure, or sin, or shame… but about the ability to love and be loved as complete, imperfect human beings” (qtd in Robinson 62). The AIDS crisis combined with traditional American morality led to the disavowal of counterpublic sexuality by the mainstream publics and the new gay conservative counterpublic.

The impact of the AIDS crisis on the non-political clone community made counterpublic identity unable to counter the gay conservative ideal of assimilation in mass publics. Even as the Gay Men’s Health Crisis tried to give clones specific education about the causes of AIDS, most gay men were no different than others members of the public in their inability to comprehend or evaluate the “highly technical information” (Levine 139). Edmund White writes in The Farewell Symphony that “I wanted to belong to a movement that I
scarcely understood, for Larry Kramer had called for anger and activism, but I had nothing to offer but grief and helplessness” (495). This continued lack of political activism made clone identity an easy target for gay conservatism. The appearance of clones was condemned by Andrew Sullivan: “But insofar as these cultural expressions are also products of a deep and searing anxiety, of the inability to be publicly a gay man or woman except as a caricature of one gender or another, then they are no more to be clung to than excruciating racial stereotypes” (qtd in Robinson 83). Although Sullivan carefully avoids generalization, the statement implies that the clone performance is often a pathology. Warner claims that Sullivan taps into the desire of every contemporary American to be normal, not deviant (Trouble 53). Sullivan wants to discard “the notion of sexuality as cultural subversion” as most gay people “accept the natural origin of their sexual orientation, but wish to be integrated into society as it is” (qtd in Warner, Trouble 52). Tightly connected to neoliberalism of the early twenty-first century, “the democratic diversity of proliferating forms of sexual dissidence is rejected in favor of the naturalized variation of a fixed minority arrayed around a state-endorsed heterosexual primacy and prestige” (Duggan 65). With the disappearance of counterpublic space and the disavowal of counterpublic sexuality, the counterpublic identity was eventually marginalized by the gay conservative counterpublic striving to be absorbed in mainstream publics.

The disappearing counterpublic eventually returned in nostalgic texts by the survivors of the AIDS crisis. The depiction of the New York gay clone in Hollywood films would remain problematic. The voyeurism of Cruising and the whitewashing of Can’t Stop the Music would be followed by the invisibility of AIDS in the first years of the crisis (Benshoff and Griffin, Queer 206). When the AIDS crisis of the gay community of New York was finally depicted in Longtime Companion (1990), it aimed to win “the sympathies of the dominant heterosexual society” by not showing actual sex and focus on “caring, compassion,
and love” in the gay ghetto (210). The minimal attention by Hollywood contributed to the emergence of independent movies on AIDS, for example Buddies (1985) and Parting Glances (1986). The survivors of the Violet Quill dealt with the AIDS crisis by sweeping sagas covering decades in order to illustrate the damage of AIDS, as in White’s The Farewell Symphony (1997) and Picano’s Like People in History (1995). When the clone counterpublic had all but disappeared, a nostalgic image of the clone emerged in retrospective documentaries. In Gay Sex in the 1970s (2005), survivors of the AIDS crisis reminisce about the demise of the counterpublic and public sex, intercut with rare film and photography of clones in their counterpublic space. For the project Petite Mort, gay men were specifically asked to hand in drawings instead of photographs to encourage a fluid way of reminiscing, “along the lines of an oral history” (Lubin-Levy and Motta 12). As gay men realized that the counterpublic was disappearing, they produced counterpublic texts to commemorate their loss.

