The still life: Domesticity, subjectivity, and the bachelor in nineteenth-century America

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THE STILL LIFE
DOMESTICITY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND THE BACHELOR IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the American Studies Program
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Matt Cohen
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This Dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of

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Approved, August 2002

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Mason Stokes, Skidmore College
For my parents
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The title page of the dissertation, the form of which is prescribed by universities, perpetuates illusions of authorial autonomy that this dissertation was designed to help fracture. Simply to point out that the following people and institutions contributed in direct ways to this text may do as much toward complicating authorship as an idea as the argument that follows.

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ABSTRACT

“The Still Life” explores debates over single manhood in the culture of the nineteenth-century United States. Until recently, the “bachelor” was less an identifiable social type than a battleground for discourses of privacy and intimacy, sympathy and sentiment, and labor and leisure. Representations of the bachelor tended to excite readers’ concerns about the relationships among emotion, public behavior, and intellectual prowess. Concentrating on constructions of the bachelor within specific discursive arenas, this dissertation examines “bachelorhood” as a way culture organized a wide range of ideologies and experiences. Though the bachelor’s particular significance faded in the twentieth century, a conceptual roadblock dramatized by the figure remains: the notion that an emotionally rewarding family life and the production of works of public significance are fundamentally at odds.

The Introduction traces the evolution of the notion of “bachelor” from European religious, martial, and academic origins to its United States version. Distinguishing “bachelorhood” from “single manhood,” it sets the terms of inquiry within the theoretical context of cultural studies of masculinity.

The first chapter explores an apparent paradox: while much American writing of the early nineteenth century declared the single male a dangerous figure, Washington Irving’s use of the bachelor as narrator evoked a quite different response. As a sentimental male narrator, Irving’s bachelor participated in the construction of sympathy (crucial to post-Revolution politics) by observing the family and re-uniting alienated members of the body politic.

Chapter Two moves this discussion into the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. Hawthorne’s The Blithedale Romance and Melville’s Pierre suggest a very different relationship between manhood and the domestic than Irving’s model, one that criticized domesticity. Subverting the language of domestic spheres, these stories suggest that intimacy and privacy could be at odds.

The final chapter argues that we see competitive individual masculinity as a complex product of a shared domestic life. It focuses on fin-de-siècle still life paintings by William M. Harnett and John F. Peto that frequently depicted men’s paraphernalia. These paintings and the contemporary popular literature of masculine domesticity suggest that the new urban bachelor culture was a companionate one, forged in shared living spaces.

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THE STILL LIFE
DOMESTICITY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND THE BACHELOR IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA
Sometime in the 1850s, perhaps during his initial efforts toward inventing a new democratic poetry, Walter Whitman decided he wasn’t going to call himself a bachelor anymore.

Whitman never married; his decision thus seems paradoxical from the vantage of the twenty-first century. These days, bachelorhood describes a phase of a man’s life (though we do not use the word much anymore outside the context of the bachelor party). It isn’t something you can choose to be or not, and it does not imply any particularly strong boundaries of race or class. Even the gendered implications of the word are flexible – women commonly have bachelor parties, and as early as 1897 the Century Dictionary listed “a woman who has not been married” as one of its definitions of “bachelor.” In the popular music world, black singer/songwriter Ginuwine titled his debut album “The Bachelor,” while a white male-female Australian pop duet calls itself Bachelor Girl. The word retains faint connotations of the arcane, secluded life of a man of intellect and rakish leisure – associations that pundits in cosmopolitan circles have very recently tried to resurrect and clothe themselves in – but for most of the last century
it has been a more technical term. When historians use it, as Howard Chudacoff does in his recent study *The Age of the Bachelor*, they mean "single man" – a sociological unit, defined against marriage.

Bachelorhood is a hot topic: two recent monographs and a history dissertation, along with a number of articles in *American Literature* and other critical venues, treat nineteenth-century American bachelorhood specifically. The compelling assertion of these studies has been that bachelorhood is important because, as both a stage of life and as a literary identity, it was a zone in which the ideas and behaviors of masculinity were produced and reproduced. "The Still Life" pushes this claim to a broader level; it argues that the attraction of the bachelor lay in the powerful paradox that it was a social category crucial to reproducing ideologies, yet was defined by its avoidance of sexual reproduction (and in the nineteenth century, even characterized as not productive in the commercial sense). The pages that follow are intended in part to augment recent historical work on gender that has given us a better sense of the models of masculinity operative in nineteenth-century America. I hope to show, for example, that the meanings of bachelorhood in Europe resonated in the United States during Washington Irving’s time, and that a culturally acceptable sentimental version of manhood was in circulation

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1 See, as a typical example, Thomas Vinciguerra, "Batching It," *American Spectator* 33:3 (April 2000), 70. Jeff Fox argues against the term bachelorette, in the process giving a range of current connotations for terms related to "bachelor," in "Are Bachelorettes Really Female Bachelors?" *Bitch* 11 (May 31, 2000), 64.


throughout the century – that male authors could argue, in G.J. Barker-Benfield’s words, that the “bachelor’s brain could breed in sexual and economic terms.”

Some of this ground has been canvassed in works such as Michael Kimmel’s survey *Manhood in America*, Anthony Rotundo’s *American Manhood*, and Charles Rosenberg’s influential essay “Sexuality, Class and Role in 19th-Century America.” Yet these studies leave the impression that men lived through rigid categories of identity; they fail to help us understand how men came to adopt, modify, or defy gendered behaviors and expression. More provocatively, work by Gail Bederman and Dana Nelson on manhood and nation, and by David Leverenz and Eve Sedgwick on masculinity and narrative describes a set of processes by which men formed their (often temporary) identities – processes that always involved differentiation from and ultimately the subjugation of a range of “others” in their cultures. I will be interested in these performances of differentiation, and in particular how they were shaped by and entered into debates about the ideal relationship between domesticity and the creation of a competitive public self. Because middle-classness in America was something that had to be learned and performed, masculinity was at work in the reproduction of class boundaries as well. Thus, seen from another perspective, this dissertation is a cultural philology of a concept that was applied across the sex-gender boundaries so controversial among students of the nineteenth century. When people invoked the bachelor, or spoke through him, or depicted his lifestyle in a painting, what could it mean to a nineteenth-

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century audience? What cultural inheritances and contemporary concerns did the bachelor excite — and were they sometimes in conflict? And how was this identity used (or refused, as in Whitman's case) by men to reproduce class concepts in the forms of their own bodies, living spaces, writings? The bachelor's position both as object of suspicion and ridicule and as intellectual ideal made him key to what Peter Stallybrass and Allon White call "the formation of the cultural Imaginary of the middle class." The chapters that follow analyze bachelorhood as it appears in binary pairs of culturally charged terms: sentiment and sympathy in the early nineteenth-century, privacy and intimacy at odds in the life and works of Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne, individualism and comradeship in fin-de-siècle male domesticity.

If the term bachelor, as I frame it here, was a battleground for nineteenth-century ideologies, certainly gender studies itself has in our time been a battleground for methodologies as much as for concepts of gender. "The Still Life" thus inevitably participates in the debate about method. In many cases historians' attempts to write men's history as the history of gendered discourse have in fact retained traditional social scientific frameworks, using longstanding formulations that provide universal causal explanations. Some of these studies use a great deal of quantitative data; for example, some use statistical analyses of census records to argue that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century urban bachelors created a subculture. Under the aegis of doing gender history, the quantitative approach nonetheless forces researchers to make a distinction between the masculine and the feminine based on the social assumptions (the "common sense") of our audience. That is, at a minimum, to study men and women in the past.

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numerically, one has to decide what was “male” and what was “female.” Yet presumably, given that the goal of gender history should be to problematize gender, we are trying to alter those very notions. As Cora Kaplan wrote sixteen years ago, “masculinity and femininity do not appear in cultural discourse, anymore than they do in mental life, as pure binary forms at play. They are always, already, ordered and broken up through other social and cultural terms, other categories of difference.”7 There is probably something quantifiable about these categories, but not their human constituents, and certainly not any particular subject in history except at a very specific moment and place. Bachelorhood is a rich example, because we can see it eagerly taken up by historians as what appears on the surface to be a quantifiable category of experience – yet as Joan Wallach Scott points out about experience, this tends to distract us from understanding how such “experience” served the interests of class and racial discourses.8

In the early nineteenth century, I will argue, the cultural construct referred to as the “bachelor” was different from, and more specific than, a “single man,” and had a long history as an icon of the ideal, rational observer of society with physical latitude in the city and without marital contingencies. This means that one cannot take statistics on “bachelors,” simply because, as a contested category of identity and experience, it means something different when used by different speakers. As Scott points out, we may all agree that gender is a useful category of historical analysis, but it is inherently a grammatical construct. And if words are best understood as the sites of social struggles, then history telling must be self-consciously an act of discursive interpretation. As Raymond Williams puts it, we must focus on the production of literature and the

production of the social as reflexive projects: "we understand society because we have made it... we understand it not abstractly but in the process of making it... the activity of language is central in this process."9

Certainly what emerges from these shifting definitions and from literary uses of the bachelor figure is that the term implied class parameters. "Bachelor" was deployed to construct a masculine category that presumed education, employment, and whiteness; it circulated at the center of the problematics of single masculinity in an age that increasingly associated cultural and national ascendancy with a privatized, reproductive family. Michel Foucault makes two points in the History of Sexuality that are important in this context: first, that class was an important factor shaping familial and sexual norms, and that the sexuality of working-class people became an issue – that is, appeared in its contemporary form – in the late nineteenth century. Coeval with this concern, and enabling it, was a rise in the surveillance of working-class sexuality, "with the development of the juridical and medical control of perversions, for the sake of a general protection of society and the race" (122). In other words, the quantification of working-class sexuality was coeval with its creation as a public concern. Hordes of single men "appear" in the nineteenth century in part because statistics began to be kept on them in new ways, as part of (and justified by) a larger concern with the regulation of sexuality. It is important to point out, though, that working-class men, black men, and recent immigrants were not referred to as bachelors until the last decades of the century – except, significantly, when the term was employed ironically or mockingly. Both the use

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of the term "bachelor" and the statistical "discovery" of single manhood by recent studies are problematic.

Also problematic is the characterization, across disciplines, of nineteenth-century men as "marginalized," "liminal," and "embattled." One historian claims, for example, that "the social status of bachelors as akin to that of immigrants or a minority group made unmarried men 'others' in a male-oriented society dominated by married men." Another writer argues that "nineteenth-century American artists have consistently occupied a liminal social position, wherein their masculinity was frequently questioned." Based on the evidence that single men were considered social parasites and sexual predators, these studies argue that bachelors occupied an unenviable social position and experienced an anxious, almost paranoid subjectivity. This conclusion, which is increasingly taken as foundational to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the "crisis of masculinity" thesis, has larger methodological consequences for cultural studies of gender. Why is it so important for us today to think of men as embattled or liminal? Bachelors, after all, were

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10 Chudacoff 16; Martin Berger, Man-Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000), 68. Liminality is also central to studies by Snyder (cited above), Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) and Michael Kimmel, Manhood in America: A Cultural History (New York: Free Press, 1996). The most significant departure from this tendency is Eve Sedgwick's work on the bachelor figure in English writing, which critiques the self-marginalization of the male narrator. As she puts it, notions of liminality helped construct a seemingly-natural "profound schism" between gay and straight manhoods that was "based on minimal and undecideable differentiation." This mechanism (in one of its manifestations, what Sedgwick terms "homosexual panic") she insists became "a mainspring of their [Anglo-American men's] treatment of politics and power." Sedgwick, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), 201.

11 As Snyder writes, "to imply that masculinity was in crisis suggests that manhood is a transhistorical category or fixed essence that has its good moments as well as its bad, rather than an ideological construct which is constantly being remade." Snyder, "A Paradise of Bachelors: Remodelling Domesticity and Masculinity in the Turn-of-the-Century New York Bachelor Apartment," Prospects: An Annual Journal of American Cultural Studies 23 (1998), 250. One of my objectives is to refocus on
white, educated urban men – the kind of figures generally occupying the center of social
and political power. And more basically, what is at stake ideologically in some recent
work in the history of masculinity? The pervasive language – and structural models – of
masculinity in the nineteenth century as “unstable” or “liminal” give the impression of a
gender-based dominance that could crumble at any moment – should masculinity fail the
modern man, the structure of male dominance would collapse. (Chapter Three will
attempt to demonstrate with some explicitness that gender functioned in conjunction
with, and sometimes as a distraction from, the class issues that sharply delimited the
possibilities of gendered identity.)

