

CLIFT, MONTGOMERY (1920–1966)

American actor. Born into an ambitious nouveau-riche family, Clift responded to guidance by becoming a successful child and adolescent actor. By the age of 20 he was starring with Lunt and Fontanne in Robert Sherwood's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *There Shall Be No Night*. At the same time he had his first serious affair—with a fellow actor. Making a national splash in the film *The Search* (1948), he was for a time one of Hollywood's top romantic male leads. His brooding good looks appealed to both women and men, but some of his associates such as Frank Sinatra and the director John Huston taunted him for his homosexuality. Nonetheless, Clift's career continued meteoric until his 1956 car crash, after which his face had to be reconstructed, but without complete success.

Clift suffered from a strong sense of internalized self-contempt, referring to himself as "the fag." At times he pursued desultory affairs with women, but more frequently sought out the company of hustlers and other companions in casual male sex. His abuse of alcohol and drugs increased as the years passed. In New York City Clift found a psychiatrist who tried to help him to accept his homosexuality, but at the cost of a crippling personal dependence. The actor's tortured life reflected not only the difficulty of being a homosexual in America in the middle decades of the twentieth century, but also the stresses caused by the hypocrisy of an entertainment industry seeking to protect its investment in a talented, but "unstable" property.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Patricia Bosworth, *Montgomery Clift: A Biography*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

CLIQUEs

See *Circles and Affinity Groups*.

CLONE

In current general usage, the word clone has come to mean "a living organism created as a duplicate of another through genetic engineering." In addition, the word acquired a vogue use in gay circles in the late 1970s to designate an emergent male homosexual style.

First attracting attention as a definite type, it seems, in such enclaves of gaydom as San Francisco's Castro and New York's Greenwich Village, the gay clone wore short hair and a clipped moustache, while sporting (if possible) a sculpted chest with prominent pectorals. Clothing, typically flannel shirts and leather, was chosen to accentuate these features. The intent was to create a masculine, even *macho* image, while at the same time signaling one's orientation. Such signaling might be accentuated through gay *semiotics*—keys worn externally on a ring and a handkerchief, color-coded to indicate specific sexual wishes, placed in the back pocket. In public gathering places, especially bars, gay clones were said to be frequently observed "giving attitude," that is, assuming a scornful and haughty demeanor, and offering only laconic and surly replies when addressed.

The popularity of this style reflected several converging tendencies. On the one hand, there was a rejection by a substantial portion of the gay male community of both the *effeminate* mode (as prescribed by the traditional stereotype) and the *androgynous* mode (championed by early gay liberation), in favor of a markedly masculine style. Hostile observers were wont to say, of course, that the clone look was just another form of gay costuming, and therefore just as much "drag" as the looks it displaced, but this was surely not the motivation of those who adopted the trend. American culture itself had tended to promote rough-hewn, proletarian styles for men, television's adaptation of the Hollywood Western being the most notable source. Then there was the national interest in physical fitness, which

was surely a healthy reaction to the neglect of health and the body that the hippie style and the drug culture had fostered. Not surprisingly, the clone look was taken up in Europe and other places where local homosexuals eagerly followed changes in American gay fashions.

Jean-Paul Sartre has identified "seriation" as a key aspect of modern society—the tendency of individuals to assort themselves into "sets" characterized by homologous features. Sartre gives the example of passengers taking a ticket and falling into line in numerical order at a bus stop. This social trend represents, of course, a symbolic mimicry of industrial mass production. In this light the "cloning" of the male homosexual may be viewed as part of a larger social process whereby a "nonconformist" subgroup fosters conformity in its own realm. Among the members of the subgroup behavioral norms are rigidly enforced by group consensus. Similar phenomena have been observed among the pachuco ("zoot suit") youth of the 1940s, the beatniks of the 1960s, and the skinheads of the 1980s. Such phenomena are not limited to groups usually seen as marginalized; Harold Rosenberg sardonically, but perhaps not unjustly styled American intellectuals as "a herd of independent minds."

The gay clone vogue also has a psychological dimension. One made oneself over as a clone in order to attract other clones, and success in cruising meant possessing someone similar to oneself. This quest for one's double is a major recurrent aspect of homosexual consciousness. It was perhaps first set forth in the *Symposium* where Plato posits that all homosexuals are sundered halves of a once whole being. One's goal therefore is to find the mirror image who will dovetail with oneself and then to unite with him. To be sure, such aspirations have sometimes been stigmatized as egocentric narcissism, the wish of someone who does not truly seek an interpersonal relationship but only to mate with himself. A fascinating explora-

tion of this concept appears in David Gerrold's science fiction novel *The Man Who Folded Himself* (1973). Yet it is essential to recognize that the quest for the double usually operates in tandem with a simultaneous search for difference—for complementation.

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CLOSET

Until the late 1970s the term closet was restricted to gay jargon, where it meant a state of concealment in which one immured one's homosexuality. Some individuals were said to be remaining "in the closet," and thus passing for heterosexual—or so they hoped. Some were chastised for their illusions by being labeled "closet queens," the idea being that they remained what they were no matter how elaborate and seemingly successful their impersonation of heterosexuality might seem. Others emerged from the closet, or were urged to do so, by coming out. Then mainstream journalists appropriated and extended the usage so that they could speak of "closet conservatives" and "closet gourmets" with no sexual connotation.

Semantics of the Closet. All these connotations of *closet* depend on an underlying metaphor. In American usage, the architectural space designated in the primary meaning is typically small and confined, essentially an alcove secured by a door for the storage of clothing. Older English usage treats a closet as any private room or chamber. Through a combination of these meanings, the verb "to closet oneself" came to merge the idea of privacy and remoteness, on the one hand, with narrow confinement, on the other. For the element of secrecy occasioned by the suspect character of what is being hidden, compare the proverbial expression: a skeleton in the closet. Historians of literature