Due to the vanishing counterpublic and the deaths of many of its participants, younger generations of gay men fail to see its historic importance. In the introduction to Petite Mort, Lubin-Levy expresses the difficulty for people to connect to their culture, when its practices have changed dramatically, or “the challenge of accessing a history that is ours, and yet is not something we experienced” (13). Furthermore, due to the deaths of those who could relate this history “the queer culture of the present faces more than the usual shortfall in memory” (Warner 52). This loss of memory is not just an inability to remember, but also a “willed amnesia” by many gay men who “forget our past in order to assimilate to purportedly healthier mainstream forms” (Castiglia and Reed 159). Gay conservatives regard the clone period as “‘adolescent’ years when we hadn’t fully grown up and assimilated,” while their critics feel that “we abandoned some of the powerful ideals of gay liberation, and sold out for rights” (Bartlett 30). Chris Bartlett argues that gay culture after Stonewall and before AIDS
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had a lightness, which was lost by the death and trauma of AIDS (25). Bartlett wants to recapture this lightness by elegizing the lives of AIDS casualties, whereas I argue that the lightness can be equally captured by connecting to the counterpublic. Regardless of methodology, Bartlett notices “the inspiring new generation of queers who are recreating and regenerating, making new the old traditions of lightness and camp” (32). It seems that a new post-clone counterpublic has emerged against the mainstream homonormative gay publics. Parts of the clone are reassembled in new gay prototypes: the sculpted bodies and love for dance and drugs reappeared in the circuit counterpublic, the hypermasculinity emerged in the bear counterpublic, and the costumery and S and M evolved into the fetish counterpublic. The sexual morality of the clone can be traced in any of these fragmented counterpublics. Furthermore, in recent years the clone counterpublic sexuality became a political tool against gay conservatism. Katherine Franke argues that the desire for “the pastorality of marriage” as definition of sexual citizenship is created by homophobia and that “the elaboration of sexual publics and new forms of Public Sex are essential as counterweights that can challenge the hegemony of the matrimonial gay subject/gay couple” (158). Although the clone counterpublic has vanished, its core values are adopted by a post-clone counterpublic resisting mainstream gay publics.

Instigated by the gay sexual revolution and supported by the lure of the gay ghetto, gay men constructed the appearance, lifestyle, and cityscape of the gay clone of New York. The model of the gay clone became a prototype for gay men all over the world for a short period of time. While clones were usually non-political, they believed that their newly required liberties were the basis of a unique way of life based on seemingly limitless social and sexual interaction. From within the community, inspired clones used a wide spectrum of arts to reflect this lifestyle. The producers of the counterpublic texts were ultimately disappointed with the cross-over appeal of their work and ideas. Those who survived the
AIDS crisis used the counterpublic to document their personal losses and the decline of the clone. The current gay movement in the U.S. is struggling for equal rights in all aspects of public life, for which they presuppose that gay men are normal Americans and demand that gay men act like normal Americans. Fragmented counterpublics resist this assimilation movement and argue that gay men should fuck their way to freedom. Similar to many other American social and political battles, the binary opposition in the gay community leads to polarization and fragmentation. A few months before his death in 1984, Foucault gave an interview in which he explained that changes in people’s everyday lives since the early 1960s are the result of social rather than political movements: “These social movements have really changed our whole lives, our mentality, our attitudes, and the attitudes and mentality of other people--people who do not belong to these movements” (qtd in Gallagher and Wilson 35). Foucault’s comment confirms the workings of the clone counterpublic--as well any other counterpublic--in their potential to be agents of cultural innovation and liberation, whether they operate through public sex or any other form of social connection.
Notes

1While the concept of a public has so far been reminiscent of Louis Althusser’s notion of interpellation, Warner claims that the impersonality in public address is missing in Althusserian interpellation (Publics 77). Warner explains this by the famous example of the policeman who says “Hey, you!” The policeman is believed to address a particular person. In a public, the members of the audience feel personally addressed, but also realize that the speech is intended for indefinite others. The policeman example seems too convenient, as interpellation in a broader sense is usually performed by ideology, which is aimed at indefinite others. However, it could be argued that individuals interpellated by ideology are not aware that other people are also addressed, in contrast with members of Warner’s public.

2Altman did not mention any women in his observation of the gay neighborhoods and indeed, women are conspicuously absent in counterpublic texts. If women did live in gay neighborhoods, they barely mixed with clones. Levine describes the friendship circles in clone circles, called “cliques” (43). Only a few cliques included “lesbians, ‘fag hags,’ or ‘wise’--nonhomophobic straights” (44).

3This famous quote gave Michael Warner a place in David Horowitz’s book on the 101 most dangerous academics in America (348-349).

4Clones had a dual attitude towards camp. On the one hand camp referenced the self-hatred of the pre-Stonewall effeminate, closeted gay man (Levine 27). On the other hand clone clothes were seen as campy drag by many clones who made clone style a parody, while they simultaneously emulated traditional masculinity (59).
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Castiglia, Christopher, and Christopher Reed. “‘Ah, Yes, I Remember It Well’: Memory and Queer Culture in ‘Will and Grace.’” *Cultural Critique* 56 (2004): 158-188.