While Donald Weber has recently argued that the concept of “liminality” has been
superseded by the concept of the “border.” But in studies of nineteenth-century
American masculinity -- from a broad range of disciplines -- liminality becomes causality
in the story of middle-class white males. The concept, brought into academic vogue by
anthropologist Victor Turner (and originally taken from Arnold van Gennep), describes
the state of an individual who is between stages in a social ritual – say, the transition from

12 Scholars of citizenship refute the notion of middle-class white male liminality. Nancy Isenberg,
antebellum definitions of citizenship and their relationship to gender and race. Linda Kerber’s discussion of
the issue of taxation and representation gives an example of the ways in which citizen marriage as a
normative assumption of legislation and taxation might oppress both men and women who chose to remain
single, but it also demonstrates that bachelors had considerable advantages over spinsters because of their
eligibility to vote. Kerber, No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of

a ritual of resistance to the abuse of power that becomes embodied in those who will ultimately take power,
but points out that when multiple cultures, and multiple potential social structures co-exist, “liminality” and
“marginality” cease to be able to explain either the choices people make or the persistence or destruction of
boundaries within and between cultures.

14 See for example Smith-Rosenberg, “Dis-Covering the Subject of the ‘Great Constitutional
childhood to adulthood. When there is no more ritual, but not as yet a stable social status either, where are you? One comparison might be to having your learner's permit for driving: you are not a child anymore, but you are not a driver, either. As Turner put it, distinguishing this state from the communal mentality,

what I call liminality, the state of being in between successive participations in social milieux dominated by social structural considerations, whether formal or unformalized, is not precisely the same as communitas, for it is a sphere or domain of action or thought rather than a social modality. Indeed, liminality may imply solitude rather than society, the voluntary or involuntary withdrawal of an individual from a social-structural matrix. It may imply alienation from rather than more authentic participation in social existence.15

Recent research, however, including the research in this dissertation, suggests that bachelorhood was not a non-delineated social category. It had trappings, rituals, expectations, and sometimes even taxes (it is no coincidence that during the period I discuss, statistics began to be kept on single free men). "Single manhood," as I have stressed, did not necessarily mean "bachelorhood"; bachelorhood could be thought of as a transition, but was not presumed to be by Anglo-American society. We may more usefully think of men as representing themselves as liminal. As Turner points out, those sharing similar social status often create close friendships and appear to eliminate hierarchies amongst themselves. At issue in American culture, though, was the ultimate availability of certain rites and assumptions of power - voting, to take the most obvious example - from which most people could not be excluded because they were not candidates. That is, single black men during the Civil War can certainly be thought of as living in a liminal state - caught between the familiar rituals of the plantation house or their own black communities and the uncertain new rites of political "freedom" or legal
equality. In moments of confrontation or conflict between black and white men in the nineteenth century we can see the stakes in claiming liminality for white men most clearly; bachelors, after all, appear in Frederick Douglass’s Narrative as, in his words, the “young white men” who beat him nearly to death for appearing as potential competition in the shipyard — and who cannot be brought to trial, even by Douglass’s master. Scholars have reached for this idea of liminality because it is a way of characterizing the unsteady and not-always-successful process of learning how to perform class behaviors, consumption patterns, and racial distinctions. This process in the American nineteenth century was mediated by gender ideology. In a sense, if we find bachelors constituting themselves as liminal, protesting that they are idle or powerless, we should not simply take them at their word, but see them as men reshaping a potentially dangerous social status as a potentially rewarding or foundational one.

For Nina Baym, in her famous attack on the “melodrama of beset manhood,” the fiction of liminal manhood is implicated fundamentally in what gets passed on as

16 Dana Nelson’s approach to the contingencies of masculinity introduces this subtlety, questioning the ways in which “[w]hite manhood’s identification with national unity has worked historically to restrict others from achieving full entitlement in the United States. At the same time, it has worked powerfully to naturalize ‘white’ men as essentially unified subjects.” White male selfhood, I will argue in tune with Nelson, was never a sure or stable thing, limiting individual men’s conceptions of power. Nelson, National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men (Durham: Duke UP, 1998), 27.
18 A return to Turner’s original fleshing-out of “liminality” in its full dynamism is useful. For Turner this approach to ritual implied “that the high could not be high unless the low existed. [...] From all this I infer that, for individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, communitas and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality.” Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977 [1969]), 97. As Stallybrass and White have since suggested, even the occupation of a position in society with a definite status involves a continuing synthesis, rather than a “successive experience” of low and high. Turner himself warned that the term had limited applicability to the industrial West in The Ritual Process, 107.
“culture” in the United States. Summarizing Lionel Trilling’s claims that marginalization within the majority is the enabling condition of genius, Baym writes:

These two aspects of their situation, their membership in the dominant middle-class white Anglo-Saxon group, and their modest alienation from it, defined their boundaries, enabling them to ‘contain within themselves’ the ‘contradictions’ that, in Trilling’s view, constitute the ‘very essence of the culture.’”

Baym’s main point, and it is a powerful one, is that this essentialization (sexual and racial) of what makes an author useful and good excludes social “others” from participation in the kernel of culture. Mine is that this emphasis on marginality can make us lose our focus on the question of how and why these men could have imagined themselves as marginal, given the staggering inequities of their culture. Baym struggles to account for the pervasiveness of a notion she encounters regarding the myth of intellectual prowess – that, in Richard Chase’s phrase, “the myth requires celibacy.” As do many other critics, she turns to psychoanalysis to explain why both the authors of the past and the male scholars of the present reproduced this myth in form and content. This dissertation will explore instead what men were doing with this myth in context, in response to the particular needs of their audiences, their families, and their concept of how to perform manhood in public.

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19 Baym, “Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors,” American Quarterly 33 (1981): 123-139; reprinted in Baym, Feminism and American Literary History: Essays (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992): 3-18. Baym’s dissection of the connections between gender and criticism is famous, but its interest in what makes texts “American” dates it. Also, she has a somewhat tone-deaf reading of Trilling, who, for all his faults, has a more nuanced sense of what “culture” is and has meant than Baym credits him with.


21 This issue has no easy resolution; Stephen Greenblatt struggles with the ascendance of “the ability to be at once inside and outside [as] the condition of... cultural existence” in a recent article in PMLA; now the discussion is more broadly placed in the context of issues of nationalism and globalism in literary studies. Greenblatt, “Racial Memory and Literary History,” PMLA 116:1 (January 2001): 60-1.

22 As Michael Sappol puts it, “the era of the ‘self-made man’... can more accurately be characterized as the era of the man-made self.” Sappol, “Sammy Tubbs and Dr. Hubbs: Anatomical
WALT WHITMAN, BACHELOR?

Whitman's case exemplifies the need for a new approach to the concept of the bachelor. For if the nineteenth century was the age of the bachelor, and if Whitman was one of its most famous single men, how could he imagine that he could succeed at not being a bachelor? Late in 1849, Whitman (still calling himself Walter at the time) began writing a series of local color sketches for the New York Sunday Dispatch. To help the essays flow together and to provide a focus for narrative commentary, Whitman used a tactic that was familiar to his readers—he posed as a wandering bachelor. The resulting series, "Letters from a Travelling Bachelor," drew on conventions established by British essayists of the eighteenth century like Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele and further developed by Americans such as Washington Irving (in The Sketch Book and Tales of a Traveller, among others) and James Fenimore Cooper (in his 1828 Notions of the Americans: Picked Up by a Travelling Bachelor). These conventions and influences will be explored further in Chapter One. This popular convention cast the bachelor as an urbane and rational, hence ideal observer of society, uninhibited and unbiased by either the demands of physical labor or domestic responsibilities. Distinct in many ways from what would become known as the flâneur, the bachelor-observer and Baudelaire's urban roamer share some ground.23 If only for the power of the convention, the bachelor pose

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23 See Dana Brand, The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature (New York: Cambridge UP, 1991). Wyn Kelley argues persuasively that the category of the flâneur does not apply in the American context, and certainly in Whitman's case the wandering observer does not rely exclusively on the city or the crowd in the way the flaneur does. Kelley, Melville's City: Literary and
must have seemed ideal for Whitman’s purpose of depicting a broad spectrum of the American people.  

Yet strangely, this was the last time Whitman used the bachelor pose in his work; even the word “bachelor” does not appear in his poetry, and extremely rarely in his other writing or records of his conversation. In 1844, Whitman began his short story “My Boys and Girls” with the words, “Though a bachelor, I have several girls and boys that I consider my own.” His famous response to John Symonds’s 1890 request for frank information about Whitman’s ideas on sexuality begins, “Tho’ always unmarried I have had six children….” Why did he decide to avoid the concept – and the word? The facts of Whitman’s real-life domestic bachelorhood complicate this inquiry and certainly make it more urgent. Because of the centrality of questions of both narrative authority and male sexuality to the study of Whitman, the issue of his discursive and his social bachelorhoods is close to the heart of recent critical debates. What is at stake is what, to use Mikhail Bakhtin’s term, was the “accent” of the word “bachelor” in Whitman’s time. (This dissertation’s chronological boundaries roughly coincide with Whitman’s life, 1819-1892.) Exploring how and why Whitman avoided the literary bachelor yet embraced a social one can help us begin to rethink the relationships among cultural

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Urban Form in Nineteenth-Century New York (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996). I argue in Chapter Two that the bachelor and the flâneur differ on at least two counts: their relationships to the domestic and to class.


discourses — in this case social and literary ones — that seem to share gendered terms. A logical starting point for this analysis is a sense of the philology of the term "bachelor."

While the origins of the word "bachelor" are difficult to trace, it seems that a cognate form of it was circulated among French, Spanish, and English, and that in all three languages, during the middle ages, the word had two meanings. It was a military term signifying "an aspirant to knighthood; a novice in arms, a squire." It could also mean simply a young man, implicitly one destined for military service. In Old English "hagostealdic" could mean "virgin," and "hagolstealdhad" meant "unmarried state," implying a broader use of the word to designate sexual or domestic categories. This term seems to have been replaced by the continental term "bachelor" by the fourteenth century. Godefroy’s *Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue Française* quotes an early French writer:

Et la flour de bacelerie,
D’ounour et de cevalerie.

Godefroy goes on to point out that the French meaning of the term changed:

Au XVIe siècle, ce mot prend dans les écoles un sens nouveau, et signifie degré de bachelier, c’est-à-dire de celui qui, dans la faculté de droit canon, après trois ans d’étude, soutenait un acte dans les formes prescrites par la faculté.”

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26 The *Oxford English Dictionary*, admitting that its account is “uncertain,” traces the very earliest origins of the word (pre-eighth century) to farming and husbandry, from the Latin words “baccalāria, a division of land,” and “bacca” meaning “cow.” These meanings, aside from their coincidentally domestic associations, seem to have been replaced entirely by the use of the word for military or aristocratic rank. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), I:855.


30 Philippe Mouskès, *Chronique*, about 1200. Though this rhyme suggests otherwise, several etymologies theorize that the term “bachelor” was a concatenation of the French term “bas chevalier,” or lesser knight.
In French and in Spanish, in fact, the emergent sense of the word “bachelor” (indicating a person holding a degree of divinity or canon law) replaced the military meaning of the term by the sixteenth century. Sebastián de Covarrubias’s 1611 *Tesoro de la lengua Castellana*, for example, says of the word “bachiller,” “Es el primer grado que se da en las universidades a los que han oyo alguna facultad, como en Artes, Teología, Cánones, Leyes, [o] Medicina.” Aside from a brief etymological comment, Covarrubias does not mention any remaining significance of the word in martial discourse. He does point out a popular use of the term that remains in use today: “Al que es agudo hablador y sin fundamento dezimos ser bachiller; y bachilleria la agudeza con curiosidad. Bachillerear, hablar en esta manera.” This sense of the word — a person who babbles sophomorically, or the things such a person would say — was crucial to the development of the bachelor character in fiction, and points to some of the tensions accompanying the identity of “bachelor.”

In English, however, the emergent use of the term in academia (a use which seems to have become common by the fifteenth century) coexisted with the residual chivalric sense of the term. In the sixteenth century, as national boundaries were established and

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33 Covarrubias 179. *Diccionario enciclopédico abreviado*, 1st ed. (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Arg., 1940), I:466. The tension between these two meanings of the word takes center stage in Miguel de Cervantes’s *Don Quijote*, in the sustained ironic juxtaposition of scholars and military men.

Bean concludes fascinatingly that from the descriptions of the retinues of John of Gaunt and the registers of the Black Prince “there emerges a picture of the ‘bachelors’ as an inner group within the magnate’s household, enjoying a position of closeness to their lord.” He means this literally: they are paid, essentially, to be both military men and household protectors. They are military domestics, in essence: “such knights formed a special group in association with the organization of the household, since one
as middle-class professionalism and international merchant economies began to flourish, the academic designation of “bachelor” became the primary definition of the word throughout Europe – meaning a student who had passed the first level of ecclesiastical or legal training. This shift in connotation from the realm of knighthood and aristocracy to the emergent world of bourgeois international intellectual discourse is the earliest evidence of a powerful flexibility, and indicates the word’s significance as a site for ideological contests.35 Also from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, the word came to be used commonly in English to refer to unmarried men. “Soltero” or “celibato” in Spanish36 and “célibataire” in French came to signify single manhood, although in some regions in France it signified single young men or women (“bachelotte”).37

In Diderot’s Encyclopédie there is a five-page debate on the French concept of bachelorhood, indicating that it was a religious, philosophical and social issue by the eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson’s 1755 dictionary defines “bachelor” as “a man unmarried,” and quotes uses of the term by Shakespeare, Bacon, Dryden, and Pope. The Dryden quotation, however, indicates a new sense of “bachelor” as a permanent identity. Slightly later, the Encyclopædia Britannica’s first edition (1768-1771) identifies this


36 The Spanish meanings of “bachiller” and “soltero” have been comparatively stable over time. Covarrubias’ 1611 definitions are similar to those of a translating dictionary of the late eighteenth century and those of twentieth century dictionaries. Thomas Connelly, Diccionario nuevo y completo de las lenguas Española é Inglesa, Inglesa y Española, Part II. (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1797), I:70; Roque Barcia, Diccionario general etimológico de la lengua Española (Buenos Aires: Anaconda, 1945), I:594.

37 Edmond Huguet, Dictionnaire de la langue Française du seizième siècle (Paris: Champion, 1925), I:447. Bescherelle’s Dictionnaire Nationelle (Paris: Garnier, 1865) points out that the use of bachelier and bachelotte to designate young lovers was archaic.
distinct meaning by qualifying its first definition: “a man who still continues in the state of celibacy, or who was never married.”38 By the end of the century, the Britannica’s definition had expanded from a few paragraphs on the ancient and modern meanings of the word to nearly two full pages. The 1797 edition recounts a history of “imposition” and “affront” foisted upon men who remained unmarried after early maturity in ancient times, from extra taxation to “a number of blows and lashes with a rod.”39 These discussions focus on the marital and gendered meanings of the word, participating in a rising interest in the invention of a culture and a history for bachelorhood. Significantly, during the years when the first editions of the Britannica were produced, taxes on bachelors (imposed for each servant they maintained) were a subject of public debate in England. This definition illustrates the politics of gender at work in the construction of meanings for words, by explicitly situating British taxes on bachelors at the end of a history of public humiliations of men who chose to remain single. The men who assembled the Britannica – and whose interests it came to serve – were caught in many cases between celibacy requirements in their academic work and the powerful discourse of reproduction and empire within which they lived. By suggesting the increasing pressure of gendered and nationalistic public standards on non-reproductive behavior, they tied bachelorhood to a history of heroic resistance in the name of genius.

The sense of bachelorhood as a permanent status was conveyed, by the eighteenth century, with the phrase “old bachelor;” in Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary, the second definition for the word is “a man of any age, who has not been married; often

with the word old."\(^{40}\) In many cases, however, by the late eighteenth century, the term "bachelor" alone denotes a permanent, and frequently deliberately chosen, social identity.

Washington Irving, for example, wrote in an 1842 letter,

> God knows I have no great idea of bachelorhood, and am not one of the fraternity through choice — but providence has some how or other thwarted the warm wishes of my heart and the tendencies of my nature in those earlier seasons of life when tender and happy unions are made; and has protected me in those more advanced periods when matrimonial unions are apt to be unsuited or ungenial....\(^{41}\)

Irving’s sense of bachelorhood as a “fraternity” indicates both the level of coherence this social identity had taken on by the nineteenth century and the presence of a community of single men that shared that identity. It is also a moment in which an influential bachelor tries to help create that coherence. As will be explored in the first chapter, Irving was engaged in arguing for bachelorhood as socially responsible — when in the hands of a competent writer.\(^{42}\)

As higher education became both secularized and more essential to an international bourgeois commercial culture, “bachelor” came more generally to connote a comfortable, white, educated single male. By the eighteenth century, the word was being used by Addison and Steele to establish an ideal position within the public sphere. This spectator was explicitly gendered male because of his physical latitude — unlike women, men could freely wander the city and cast their gazes on most objects without risking...


\(^{42}\) The more general senses of the word that we recognize as “bachelor” only begin to appear at the very end of the nineteenth century. The OED cites female bachelorhood as its fifth and sixth definitions, noting it in combination with “maid,” “girl” or “woman” beginning in the 1890s. This expansion of the possible meanings of “bachelor” testifies to a fin-de-siècle reaction to the processes of an increasingly gendered culture. Yet it also points to one aspect of a more general democratization of bachelorhood that, in the early twentieth century, moved the word into use across racial, ethnic, and class boundaries as well.
their reputations. Here they also drew on a philosophical tradition, explored in depth in the recent work of Naomi Zack and Susan Bordo, that associated masculine isolation with intellectual power. With this freedom, and unburdened by the demands of marriage, the educated single man could best represent the interests of the nation. This connotation—and the ideal of masculine intellectual production as necessarily isolated from enervating female influences—lingered on in nineteenth-century American literary culture. "The great men are all bachelors, you know," we are told in Melville's *Pierre, or, the Ambiguities*, while Margaret Fuller reported Ralph Waldo Emerson as saying of marriage: "Ask any woman whether her aim in this union is to further the genius of her husband, and she will say yes, but her conduct will always be to claim a devotion day by day that will be injurious to him, if he yields." Whitman used this pose in "Letters from a Travelling Bachelor," explicitly mentioning the theory at one point:

> Now that old Dutch Dr. Zimmermann, who wrote so profoundly and acted so foolishly, commends "solitude" as the greatest developer and establisher of virtuous conduct, and intellectual and scientific improvement. Also, it is a common way among writers to speak in the same strain—to make much of "the soothing pleasures of retirement," and the "calm delights of obscurity."

Yet at the same time, in popular literature, "bachelor" came to connote a strain of essentially pornographic literature, including for example *The Bachelor's Pocket Book for 1851*, a list of whorehouses and private prostitutes—a resource one could find for most

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45 Whitman quoted in Rubin, 318.
large cities at the time. Closer to Whitman’s experience (perhaps) was an 1864 circular advertising lewd “New Pictures for Bachelors,” which so enraged Captain M. G. Tousley that he sent a copy of it (confiscated from his naughty troops) with a letter directly to Abraham Lincoln.

The illicit implication of the word “bachelor” had its counterpart in the prescriptive literature and social reform movements of the early nineteenth century. Whitman himself in his early journalism once criticized “single fools, the bachelors and maids who are old enough to be married – but who from appearances, will probably ‘die and give no sign,’” recommending, in harmony with Parson Weems, William Alcott, and other moralists, “Young man reader! If you have good health, are over twenty-one years old, and nothing to ‘incumber’ you, go and get married.” And as influential a figure as George Berkeley wrote in his “Maxims Concerning Patriotism” that “a native than a foreigner, a married man than a bachelor, a believer than an infidel, have a better chance for being patriots.”

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Given Whitman’s statement that he wanted to “keep in mind the difference between the simply erotic, the merely lascivious, and what is frank, free, modern, in sexual behavior,” and what David Reynolds calls Whitman’s “distaste for habitual obscenity,” the negative connotations of the bachelor character and pose may in small part help explain Whitman’s decision not to utilize it. But more significantly, Whitman rejected these terms because he wanted to talk about sexuality in a new way – to dissociate it both from the predominantly genital motives of pornography and from the stratosphere of an archaically celibate intellectual discourse. Many of Whitman’s contemporaries, from Nathaniel Hawthorne to N. P. Willis to Donald Grant Mitchell, used the bachelor pose both to gender authority as masculine and to reinscribe social boundaries of class, education, race, and nationality. However sophisticated their deployments of the concept were, for Whitman the trope was too limiting; his view of how gender should function in his poetry was very different.

A characteristic example comes from the poem “Walt Whitman” in the 1871-72 Leaves of Grass. In the space of three line-groups (118-120) we get a full spectrum of possible masculinities for the narrator.

118
I am he attesting sympathy;
(Shall I make my list of things in the house, and skip the house that supports them?)

119
I am not the poet of goodness only – I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.

120

50 Whitman quoted in Reynolds, 203; Reynolds, 203.
51 Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance (1852) and Ik. Marvel [Donald Grant Mitchell], The Reveries of a Bachelor (Philadelphia: Altemus, 1893 [1851]). These texts will be discussed at length in the second and third chapters. See Snyder, “Bachelor Narrative: Gender and Representation in Anglo-American Fiction, 1850-1914,” (Ph.D. Diss., Yale, 1991) for an extensive yet only partial bibliography of bachelor sources from nineteenth century.
Washes and razors for foofoos — for me freckles and a bristling beard.\textsuperscript{52}

First the poet voices the sentimental observer; his specific insistence on a "he" attesting sympathy who lists domestic objects spites the convention that sympathy was a female trait.\textsuperscript{53} The next image, of the poet of wickedness, evokes the masculine litterateur's objectivity and heroic confrontation with the dark side of human nature. Finally, the last voice, denigrating "foofoos," seems to reject both its predecessors with an unshaved, befreckled-because-outdoors, muscular, masculine man.

The synthesis of ideal sympathy and muscularity in this passage emblematizes Whitman's larger project of joining what he calls "adhesiveness" or "the passion of friendship for man" with political democracy. This amalgam has been discussed by Robert K. Martin, M. Jimmie Killingsworth, and others; as Betsy Erkkila has stated it,

\begin{quote}
By conceptualizing and articulating his love for men in the language of democratic comradeship and by celebrating physical pleasure among men in the context of male and female amativeness and procreation, Whitman in fact suggests the extent to which the bounds between private and public, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, are still indistinct, permeable, and fluid in his work.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{quote}

The conventional, literary bachelor pose was both unable to transgress these boundaries and ineffective at provoking readers to rethink the relationships among gender, politics, and poetics. In Robert Davis's words, it could not defy "social and linguistic fixity" because it relied on hierarchies for its effectiveness.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} Walt Whitman, \textit{Leaves of Grass} (Washington, D.C.: Redfield, 1871-72).
\textsuperscript{53} The gendering of sympathy will be discussed at length in Chapter One.
\textsuperscript{55} Robert L. Davis, \textit{Whitman and the Romance of Medicine} (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), 64.
But following the social logic of Whitman’s insistence on adhesiveness, the kind of close, public masculine companionship he demands seems almost to require single marital status. Certainly Whitman’s own life was a powerful example of fellowship for his followers, and he himself declared to Richard Maurice Bucke, “I suppose the chief reason why I never married must have been an overmastering passion for entire freedom, unconstraint; I had an instinct against forming ties that would bind me.”

This “passionate” domestic bachelorhood itself made a political statement during his time. Cultural scholars and historians from Carroll Smith-Rosenberg to Chudacoff have recently argued that, in Vincent Bertolini’s words, “though the bachelor was a fact of the American social scene, he represented one of the worst threats to nineteenth-century bourgeois social and sexual ideology.” In the light of recent work by George Chauncey, for example, who suggests in Gay New York that the word “bachelor” became in urban New York a code word for “gay” by the 1890s, Whitman might be said to have used his social bachelorhood itself transgressively, as a kind of code for his sexual preferences.

Thus, when late in life he qualified Horace Traubel’s comments about his solitary life by saying that he was “Not too much of a bachelor, either, if you knew it all!”, Whitman’s concluding chuckle may have been at the expense of Traubel, who claims to have been expecting to hear about a clearly heterosexual secret from the poet’s past. That this comment is difficult for Traubel to interpret is telling; Whitman here plays with the gap between his literary and his real-life bachelorhoods. His awareness of the multifarious

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56 Richard Maurice Bucke, Walt Whitman (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1883), 60.
57 Bertolini, 708-9.
connotations of the bachelor in different discursive realms exemplifies the fluidity he advocated between literature and society. A staunch defender of Whitman’s, William Sloane Kennedy, felt compelled to write in an unpublished defense of his lifestyle, “if it be asked why Walt Whitman did not marry I answer that after thirty a noble desire not to injure others made it absolutely out of the question for him.” In this formulation, fascinatingly, it is marriage that dare not speak its name. Diverting possible priapism not away from desire but into “noble desire,” Kennedy’s explanation remains evasive, unsure of the quality or kind of “injury” declaring marriage would have done.

The sequestering of the bachelor persona evidenced in Whitman’s writing and his life finds a kind of analogue in what Ed Folsom describes as the “obscurity and encrypted quality” of photographs of Whitman and his male companions. As they are simultaneously self-consciously constructed images and material evidence of Whitman’s life, these pictures are suggestive about the poet’s understanding of the single life. With the “family pictures,” like his photographs with the Johnston and Williams family children, Whitman used his bachelorhood to promote his image as a family man – a father, or more often in the photographs, grandfather figure (fig. 1). In these photographs, Whitman is always touching or holding the children – partly to keep them from fidgeting during the longer exposures of nineteenth-century photography – and he is always looking at the camera. His status as an older single male enables, in Folsom’s words, an image using “the conventions of a posed family portrait where the ‘family’ has to be construed


Figure 1. William Kurtz, Walt Whitman with Kitty and Harry Johnson, 1879. Photograph. From the Walt Whitman Archive, courtesy Gay Wilson Allen.
outside traditional definitions, even while familiar and comforting ‘family’ emotions are triggered by the careful staging and posing.”

In this case, then, Whitman used his old bachelor status to pose as a family man.

But the case was different in his photographs with boyfriends, young men like Peter Doyle and Bill Duckett (fig. 2). Folsom suggests that in these photographs Whitman “cross-posed,” using traditional wedding postures; “gender and sex and even generation lose their categorical status as Whitman and his comrades stage unnamed identities and relationships.”

Yet in these images Whitman keeps his hands to himself; his partners usually (but not always) lay one hand on him, but we hardly see the affectionate embrace of comrades. In the pictures with Doyle, in fact, Whitman’s hands are completely obscured, either in his pockets or crossed under his arms. Furthermore, while Whitman may have been experimenting with new ways of picturing adhesiveness, his maintenance of bachelorhood as a personal lifestyle based on complete “unconstraint” and domestic latitude suggests that “marriage” would not have been an adequate model for homosexual relationships.

We know that Whitman shared these photographs with his friends but discouraged their reproduction in public venues, newspapers, or periodicals. Very much like his bachelorhood, then, Whitman carefully controlled the circulation of these images — and for more or less the same reasons. For just as the word “bachelor” was easily robbed of evocative power by its literary contexts, so public circulation of the “Calamus” photos would simultaneously remove the emotional investment Whitman made in them and tame

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Figure 2. M. P. Rice, Walt Whitman with Peter Doyle, ca. 1869. From the Walt Whitman Archive, courtesy Ohio Wesleyan University, Bayley Collection.
them with a heteronormative interpretation. He stopped using the word in print, and resisted its use by his interrogators and publicists.

Whitman’s negotiation of bachelorhood – avoiding it in print and embracing it in his persona – demonstrates the complexity we face in reconstructing concepts like “bachelorhood” from our own times, when the word has lost much of its resonance. As V. N. Volosinov put it in 1930, “A sign that has been withdrawn from the pressures of the social struggle – which, so to speak, crosses beyond the pale of class struggle – inevitably loses force, degenerating into allegory and becoming the object not of live social intelligibility but of philological comprehension. The historical memory of mankind is full of such worn out ideological signs incapable of serving as arenas for the clash of live social accents.” Whitman’s relationship with the word “bachelor” suggests the possibility that at times, words are also avoided because of the struggle being staged through them. Whitman himself argued in An American Primer that “The lack of any words... is as historical as the existence of words.” But just as he went on to say, “I feel a hundred realities, clearly determined in me, that words are not yet formed to represent,” so he eschewed those words that bore cultural significance clearly detrimental to the interpretation of his poetry – especially in this case to the central argument about sexuality, manhood, and democracy. In March of 1890, the same year Symonds posed his famous inquiry, Maurice M. Minton of the magazine Illustrated American requested of Whitman a few lines of text to accompany a picture of the poet as a frontispiece.

63 Ibid., 205.
Whitman happily obliged, sending a few lines from section sixteen of "Song of Myself." A month later, Minton asked the poet to answer a different inquiry – this time, "Why am I a bachelor?" Whitman apparently made no answer to the query. This reticence, paradoxically, speaks to us, showing Whitman’s powerful awareness of American print culture and its connotations. Yet it also shows the ways in which a concept that has lost much of its controversial aura with the successive sexual revolutions of the twentieth century once had a multifarious and controversial life in divergent cultural arenas.

ANIMATING "THE STILL LIFE"

On one level, what animates this dissertation is a conversation in current literary and historical work about affect, families and companionship, and the situation of these constructs within notions of class. Following Stephanie Coontz’s Social Origins of Private Life and work on the family by American social historians and by theorists like Jacques Donzelot and Foucault, it seems to me that the most useful way of understanding the family is as an ideological mechanism – not strictly as a kind of mold for making state subjects, but rather as a complicated set of relationships with power structures that competed for hegemony in an increasingly diverse, industrialized, and literate country. That said, the middle-class vision of family (and its effects on the family aspirations and formations of families in other classes) takes center stage as a way of reproducing social order and economic ascendance. Some accounts of the origins of property relations – the

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66 Illustrated American, Apr. 19, 1890, request March 9; second inquiry April 2, 1890; whole story, Whitman 1963, 548 n. 3012.
notion that property can be passed on – are tied to the notion of marriage; as Walter Benn Michaels summarizes, “Before marriage there had been no property… and before property there had been no marriage.” 68 Though the bachelor appears to emerge from a kind of comfort zone within the middle class, bachelors and spinsters implicitly offered a challenge to the family mechanism. (The spinster is a figure missing from this study; while situated within many of the same cultural conflicts about domesticity, publicity, and authority, the spinster had both a very different cultural philology and a different, complex resonance for nineteenth-century writers and artists.) They thus became a rhetorical battleground, with some claiming the power of the bachelor to reify class sensibility in a way superior to that of the family, drawing on intellectual myths of the old world and on the increasing diversity and instability of what June Howard has called the “consensual family.” 69 Medico-moralists and others, leaning on the perceived ideological congruence of healthy family and powerful nation, claimed that the single men and women of America were rotting it from within. Yet when we see the bachelor’s claim to authority from within the class as a construct itself, we find that it is a product of his privilege to dip into the world of others, outsiders, as he does incessantly in


68 Michaels, "The Contracted Heart," New Literary History 21 (1990): 495-531. Drawing on the work of anthropologists Branislaw Malinowski and Robert H. Lowrie, Michaels makes fascinating connections between textual arguments for the causal connections among notions of property, marriage, and privacy, though he never goes so far as to say that the legal notion of the right to privacy depends upon the social fact of marriage.

representation—Irving with the gypsies in England, Melville with island natives, middle-class urban men as they enjoyed the entertainments of the Bowery in New York City.70

Amy Schrager Lang observes of sentimental literature what I will argue throughout this dissertation: “gender and race are structurally able to substitute for class because the conjunction of attributes that define class position are rendered so intrinsic or else so transcendent that they pass either below or above history” (130).71 In the case of a self-consciously republican approach to politics, class loses its naturalness—gendered and racial “norms” thus help stabilize an otherwise vertiginous social experience.72 Lang’s vague sense that these ideologies “are rendered” means more if we say that class is something that is constantly performed, and the authority to perform it is constantly contested between the bodies and literatures in circulation at a given time. The authoritative narrative offers its reader a safe resolution of conflicts, a demonstration that democracy, or perhaps the emotional home life, really do produce consensus and stability. Yet lurking behind this resolution is the necessity of depicting class as a vector, in a set of stages—this need constantly works against resolution and against metaphorical structures such as “separate spheres” to unsettle the narratives of middle-class formation. The other

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72 According to Pierre Bourdieu, this sense of vertigo is an illusion produced by ideology and competing capitalist interests. With regard to the representation of gender in fictional forms, the perception of a need to perform class functions regardless of the social actuality. The frequent financial panics and depressions of the nineteenth century, moreover, lend credence to the notion that the performance that was a man’s “character” could indeed be important to his very real credit. Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature (New York: Columbia UP, 1993), esp. 29-141.
difficulty for nineteenth century ideologues was more obvious: the naturalness of gender and race were not easy to construct in the face of social, political, and scientific evidence. The back-and-forth series of strategies for containing the bachelor demonstrate this difficulty. The bachelor as represented in the literature of the English masculine commercial and literary sphere (The Spectator, The Tatler) began as a kind of culture hero, an ideal observer unfeminized by marriage and unbiased because he did not have to shelter children. In the new republic, this European model lost its shine, and as the family came to be an analogy for the state, an unreproductive single man became almost a threat to national security. Irving and the writers that followed him combated this argument. In the antebellum, medico-moralists initiated a counter-attack in the form of a literature of anxiety about the effects of masturbation and prostitution on men and on the social order. Acknowledging the power of desire, but depicting the act of writing as participation in a competitive international community of letters premised on male asceticism, Hawthorne, Melville, Mitchell, and a host of mid-century writers made literary war on the medico-moralists. Though president James Buchanan’s bachelorhood was the source of jibes during his campaign — a Currier and Ives print making reference to Mitchell’s text immediately following Buchanan’s nomination is a typical example — Americans nonetheless elected him president (fig. 3). The Civil War changed manhood in the United States forever, introducing black masculinity as an overt political possibility, dramatizing an ideal of masculine camaraderie, and reviving combat experience as a part of historical manhood. As recent social history shows, the phenomenal rise in single male, often immigrant populations in major urban areas once again changed the category of “bachelorhood,” democratizing it even to the point, as mentioned earlier, that women could refer to themselves as bachelors. The emergence of black urban culture — from
Figure 3. Currier and Ives, "A Serviceable Garment – Or Reverie of a Bachelor," ca. 1856. Lithograph.
clubs like the “brown paper bag” clubs to the fictions of writers like Charles Chesnutt and James Weldon Johnson – demonstrates that black men, too, began to occupy the bachelor’s social space, to co-opt both his objects and his objectives. But as masturbation fears waned and as bachelorhood began to be seen as a stage one went through, the new medico-moral invention of the time, homosexuality, became the evil side of the bachelor life. As mentioned before, gay men appropriated the term bachelor as a kind of code word, signifying, as it were, on the moralists’ complaints. Again, though, the limits of this demonization (traced by Peter Laipson in his recent dissertation) are indicated by the election of yet another bachelor, Grover Cleveland, to the presidency during the final decades of the century. The residual meanings of the word “bachelor,” as discussed above, helped stabilize the category, appealing as it was for men learning how to be middle-class and how to perform their educations. Bachelorhood as a stage of life, preparatory to marriage, took on a kind of isomorphic relation to the idea of rising through the ranks of class. Making gendered and racial categories seem “natural” was not easy – but the semiotic tools were many and varied, and the reward of apparent class stability, of boundaries that could be “known,” was worth the effort.

The chapters that follow will trace a roughly chronological genealogy of the bachelor in the United States of the nineteenth century. As mentioned earlier, the first chapter explores an apparent paradox: while much American writing of the early nineteenth century declared the single male a dangerous figure, Washington Irving’s use of the bachelor as narrator seems to have evoked a quite different response. As a sentimental male narrator, Irving’s bachelor participated in the construction of sympathy (crucial to the ideal post-Revolution public sphere) both by observing the family and by re-uniting alienated members of the body politic.
Chapter Two moves this discussion into the writings of Hawthorne and Melville. Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* and Melville's *Pierre*, both published in 1852, suggested very different relationships between manhood and the domestic than the one Irving posited — ones that criticized domesticity and ordered sexual behavior. Subverting the language of domestic spheres, their fictions, when read alongside and against evidence about their own domestic lives, suggest that intimacy and privacy could be at odds.

The final chapter moves the discussion to the late part of the century, and into the realm of visual representation, to get at the relationship between single manhood and its relation to physical and imaginary "interiors." Arguing that we should see competitive individual masculinity as a more complex product of an ideally shared domestic life, it focuses on fin-de-siècle still life paintings by William M. Harnett and John F. Peto, which frequently depicted men's paraphernalia. These paintings and a popular literature of masculine domesticity and interior decoration at the time suggest that the new urban bachelor culture was a companionate one, forged in shared living spaces.

In an important article called "Secrets of Men's History," Peter Filene points out that the danger of "men's history" has been its naturalization of the idea that men's history is public history. To counter this, he suggests that we explore the personal aspects of class and power — the relationship between public and private selves. In the case of the figures I study here, this has meant drawing connections between their metaphorical obsessions in writing or art and their daily environments. More broadly, it means bringing the evidence of living arrangements — of domesticity in men's lives — into my discussions of the texts, verbal and visual, that have remained to us. The appeal of the bachelor, then, is the paradox of his being a fundamentally domestic category of social
being – yet until the end of the nineteenth century connotationally a white male, and hence a public creature. Following the word bachelor through its broad range of venues, I bring the feminist focus on gender discourse and its critique of aesthetic hierarchies to bear on this locus for contests over social power.
In 1848, an anonymous reviewer for the Ladies Repository described the power of Washington Irving's prose in terms of its ability to create familial sympathy:

It is hardly possible for any person to peruse him frequently, without being a more affectionate member of the domestic circle. Whether a father, or mother, or brother, or sister, the reader acquires a stronger, a purer, a holier attachment to family friends. In this particular, Mr. Irving has spread the sweet influences of his good heart over all the families of the land.”

Therapy for the troubled home, the proof of Irving’s efficacy here is his ability to create genuine “affection” between family members who have to associate with each other, happily or not. The phrase “family friends” suggests that the definition of family and that of friends is ideally continuous. But it also reminds us that Irving’s influences (spread like jam over domestic America) are communicated by a narrative persona who is distinctly outside any family circle. Almost all of the narrators in Irving’s fiction, after all, are bachelors. Jonathan Oldstyle, Launcelot Langstaff, Diedrich Knickerbocker, Geoffrey Crayon – the “mere spectator” without a hint of intentions to marry was Irving’s choice as storyteller. On one hand, reviewers like this one often implied that Irving as an

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author was a part of every family, so in a sense he did not need his own: the desire for an emotionally unified domestic life created a space for Irving as a kind of sage, a family member above reproach. Irving becomes fictive kin, everyone's "bachelor uncle." On the other hand, it is precisely the outsider status of Irving's narrators, particularly in The Sketch Book and Bracebridge Hall, that enables their creation of this sympathy.2

This chapter gives a sense of the specific literary history Irving drew on with his sympathetic bachelor narrator and how that narrator functioned in the political and social climate of the new United States. I will argue first that the bachelor narrator had the power to represent residual beliefs about masculine intellectual work and how it functioned as both a public and domestic authority. Second, I argue that Irving cemented the power of this trope by prioritizing the sympathetic qualities of masculine writing. Given that sympathy at the time was considered a "natural" feminine trait, Irving's use of it suggests complex possibilities for masculine self-fashioning in the early nineteenth century. Irving performed, both in person and in fiction, a literary convention that figures single manhood as a privileged, authoritative narrative vantage.3 Yet posing this way was

Repository was a Methodist publication, and this article is a retrospective; this comment comes just after the author extols "The Wife" and "The Widow and Her Son," discussed later in this chapter.

2 This chapter, though designed and drafted before the appearance of Michael Warner's "Irving's Posterity" and Bryce Traister's "The Wandering Bachelor: Irving, Masculinity, and Authorship," reads like a response to them. Warner is right to point out, as Traister does not, that reproductivity is at the center of Irving's use of bachelorhood. But I see Irving's queerness emerging particularly out of an implicit critique of marital necessity, one he carries out by prioritizing the bachelor's ambiguously-sexual body and, on a broader level, by vesting him with ideal sympathetic powers. Michael Warner, "Irving's Posterity," ELH 67:3 (2000): 773-799; and Bryce Traister, "The Wandering Bachelor: Irving, Masculinity, and Authorship," American Literature 74:1 (2002): 111-137.

3 Martin Roth cautions that Irving's letters and journals reveal not a developing persona, but a "succession of poses," that his "personality... is a thoroughly artificial one, and its formation involves the translation both of expression and of experience into artificial forms." Given the constellation of politics and visions we encounter in his literary endeavors, Irving's flexibility seems pragmatic; it makes drawing connections between what is "personal" and what is "public" in his work difficult. Roth, Comedy and America: The Lost World of Washington Irving (London: Kennikat P, 1976), 24. See also Joan Scott's argument that experience be used to problematize, rather than reify, our knowledge of the historical subject that recorded it, in "The Evidence of Experience."
neither as simple nor as assured of success as, in retrospect, it seems. How could a bachelor character – when actual “old bachelors” were still rare in the United States – function for an Anglo-American readership? Drawing on a character with a long European textual history, was Irving’s use of the figure merely “conventional”? How could a series of narrators who were “gentlemen” (and yet not fathers) attract readers in a republic premised on familial sympathy and a social order invested in aggressively reproductive values?

At the broadest level, I am looking at the conjunction of two different discourses, each of which was vital in shaping an emerging formation of modern sensibility. The first of course is bachelorhood as a sub-category of gender that was simultaneously grounded in, and outside of, even at certain moments resistant to, the dominant discourse of sensibility and sentiment anchored in the emergence of the family as a privileged site for the production of the modern self. The category of bachelor makes clear that this subjective formation is both an issue of inwardness, and an issue of public politics; indeed in the figure of the bachelor this interarticulation of public and private is at its clearest. In this context, Irving is particularly important because of the way he, as a writer and as an unmarried man, adapted to, exploited, and finally performed bachelorhood. What I have found compelling is how his bachelorhood functioned in abetting his pursuit of a hitherto unprecedented form of authorship adapted to another discourse – that of a marketplace increasingly sensitive to, and eager to construct, "the popular." What I will explore then is the ways in which he condensed these complex social constructs of affect

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and subjectivity into the peculiar amalgam of voice and presence that constitutes his distinctive "gentleman narrator" - a figure so compelling, so persistent, that it not only established the "type" of writing for the next half century, it brought to life the cultural type of the bachelor. Irving did not invent this figure, this virtual man - but he was among the first, and certainly the most successful, to connect an aesthetic disposition with single manhood.

For all the conservative, "old-fashioned" posing in his fiction, Irving was participating in a fundamental change in the functions of public authorship. The possibilities of republican ideology and the emergence of a mass market for literature caused a shift in focus from elite to popular audiences. As Grantland Rice has observed, this shift engendered a spectrum of new approaches to fiction, including

the recasting of the site of critical pressure from the public and the political to the private and the domestic realm, and the change in critical focus from that in which political functionaries were made accountable for their actions in public roles to one in which private individuals were presented with fictional representations of ordinary life (... those of domestic production and reproduction).

But the boundaries between the domestic and the political were not as rigid as Rice portrays them. Recent studies of sentimental literature have changed our notions of the political to envision popular texts as a more direct form of power than was thought in the past regarding a novel such as Uncle Tom's Cabin, to choose a well-known example. In Irving's case it is significant that he parlayed his domestic personality into an ambassadorship - thus becoming a state-sponsored representative of the domestic United States in two senses of the word. At the same time, as a writer he parlayed the authority

generated by his version of the bachelor narrator into the role of international historian, with his histories of Spain and biographies of Christopher Columbus and George Washington. Given the way in which the domestic authorized his geopolitical status, I will focus here on Irving’s use of sympathy as the fundamental technology of a successful democracy rather than on his expression of any particular cause, party, or tradition.6 Irving managed to become a family man for Americans, I will argue, because his version of the bachelor narrator was preoccupied with reproducing the family rather than with his own moral development. The same industrialization that fueled improvements in the transportation of merchandise like books made incursions into the cohesiveness of families. In Irving’s fiction, the family needs help from outside — threat becomes therapy as the traveler’s mobile labor is channeled toward the restoration of true home affection. While his essays are in many cases about English families, Irving’s prose was figured by reviewers as helping American families live in a state of ideal, shared emotionality.

The politics of sympathy is a hot topic among scholars of early American writing — a focus enabled by the work of Cathy Davidson and Jay Fliegelman on American texts and Nancy Armstrong on the novel in England. In Federalist America, the sentimental novel dramatized social anxieties about the problems and possibilities of republicanism. The trauma of the Revolutionary War, the difficulty of building an enlightened, politicized population, the persistence of slavery, and the loss of republicanism’s revolutionary promise for women’s involvement in politics caused a range of problems

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6 Irving did have more confrontational moments, as in his critique of Indian policy in “The Traits of Indian Character” and “Philip of Pokanoket,” published in 1814 in Analectic Magazine and edited for inclusion in The Sketch Book; these essays, however, which employ their own sophisticated use of the concept of sympathy as embodied in native Americans, are not mediated by the character of Geoffrey Crayon.
and possible solutions.\(^7\) As Elizabeth Barnes puts it, discussing William Hill Brown’s novel *The Power of Sympathy*, “related to these contradictory resolutions is the rise of a sentimental ideology that... [can be characterized] as the cultural expression of the desire for union. [...] *The Power of Sympathy* not only represents sympathetic attachment in its story line but reproduces it in the relationship between reader and text.”\(^8\) This use of sympathy springs from an intellectual tradition that takes familial relations as a model and a metaphor for social and political ideals. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg characterizes it, (and Fliegelman’s *Prodigals and Pilgrims* traces in detail), the “traditional civic humanist relationship of state authority and subject deference” was inverted in the creation of the democratic family. Instead of families modeling themselves isomorphically on the structure of the monarchy, the state now tropically built itself in the image of the socially responsible, consensual family.\(^9\) Irving’s many scenes of the bachelor telling stories about filial devotion in *The Sketch Book*, or relieving tensions in the family hosting him in *Bracebridge Hall*, give the bachelor a kind of therapeutic space to work his way into the now politicized sentimental family.\(^10\) Thus Irving’s writing, while framed as travel

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narrative rather than as novel, powerfully adapts a use of sympathy whose outlines we recognize from the context of earlier, post-revolutionary fiction.¹¹

I do not argue that Irving was unwittingly propagating republicanism in any of the recognizable political formations of his day. My sense is that “republicanism” was less a description of a “politics” than a battleground for competing versions of the ideal democratic relationship between an individual and the collective; as Joyce Appleby cautions, “once having been identified, it can be found anywhere.”¹² However one reads republicanism in the past, though, Irving’s prose participates in the propagation of republicanism’s basic emotional kernel: civility, the control of the violent passions. Compromise was not guaranteed by the particular form of government that embodied American democracy. In theory, sympathy among the arbiters of democracy was necessary to achieve the most rational choices. Ideally, ruminating deeply on the validity of an opponent’s position – presuming that the interlocutors were both invested in creating a stronger nation – produced both a balanced decision and peace, instead of mob violence. Thus sympathy, while on one level considered a foundational feminine trait, had also been positioned as the emotional self-control required of democratic citizens and lawmakers.¹³ We can read Irving’s writings as a textbook for the proper timing and


¹³ Fleigelman’s Declaring Independence gives a good account of this transformation, instantiated, he argues, by emergent elocutionary ideal that answered the difficulties of “representation” under the new government. Fleigelman, Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993). My reading of Irving suggests the ways in which the ideal
display of affect, full of complicated moments of sympathetic response to emotional displays. But the citizens and lawmakers thus sanctioned in the political use of emotion had to be men, and frequently they were single men. As Smith-Rosenberg, Nancy Isenberg, and Gail Bederman have shown, the health and continuance of the state was imagined as dependent upon the education, productivity and reproductivity of its fundamental economic actor, the single white male.

How did Washington Irving live up to this ideal of productive manhood? Not very well. As Michael Warner put it recently, "[a]s a younger son whose independence could no longer be secured by the family, and who had already cited financial worry as his reason for remaining unmarried, [Irving]... registered the vicissitudes of capital through a confused mixture of class shame, troubled masculinity, socio-sexual isolation, and fear of mortality."14 Much critical work on Irving has focused on this issue, taking energy from the similarities between Irving's personal life, peripatetic and somewhat parasitic, and the personae that narrate his writings. As R. Jackson Wilson shows, Irving had trouble motivating himself toward the mercantile pursuits of his family, which in turn gave him anxieties about his usefulness both to his family and to society at large. Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky has also analyzed Irving's career to shed light on the connections among gender ideals, politics, and the situation of the would-be author in early-nineteenth-century America. Yet these analyses often tend to reduce authorial decisions to biographical (and frequently psychological) causality; Rubin-Dorsky argues, for example, that Irving's anxieties about establishing himself as a grownup — defined as an

economically competitive son – motivated his depictions of a superior, leisured urbanity. At the same time, Wilson argues that Irving adopted this pose in part to convince readers that his masculinity was unsoiled by mercantile preoccupations, because eager as he may have been for commercial success, a writer faced criticism if he was unable to present a genteel self-image that eschewed such interests. The facts of Irving’s biography are useful for understanding some of the obsessions of his fiction. But we know also that his imaginative life was profoundly influenced by his reading in European literature. Irving’s successful adoption of a sympathetic, possibly feminized narrative voice was in part inspired and mediated by previous writers. Equally, his assessment of the conditions of popular authorship is intimately connected to his sense of the pressures of the “manly” world and the possibilities for counteracting them. In turning to a domesticated bachelor to negotiate authorship, however, Irving was up against a broad set of suspicions about the bachelor. While medico-moralists were beginning to urge the dangers of unregulated male sexuality, while new religious fervor was reimagining sexual and social relations, and while the fate of the republic appeared to lie in the marriage bed, Irving began a career as America’s representative bachelor.

“A GREATER OFFENSE”: THE BACHELOR AS DEVIANT

15 Wilson, Figures of Speech: American Writers and the Literary Marketplace, from Benjamin Franklin to Emily Dickinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989); Rubin-Dorsky, Adrift in the Old World: The Psychological Pilgrimage of Washington Irving (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1988). Ann Douglas argues that the image of ironic diffidence deployed by Irving and some of his contemporaries both relinquished cultural authority to female moralists and retaliated against them. But if we understand Irving as motivated in part by his failure to enjoy middle-class male work, it may be more appropriate to see his writing – an extremely successful grab for cultural authority, given that he was an ambassador, historian, and editor – as a revival of a masculine mode of authority adapted to the American emphasis on home life.
What were those suspicions about loose young men—and how did the bachelor function in other kinds of antebellum writing? Objections to the bachelor in Anglo-America long preceded Irving’s time; a famous example comes from Benjamin Franklin’s “The Speech of Polly Baker” in 1747. Arguing for tolerance in the case of a woman who bore children out of wedlock, Franklin, posing as Baker, insists the following:

Take into your wise consideration the great and growing number of bachelors in the country, many of whom, from the mean fear of the expenses of a family, have never sincerely and honorably courted a woman in their lives; and by their manner of living leave unproduced (which is little better than murder) hundreds of their posterity to the thousandth generation. Is not this a greater offense against the public good than mine?16

The claim that bachelors were comparable to murderers, though we recognize it as hyperbole, sounds eerily modern, like something out of a pro-life pamphlet. The “expenses of a family” and the “public good” remained central to critiques of single living throughout the next century—and across class lines. In the American Citizen in 1809, the Journeymen House Carpenter’s Union justified its members’ turning out from work by saying that “among the duties which individuals owe to society are single men to marry and married men to educate their children. Among the duties which society owes to individuals is to grant them compensation for service.”17


17 American Citizen, April 10, 1809. See Joshua R. Greenberg, “Married to Their Work: Masculinity, Domestic Responsibility, and the Creation of Trade Union Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century New York City,” paper given at the Harvard Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Conference, March 2001. Greenberg argues that “concerns over domestic responsibilities grounded the early labor movement and shaped union discourse in a number of arenas” (1). It strikes me that this was an aspect of working-
"Is Marriage a Duty?" was the question William Alcott posed at the start of his
Moral Philosophy of Courtship and Marriage:18

We may... under circumstances which seem to be very imperative, and difficulties
which appear insurmountable, postpone marriage for a time, and yet be guiltless.
But that a human being, of either sex, in any of the ordinary circumstances of life,
has a right to postpone this subject indefinitely, or forever, — that is, can do so
without becoming guilty before God, the Creator, as well as culpable in regard to
the great laws of social life, — is most stoutly and positively denied. (2-3)

This was the line of argument most often used against the single life in the nineteenth
century. Once again, as in the Polly Baker speech, the bachelor appears as a legal
transgressor — "culpable" not this time of murder, but of violating the more ominous,
because unnamed, "great laws." Alcott’s Hawthorne-like nested qualifiers, "we may...
under circumstances which seem," tacitly acknowledge the increasing difficulty of
acquiring enough capital to marry in the industrializing United States (and its consequent
effect of increasing the average marriage age).19 Yet the passive construction, which
removes any particular "denial" on the part of the author, who might be fallible, urges a
general, "natural" condemnation of the unmarried. Single people avoid, Alcott goes on,
"carrying out the third great decree of high heaven with regard to man, viz: 'Increase and
multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it'" (3). There are actually three decrees
here, of course, in one — represented as naturally interdependent, they thwart dissection,

18 William Alexander Alcott, The Moral Philosophy of Courtship and Marriage (Boston: Jewett &
Co, 1857), Chapter One. While this work appeared later than the others discussed in this chapter, it
synthesizes compactly the arguments over bachelor morality that took place during Irving's fiction-writing
years. For other antebellum medico-moral treatments of the bachelor, see Snyder's bibliography in
"Bachelor Narrative."

19 See for example Mary Ryan's discussion of marriage and reproduction trends in New York in
The Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (New York: Cambridge UP, 1984); also Coontz, The Social Origins of Private Life.
analysis, or conditionality. Production, reproduction, and domination are thus not only unquestionably the same project, they are enforced by God’s disdain for the single life.

Yet Alcott’s use of the phrase “increase and multiply” takes on another accent – a significant qualification – in his next phrase: “We are to receive ourselves at the hands of God, just as the first pair did, as so much capital in business, – reverently speaking, – or so much stock in trade; and to make all the improvement or increase we possibly can” (3). This mercantile simile may have been used to try to win the attentions of a male audience. The writer’s almost comical self-consciousness (“reverently speaking”) about this disjunction does not so much apologize for what should be a juxtaposition as call attention to it. The trope of commerce thus mishandled suggests an interdependency between reproductive heterosexuality and the real “stock in trade” that made the United States internationally competitive.20 Failure in one’s marital, reproductive duties was failure simultaneously to God and to nation. This message was rehearsed in a variety of Anglo-American moral and medical texts. As Barnes puts it, “the idealized sympathetic bond between parent and child served both to legitimate personal sentiment and to guarantee social interaction: according to such diverse thinkers as John Locke and Francis Hutcheson, filial attachment formed the basis of socio-political allegiances.”21 From the bachelor’s perspective, his existence and lifestyle were both a threat to his nation and dangerous moral ground. Bachelorhood, then, was not so much a stage one went through as a condition to be corrected as soon as possible.22

20 In the case of the slave trade, it was not just an interdependency but an identity between reproduction and “stock in trade.”
22 Gail Bederman traces the full flowering of this ideology by the fin-de-siècle in Manliness and Civilization. Thus, without a fully-developed polar concept of homosexuality, non-marrying men and
On the other hand, if an antebellum young male reader turned to another popular source for advice – a manners book like The Habits of Good Society, for example – to learn the art of self-presentation and social intercourse that was increasingly crucial to success in business and in love, he would have found a different representation of the bachelor. The first preface to The Habits of Good Society is an extended discourse establishing the authority of its composer, as is customary with these handbooks. Without giving his name, the author declares himself a devoted outside observer of society and its ways:

I am a bachelor.

In the year which followed the French Revolution, I was left by a very severe fever, weak, morbid, and incapable of mixing in any society. I could only support the translation from my sick-room to my club. Unable to read, unwilling to talk, and still less inclined to take part in cards or billiards, my sole amusement was to observe. [...] A very useless existence, you will say. Pardon me. The present work will, I think, prove the contrary. (13-14)

This paragraph proposes the predictability of society through its observation by an outsider while establishing that outsider as a “useful” member of society because of his expertise in helping reproduce it. “The Man in the Club-Window,” as the narrator calls himself (though the second preface reveals that “A Matron” has written the parts of the book specifically for women), brooding rather than breeding, still manages to “theorize on good-breeding,” and hence to valorize his position (18). Raising the specter of the French Revolution and the contention it brought to discussions of the potential for women were looked down upon by some in ways structurally similar to what would later be a more pervasive and definitive homophobia. As George Chauncey suggests in Gay New York, the culture of bachelorhood in some cases folded into the culture of male gayness at the end of the nineteenth century through a shared style, but more importantly, I think, through a shared mechanism for coping with or countering a disdain based in the centrality of reproductive values (regardless of gender-based sexual orientation).
republican government, the text posits the “sickness” of its representative white male as the source of potential renovation and accommodation to an idealized, society-saving civility.

COOPER RENOVATES THE BACHELOR

Though the bachelor narrator of a manners manual could authorize himself only to renovate the individual, one of Irving’s contemporaries set his goals higher. James Fenimore Cooper's Notions of the Americans: Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor (1828) attempted a wholesale renovation of the bachelor’s reputation by placing him at the center of the project of nationalization. In this text the bachelor and his club become a communications mechanism for the spread of information about the new Republic. Far from representing a threat to the reproductive order or evoking tensions about male sexuality in the urban sphere, here the bachelor functions as the ideal reporter, rational and urbane enough to convince the world of the United States’ current excellence and potential for the future.²⁴

Notions of the Americans begins about as strangely as any account of the New World has (and that’s saying a lot). Before the preface is a letter, “To John Cadwallader of Cadwallader in the State of New York, United States of America,” inviting the same to become a member of a highly-selective male club. The club is made up of bachelors, who turn out to be from a myriad of nations – Italy, the Netherlands, England, France,

Russia, and, should Cadwallader accept, the United States of America. Cadwallader, however, is not the epistolary narrator of *Notions,* he serves as chief advisor in America to the writer of the letters, who is an unnamed count. This first letter actually post-dates, diegetically, the ones that follow, since Cadwallader's election to the club depends upon the quality of the account of him spread among the members by the nameless narrator's letters from his trip to the States.²⁵

The club and this letter form an allegory of becoming postcolonial: the new United States, having demonstrated through "letters" its prosperity, vision, and sense, is invited into the highly rational (yet playful) old-boys'-club of Old World imperialists as its junior member. Cooper's depiction of the bachelors' club draws on the residual ideal of the club as space for philosophical exchange, where national boundaries do not inhibit the application of reason to argument. As the narrator frequently reminds us, the club is made up of "cosmopolites, and searchers of the truth" (13). He is "fully persuaded, that had not fortune made us all travellers, we should long since have ceased to be the independent beings we are" (379). In fact, the inclusion of an American among the ranks is a direct product of this abstract rationality and broad learning: "The question of a successor has been deeply agitated among us. Nothing but the exceeding liberality which pervades and colours our meetings could have ensured the result which has grown out of

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²⁵ Kendall B. Taft, "The Nationality of Cooper's 'Travelling Bachelor,'" *American Literature* 28:3 (Nov 1956): 368-370, points out that Cooper deliberately obscures the nationality of the bachelor-narrator: "He is a nobleman, from some European country." By amplifying the generality of the narrator's subject-position, I argue, Cooper makes the extreme claim that gendered intellectualism trumps national boundaries. But nationalism gets re-created by Cooper's reference to the other countries from which the bachelors hail, and by the argument that landscape and natural resources inspire the democratic tendencies of the United States. Thus the intellectual emerges as the representative man, one who can be global when it is required to defend the qualities of his originary, imaginary nation.
the election” (3-4). Thus Cooper allegorically elects readers from the States into this cosmopolitan tradition, while trying to head off the possibility that a European audience would react negatively to the unabashed patriotism that makes up the bulk of *Notions*.26

Cooper uses the bachelor – and one whose nationality he deliberately obscures – because he could function as an unattached, objective, and thus reliable observer. Touring the countryside at one point, the bachelor tells us, “I saw no great town during my absence, and if I travelled much of the time amid secluded and peaceful husbandmen, I occasionally touched at points where all was alive with the bustle and activity of commerce and manufacturers” (56). The narrator is disinterested, as none of the subjects he sees can be; he is neither “husbandman” nor a merchant, each of whose perspectives is limited by interest. At times this abstraction proves hard to maintain; Cooper revealingly digresses into his narrator's struggles with his single life, for, as Cadwallader points out, bachelors are “a class of men far less in demand in America than in England” (153). In the midst of an otherwise standard defense of the virtues of American married womanhood, the bachelor suddenly laments:

> They pay us of the Eastern Hemisphere but an indifferent compliment, when they assume that this beautiful devotion to the first, the highest and most lovely office of the sex is peculiar to the women of station in America only. I have ever repelled the insinuation as becomes a man, but alas! what is the testimony of one who can point to no fire-side or household of his own, but the dreaming reverie of a heated brain. (96)

As Vincent Bertolini has observed of later texts, the “dreaming reverie” of a brain heated by no “fire-side,” but rather by internal erotic combustion is here focused on a fantasy of

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26 It didn't work. The *London Literary Gazette* (June 21, 1828) expressed dismay at Cooper's choice of frame: “The author has involved and stultified his opinions by a contrivance which is no doubt vastly clever, but which is almost extremely confusing, perplexing, and unnecessary.” As it turns out, the reviewer was more upset (and most other critics had the same complaint) about the impossibly virtuous
marriage, not of sexuality.\textsuperscript{27} Yet even this espousal of marital values as consummately
desirable does not counter the loss of authority avowed by the bachelor on the issue of
domesticity. In the midst of testifying to the character of American womanhood, the
bachelor confesses that his perception fails him.

The contortions of the bachelor's intermediary position are again evident when the
narrator tries to discuss American courtship:

\begin{quote}
[P]ure heart-felt affection rarely exhibits itself in the language of gallantry. The
latter is no more than a mask which pretenders assume and lay aside at pleasure,
but when the heart is really touched the tongue is, at best, but a miserable
interpreter of its emotions. I have always ascribed our own forlorn condition to
the inability of that mediating member to do justice to the strength of emotions
that are seemingly as deep as they are frequent. (169)
\end{quote}

The bachelor falls short of telling the inner life of America because his experience and his
diction, that is, his "member," fail him. The same reserve and independence that
supposedly make him an ideal commentator on public affairs tongue-tie him in domestic
matters. Cooper's bachelor draws on the heroic rational tradition of bachelorhood and its
association with learning and idealized, philosophical homosocial relationships in order
to convince the old world that the new republic is logical and civilized. He does so at the
cost, however, of sympathy – of an appreciation of the emotional family life that, as so
many of Cooper's contemporaries observed, was one of the most compelling metaphors

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{27} As Bertolini sees it, moments of reverie like these demonstrate a tension between desires for
responsible stability and desires for transgressive pleasure; hence the nuptial reverie is only a fantasy of
acceptance of marital ideology. Cooper's bachelor exhibits this tension at other levels as well, sometimes
pining for a relief from the "ennui of our desolation" and other times uttering classic cynicism such as, "The
grave might be wept over, and time would soften grief for the death of even a bosom friend, but what could
time do towards mitigating a penance performed at the confessional of Hymen?" (Bertolini, "Fireside
Chastity," 172, 264)
\end{footnote}
for the vibrant political ties that connected the States. In his effort to portray the new States as progressive and energetic, Cooper disavows the trauma and anxiety that, as Julia Stern and others have demonstrated, were so important for the American novelists that immediately preceded Cooper. Of the post-Revolutionary period, Cadwallader says,

“Our object in the war had been obtained. When we reverted to its events it was rather with exultation than hostility. Scenes of personal suffering, and perhaps of personal wrongs, were forgotten in the general prosperity. […] The past presented recollections on which they were not ashamed to dwell, while the future was replete with the most animating hopes. (541)"

Structurally, even, the book defeats sympathy: the bachelor’s correspondence is entirely one-way, with only suggestions of responses by his interlocutors. Cooper’s is not a sentimental traveler. But Irving’s Geoffrey Crayon is.

THE POWER OF IRVING’S SYMPATHY

Thomas Paine begins Common Sense by saying that “society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices.”

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28 Reviewers felt that the fictional frame was more of a burden than an aid to Notions. Both English and American periodicals agreed that Cooper underestimated his own authority in choosing the “travelling bachelor” pose for what was clearly a political book. Thus, as the Athenaeum’s commentator observed (July 2, 1828), the rational observer pose backfired; in his bachelor persona, “he is too uniform an eulogist of America, and too enthusiastic an admirer of character, at first sight, to let us receive him in a higher character than that of an apologist. A philosophical inquirer we cannot consider him… we are obliged to confess, that an anonymous author never gave his readers more warning to examine his assertions with caution before receiving them.” Review quoted in Williams, “Historical Introduction” to Notions of the Americans, xxxiv.


sociable tone has been condemned by recent critics as genteel condescension, but the way reviewers at the time framed his efforts at “uniting our affections” suggests something slightly different. That is, beneath the veneer of polite worship of English history and landscape is a deeper mechanism: Irving models the kinds of relationships and understandings that aim at affective communication, at sympathy. With this model for behavior, society becomes a more fundamental arbiter of the polity than government, and the language of politics disappears from the narrative. Irving performs this disappearing act in other ways, as critics have pointed out – when he does bring up politics, for example, the setting is historical and the tale usually has a moral. (This affective dodge is made possible by yet another evasion – the invisibility of the narrative figure – that I will discuss at the end of this chapter.)

In “A Royal Poet,” from The Sketch Book, for example, Crayon praises James the First of Scotland based on his reading of James’s poetry:

> Others may dwell on the illustrious deeds of James as a warrior and legislator, but I have delighted to view him merely as the companion of his fellow men, the benefactor of the human heart, stooping from his high estate to sow the sweet flowers of poetry and song in the paths of common life. (97)

James’s capacity for sympathy is enhanced by his imbrication in a hierarchical system that sympathy both depends upon and defies. That is, James can be our “benefactor” precisely because he stoops from his “high estate,” but this nonetheless makes him “sweet” and perhaps somewhat “common.” Irving does not acknowledge that the capacity to perform sympathy in this case depends upon an initial inequality. This evasion is characteristic of Irving’s use of sympathy. It shows up again in “The Broken Heart,” the story of an Irish patriot who marries a young woman and then is executed in captivity. A soldier who has heard the young girl’s story marries her, but the marriage is
loveless – sympathy for the rebel has transcended the grave. Quoting Thomas Moore, Irving writes, “He had lived for his love – for his country he died,/ They were all that to life had entwined him” (77). Love for country and love for partner are analogous, and supersede death, but perhaps more importantly, supersede (re)marriage itself. In this passage, sympathy’s operation depends upon our forgetting that it is Crayon, a bachelor unattached to any particular country, telling the story. Crayon strategically bows out, letting the Irish Moore’s words finish the tale. But we are left wondering at the way in which sympathy conflicts with love; does Crayon not suggest in the second husband a kind of married bachelor, who, like himself, feels sympathy without a return? Quantum of sympathy is the standard of virtue; Irving’s narrator serves as a model for the reader, his prose evoking sensations that ought to come readily, without provocation.

The Sketch Book frames our consideration of its narrator as early as the epigraph, taken from Robert Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy (1621-1651): “I have no wife nor children, good or bad, to provide for. A mere spectator of other men’s fortunes and adventures, and how they play their parts, which, methinks, are diversely presented unto me, as from a common theatre or scene.” Within a few pages, Geoffrey Crayon arrives in the Old World, telling us of his complicated sense of alienation. “I alone was solitary and idle,” he says, “I had no friend to meet, no cheering to receive” (21). It is sad that Crayon has no friends to meet him at the docks (though later it turns out he has many friends in England). But it is pathetic that he is idle – in a lonely moment of susceptibility, he is unable to represent himself as anything more than a tourist among merchants, sailors and their families, and “men of business.” More importantly, he “alone” is also “solitary” – the only one who is an only one. This enables the reader’s identification with him, for in telling us he is alone, Crayon interpellates us as companions and confidantes. At the
same time, we know that Crayon will always view the characters and families he encounters from the standpoint of his perpetual solitude.

In his earlier writings in *Salmagundi*, Irving’s bachelors revelled in solitude, abusing marriage in particular as an impediment to independence. In character, for example, as “Mustapha Rub-A-Dub Keli Khan,” another visitor in a strange land (in this case the United States), Irving wrote, “I have observed... that the men of this country do not seem in haste to accommodate themselves even with the single wife, which alone the laws permit them to marry; this backwardness is probably owing to the misfortune of their absolutely having no female mutes among them.”31 But in *The Sketch Book*, from the start we find the bachelor narrator saving marriages and families.

In “The Wife,” one of Crayon’s friends, Leslie, is financially ruined, but refuses to tell his wife. Crayon insists that he do so at once: “you are depriving yourself of the comforts of her sympathy; and not merely that, but also endangering the only bond that can keep hearts together – an unreserved community of thought and feeling” (31).

Crayon’s advice suggests that open communication is the basis of sympathy, and that sympathy itself is what constitutes a marriage, it is the “only bond.” Timely and well-phrased exchanges thus sustain marital relationships, but the very conversation itself between Crayon and his friend shows sympathy operating at another level:

There was something in the earnestness of my manner and the figurative style of my language that caught the excited imagination of Leslie. I knew the auditor I had to deal with; and following up the impression I had made, I finished by persuading him to go home and unburden his sad heart to his wife. (33)

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Thus Crayon’s sympathy with his interlocutor enables and embodies his advice; his use of homosocial sympathy serves as catalyst for and example of the way men and women should interact. The incident as a whole is a synecdoche of the ideal relationship between the reader and the sentimental writer; the “earnestness” of Irving’s manner and the “figurative style” of his language should catch our imaginations and guide us in our real lives.

In the sketch “Christmas,” Crayon is a guest at Bracebridge Hall, describing to us the activities of the family that has been generous enough to host him. He tells us that on gloomy winter nights,

> Our thoughts are more concentrated, our friendly sympathies more aroused. We feel more sensibly the charm of each other’s society, and are brought more closely together by dependence on each other for enjoyment. Heart calleth unto heart; and we draw our pleasures from the deep wells of loving-kindness, which lie in the quiet recesses of our bosoms, and which, when resorted to, furnish forth the pure element of domestic felicity. (182)

Again, sympathy is figured here as independent of kinship; our “friendly” feelings – usually stored away in “recesses” – are evoked as much by the hermetic setting as by our association with each other. The paragraph that follows credits the “glow and warmth of the evening fire” with promoting this sympathy.32 Here, as in the review I quoted at the beginning, sympathy is something that we suppress, that must be “resorted to” – yet at the same time is something elemental and “pure.” While serving as the essence of a good marriage, masculine friendship, and “domestic felicity,” sympathy is something that must be provoked.

32 The same claim is made in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” This depiction marks a substantial change from Irving’s earlier work; in Salmagundi 10, mockingly describes a mode of writing that sounds very much like what would eventually be The Sketch Book: “sunshine of existence—wife and children.
Irving’s narrators position themselves as catalysts for creating domestic felicity in part by turning one of the bachelor’s vices—idleness—into a virtue: the compulsion to traverse all boundaries. Irving’s narrator has both free time and physical latitude, which he employs by wandering everywhere: between countries, into gypsy camps, into bad parts of town, into parlors and into graveyards. In one sense, he is an ideal philosophical figure; like Cooper’s bachelor club, he transcends barriers of property and nationality. Unlike its members, he can also cross the bounds of privacy. Crayon, for example, in “Little Britain,” participates in both sides of a nouveau-riche social war because of these qualities:

Being a single man, and, as I observed before, rather an idle good-for-nothing personage, I have been considered the only gentleman by profession in the place. I stand therefore in high favor with both parties, and have to hear all their cabinet councils and mutual backbitings. [...] I might manage to reconcile this to my conscience, which is a truly accommodating one, but I cannot to my apprehension—if the Lambs and Trotters ever come to a reconciliation and compare notes I am ruined! (251)

Here the bachelor’s ability to sympathize is used to make fun of the pettiness and class pretensions of the two families. The false sympathy made possible by a “truly accommodating” conscience reveals the shallowness of the people who believe the bachelor is truly sympathetic. Here again, however, Crayon hides the role he plays in heightening the foolishness of his interlocutors; as long as the first “reconciliation” (between his behavior and his true disdain for the bourgeois’ contest) does not happen, the second (between the Lambs and the Trotters) never will. Either way, where in one case Crayon’s depiction of sympathy can serve as a model for positive marital affection, in another it can be used to parody a negative example of social decadence. Thus

poking up the cheerful evening fire—paper windows, mud walls, love in a cottage—sweet sensibility—and all
Crayon's social pleasure and idleness, when represented to the reader (equally idle while reading Irving's fiction), help produce a properly reflective and sympathetic culture.

"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" deploys the bachelor character in what is perhaps the most sophisticated way of the stories in The Sketch Book. No reading of "Sleepy Hollow" can ignore altogether the axis of conflict between print and oral culture that structures it. But these issues are particularly important in a discussion of the role of the bachelor Ichabod Crane in the story. Ichabod is an outsider, an idle dreamer, a sympathetic companion to the women, and the bringer of print culture; his character fuels the complex set of confrontations that make up "Sleepy Hollow." A close reading of the story provides a good example of the ways Irving used the problems and the possibilities of the bachelor figure.

THE BACHELORS OF “SLEEPY HOLLOW”

The title "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" seems almost deliberately provocative, given that there are at least two "legends" to which it might refer – the "Headless Horseman" legend (re)told during the story, and Irving's larger story about Ichabod Crane. In the context of The Sketch Book, at the most obvious level, the title resets the reader's attention (in a book filled with a broad range of generic sketches), setting the mood for a fictional story supposedly passed down through generations of (and hence, to an extent, representative of) a particular culture. In this sense Irving's strategy has worked; the adventure of Ichabod Crane, like the "Headless Hessian" legend it is based

upon, has been successful with readers and critics since its publication. Yet the choice of the word “legend” (redolent as it is with associations with a preliterate tradition, and with decoding, as the “legend” on a map) also points to the confrontation of oral with literate culture.

Irving’s story, significantly, can help us think of “oral” and “literate” as extremes on a spectrum of cultural practice – rather than as hierarchical terms. Irving’s ideally oral village is itself invested in written culture to the extent that it sustains a school, and Ichabod in oral culture to the extent that he, for example, occasionally tells tales from his childhood in Connecticut. Stern is among the recent scholars suggesting the fluidity of these categories, arguing that in epistolary novels “the letter form bridges the acoustic and the textual, creating a dialectic of voice against vision…”33 Irving’s nest of tropes and devices raises questions about communication and community both for the nascent republic of letters in America and for international literary culture.

The itinerant schoolmaster Ichabod is repeatedly associated with print culture and the world in which it holds sway. “Our man of letters,” we are told, wins favor with the local maids by “reciting for their amusement all the epitaphs on the tombstones,” implying that they cannot read them (334). The narrator thus positions the reader as someone from Ichabod’s culture. Yet using the term “man of letters” somewhat ironically, the narrator reassures readers of our superiority to the bumbling bachelor Ichabod. This give-and-take tactic ameliorates somewhat the difficulty that this theme might raise for a reader of fiction – that the new print culture threatened traditional social

forms. Ichabod, after all, "had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather’s History of New England Witchcraft." Yet Ichabod’s greatest point of sympathy with the community is based on his belief in these tales; in a strange passage connecting Ichabod’s book-learned superstition and the town’s oral history of spirits, we are told that

It was often his delight… to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover, bordering the little brook that whimpered by the schoolhouse, and there con over old Mather’s direful tales, until the gathering dusk of the evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes.

The sublimation of print into fancy is complete when, the narrator tells us, the aural experience becomes primary for Ichabod: “every sound of nature… fluttered his excited imagination” (335). His only defense, singing psalms, is equally aural. Irving’s use of the onomatopoetic word “fluttered” is fitting for this moment of fluidity between print and sound. Characteristically, he calls our attention to the device in his first example: “the moan of the whippoorwill from the hillside” is footnoted with the comment, “the whippoorwill is a bird which is only heard at night. It receives its name from its note, which is thought to resemble those words.” Print and sound collapse in a more threatening (and literal) way in Brom Bones’ promise – fittingly “overheard” by Ichabod and put in quote marks by the narrator – to “double the schoolmaster up, and lay him on a shelf of his own schoolhouse” (343). Ichabod’s practice of flogging principally “some little, tough…, broad-skirted Dutch urchin” among his pupils comes back to haunt him. His form of discipline has, for his students, promoted their association of violence with book-learning; we may think of Brom Bones as a grown-up “Dutch urchin” commanding his own disciplinary fiction.
Indeed, to the town, school and book-learning are associated as much with beatings from a pedagogue as with “superior taste and accomplishments” (334). The parochial use of books extends only as far as patching up the holes in the schoolhouse with “leaves of old copybooks” (332). Residents are instead tuned aurally; they “hear music and voices in the air,” while “the whole neighborhood abounds with local tales” (330). Ichabod is only truly assimilated into local culture when his fright becomes “a favorite story often told about the neighborhood around the winter evening fire” (357). Once again, the bachelor’s story aids in fireside family bonding. It is the kind of fire that has been stoked a few paragraphs earlier by Ichabod’s own books and writings, burned after his departure:

These magic books and the poetic scrawl were forthwith consigned to the flames by Hans Van Ripper, who from that time forward determined to send his children no more to school, observing that he never knew any good come of this same reading and writing. (357)

Ichabod’s bachelorhood resonates with connotations, discussed in the Introduction, of education and literacy, a person distinct from and superior to those who cannot “read.” In this story, the two systems of print and orality are given equal complexity and authority within their domains – it is after all Ichabod’s failure to “read” his situation in the village properly and his failure to translate the “specter” into “Brom Bones” that causes him to leave.

Brom’s threat to fold Ichabod up like a book points to the contest of masculinity on which the larger competition between print and oral, local and cosmopolitan cultures is staged. The confrontation between a cosmopolitan masculinity in the form of a lettered bachelor and a muscular manhood in the form of a rustic swain as they compete for a woman’s affections was a popular scenario in Irving’s time. William Sydney Mount
suggests in his 1835 painting The Sportsman’s Last Visit the triumph of the city beau
over the ruddy (or perhaps merely embarrassed) country suitor (fig. 4). Though with a
different outcome, the Brom Bones/Ichabod Crane contest can be seen on a spectrum of
such representations, as a “clean” version, for example, of “The Lady’s Choice,” included
in a poetry collection, The Covent Garden Jester, of 1785:

By a couple of lovers was Lucy address’d
And to many with earnestness equally prest;
The one was a youth piping hot from the college,
The other a fellow replete with town knowledge:
To gain her good graces both studiously try’d,
But in different directions their flattery applied:
The classical lover paid court to her mind,
To her person the buck all his incense confin’d.—
Determin’d, at length, to declare her fix’d choice,
For the latter she gave her definitive voice;
She rejected the scholar, though Master of Arts,
And stuck to the man with his natural Parts.34

Here the scholar is a “Master” (rather than a “Bachelor” of Arts) to heighten the entendre,
but this is the context in which Ichabod unites single male sexuality and the learned
character. The tension dramatized here is between the class payload that university
training delivers and the “buck’s” more physical working-class masculinity that
recognizes (as does a cagey writer) the power of female pleasure.

But in “Sleepy Hollow,” it is the bachelor Ichabod that can cause trouble for the
bumpkins and excitement for the women. All along, the women identify with Ichabod,
while the men detest him. While the women seem to control discourse in this
predominantly oral Hollow, while “the old country wives... are the best judges of these
matters,” they seem to be identified as sympathizers only because they share Ichabod’s
Figure 4. William Syndey Mount, *The Sportsman's Last Visit*, 1835. Oil on canvas, 17 ½ x 21 ½ in. The Long Island Museum, New York, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ward Melville.
connection to a culture of consumption and display. It is only on the “buxom lasses,” for example, that occasionally “a fine ribbon, or perhaps a white frock gave symptoms of city innovation” (347). (In Mount’s painting, fig. 4, it appears that the urbane suitor has brought a fine ribbon as a gift to his country belle, while her white dress suggests “city innovation.”) So the class connotations of bachelorhood and learning seem, at first, to pay off. Yet it is also because he is a bachelor that Ichabod can be easily excised from communal memory: “As he was a bachelor and in nobody’s debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him” (358). Katrina van Tassel rejects Ichabod’s suit; it might be said that her already conspicuous house is in no need of adornment by Ichabod’s cosmopolitanism. Once back in his own element, however – “a distant part of the country” well-developed enough to have newspapers, lawyers, and a Ten Pound Court – it turns out that Ichabod is successful. Still, significantly, he does not marry. On one hand, Ichabod’s achievement is to transcend the necessities of marriage and the “impediments” of parochialism; as the storyteller in the postscript says ironically, “for a country schoolmaster to be refused the hand of a Dutch heiress is a certain step to high preferment in the state” (360). As an intellectual striver, Ichabod succeeds precisely because he doesn’t marry Katrina and “[set] out for Kentucky, Tennessee, or the Lord knows where” (339). For the bachelor character, marriage and “preferment” are incompatible. On the other hand, Brom Bones (a single man, like Ichabod, yet never referred to as “bachelor”)

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seems to have the last laugh, winning both the girl and the advantage in modeling masculinity.35

Seemingly resolved, the contest between oral and print provoked by the bachelor’s intrusion into rurality is raised at the very end of “Sleepy Hollow,” in the narrative space between the story’s framing devices. Ostensibly recorded by Diedrich Knickerbocker, historian of the Dutch communities, at the last minute we find in a supposedly handwritten “Postscript” that the story we have just read was originally recorded “almost in the precise words” of an oral source. Ichabod’s story, it now appears, has a function outside of the oral culture of Sleepy Hollow, and an interest beyond that of the housewives. Told in “a Corporation meeting of the ancient city of Manhattoes” in a company of its “most illustrious burghers,” the story suddenly functions in urban bourgeois masculine culture as a check to over-rationalization: “there is no situation in life but has its advantages and pleasures – provided we will but take a joke as we find it,” says the man who tells the story (359). Irving’s use of stock characters and situations, including the bachelor, and literary references like the epigraph, testify to the story’s place in a literary lineage and a history of print culture. Yet the postscript dodges the contradiction that the story itself values the preservation of oral systems of communication to the exclusion of print.36

35 The mystery is why the village keeps hiring schoolmasters at all; here Irving implicates “Sleepy Hollow” in a debate over public education that would continue for years. Despite the professed isolation and immutability of Sleepy Hollow, its residents seem to feel the need to educate their children for republican citizenship (notice it is the boys who attend school, while Ichabod has to read the tombstones to the girls). One of the aspects of the debate over public education is dramatized here, as part of the theme of cultural confrontation – how to maintain regional identity and independence of opinion when the education required to validate that input depends on external standards. The same problem was at issue in the question of an “American” literature.

36 Bracebridge Hall contains a perverse reversal of the valuation of popular tales in “Sleepy Hollow.” In a chapter called “Popular Superstitions,” the narrator tells us that squire Bracebridge was wont to start rumors in his younger days among the locals, sometimes based on “any legend of a striking nature”
The bachelor in “Sleepy Hollow” is used to stage the confrontation between bourgeois values and education and older, “traditional” models for the relationship of an individual to society. But sympathy offers the resolution of this conflict; Ichabod’s ultimate success in the urban world can be seen as a product of his excessive sympathy with the supernatural myths of the countryside. Our acquiescence in the tensions of the story is purchased through our taking the “joke as we find it,” sympathetically. And elsewhere in Irving’s fiction, sympathy serves the bachelor’s social imperative: needing to function as sympathetic in order to be “useful” to society – in Irving, as for the “Man in the Club Window” of the manners manual or for Cooper’s traveling bachelor, idleness becomes a virtue.

But at this point the essential difficulty of the pleasurable reading experience asserts itself. The problem with Irving and Cooper’s bachelors is that they do not act on their observations; their texts take as their goals only the simulation and then confirmation of the reader’s “heartfelt” feelings – not a spur to action. This shortcoming of sentimental versions of sympathy was noticed and criticized as early as Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s “Letter to M. D’Alembert on the Theatre”: 37

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37 Fliegelman writes, “Those operations that permitted one, in Pope’s popular phrase, ‘to feel another’s Woe,’ were routinely described in the eighteenth century with reference to what happens to a
In giving our tears to these fictions, we have satisfied all the rights of humanity without having to give anything more of ourselves; whereas unfortunate people in person would require attention from us, relief, consolation, and work, which would involve us in their pains and would require at least the sacrifice of our indolence, from all of which we are quite content to be exempt. It could be said that our heart closes itself for fear of being touched at our expense.38

This critique would have been equally warranted in early nineteenth-century America, as Irving and Cooper wrote in a time of increasing middle-class public reform activity in which men and women enlisted one another to act on behalf of (and toward the construction of) unfortunate “others.” In an age of active manhood, of entrepreneurial men of force, and of (ideally) participatory democracy, how could Irving’s bachelor have been persuasive?

Sympathy relies upon separation from the object. Not absence; as Rousseau points out, the presence of the object is essential to prevent a rational abstraction. But get too close, and the essence of the object defies reification by the emotions. We get a glimpse of this in Irving’s “The Widow and Her Son,” when Crayon spies on an old woman burying her son with only one other mourner:

I could see no more - my heart swelled into my throat - my eyes filled with tears - I felt as if I were acting a barbarous part in standing by and gazing idly on this scene of maternal anguish. I wandered to another part of the churchyard.... (108)

The “heart” is the familiar metaphor for the sympathetic reaction; like the organ, it is unseen – necessarily so – and internal, yet life-sustaining. But here, “swelled into my throat,” it threatens to transgress its invisibility, to leap into action or intervention.

Unwilling to become the third mourner, Crayon flees, confessing “the impotency of spectator in a theater.” As Fliegelman maintains, in the turn-of-the-century American theater, virtue, which had been considered a disinterested, rational quality, became associated with sympathy. Fliegelman, Declaring Independence, 91.
consolation,” while not even attempting to offer any. Yet for the most part Irving suppresses what Michael Meranze describes as “the reality that certain expressions of fellow feeling are not necessarily motivated by the impulse of humanity and might be better understood as projections, indices of a failure to imagine with compassion the altierity [sic] of the other.” Even in “The Widow and Her Son,” it turns out that Crayon has not abandoned the widow, but merely lurked for awhile; in fact, “it was some time before I left the churchyard” (109). He follows up on the incident by investigating the history of the scene he witnessed, thus enabling him to make a narrative out of a moment that had been purely emotional. If sympathy is “the faculty through which one comes to understand another’s anguish through imaginative inhabitation,” Crayon usually attempts to facilitate “inhabitation” at the cost of acknowledging our “impotence.”39 But this means maintaining our sense of distance from the object of our sympathy, when the desire to collapse that distance is precisely what motivates us to read on in the first place.

What is at stake in our attempts at sympathy is thus our own individuality. Glenn Hendler writes that “sympathy itself, even in its most conventional manifestation in mourning, is shown to be predicated on a loss of self that undermines any effort to base a concept of individuality on the value of sympathy.”40 For the bachelor narrator, then, the paradox is that the distinctiveness of the bachelor is precisely his indivisibility from himself – his being alone in being alone – which means we cannot sympathize with him. Irving’s bachelor sells himself as merely a conduit, disappearing in his best moments of

39 Stern 172-3; Meranze quoted in Stern 173.
creating sympathy in the reader. As one reviewer put it, “so prominent is the perspective, so absolute the verisimilitude, that you seem to have the thing itself rather than a representation of it.”

But at times, the curtain rises a little on the bachelor’s disappearing act. In one scene in *Bracebridge Hall*, Crayon describes the “Gipsies” that camp around the Hall. Though he points out that he is more sympathetic to the gypsies than are the English, who “consider them mere nuisances,” the description that follows belies the arbitrariness of the bachelor’s attempt to distinguish himself from them:

In this way they wander from county to county; keeping about the purlieus of villages, or in plenteous neighborhoods, where there are fat farms and rich country-seats. [...] They are always to be found lurking about fairs and races, and rustic gatherings, wherever there is pleasure, and throng, and idleness. (173)

In short, “they” are to be found precisely where Irving’s narrators tend to be found. The similarities between the gypsies and the bachelor narrator are profound, yet “their” movements and habits are described as completely alien and uncharacteristic, “totally distinct from the busy, thrifty people about them” (172). Despite the protestations, here the distinctions between the vagabond narrator who seeks out “fat” halls like Bracebridge and the gypsies who do the same collapses, threatening the sympathy between reader and text.

“AN IMPERFECT POWER”: SOURCES OF IRVING’S SYMPATHY

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Irving’s sympathetic narrators were not spontaneous products of the tension between the bachelor author and his need to please a readership that increasingly identified reproduction with national well-being. Irving, a wanderer among several continents himself, drew both on his domestic life – in many cases, a male fraternal experience in the various clubs of which he was a member – and on a literary tradition of masculine sentimental narrative. A club man on both sides of the Atlantic, Irving romped in the streets and private dining-rooms with a variety of male companions. More than mere fun, though, the clubs provided both a domestic service – at the least, food, drink, and a venue for companionship – and participation in the male homosocial world of action. At a broader level, as Jürgen Habermas points out in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, private societies idealized themselves as helping construct a well-informed state by encouraging, within their membership and publications, a brand of open, sometimes even burlesque dialogue on social issues. David Shields, in Civil Tongues and Polite Letters, shows how Anglo-American clubs in particular both enabled and survived the Revolutionary War; the male societies so important to Irving throughout his life were the direct inheritors of a tradition that mixed social pleasure and public criticism.

The possibilities of the sentimental male observer were in part inspired by Irving’s involvement with this environment of male fellowship and its publications. But his fictions of the sympathetic traveler drew on and modified a set of themes popularized by

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42 Wilson emphasizes Irving’s club experiences heavily; they are considered significant by most of Irving’s biographers.

Laurence Sterne and Henry Mackenzie. When Irving set sail on his first trip to Europe in May of 1804, for example, among the few books he brought was Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*. Sterne’s titillating and tendentious works had been controversial wherever they appeared, but were essential reading for a comfortably supported young man in search of a European adventure that would involve (he no doubt hoped) more than just landscape and architectural tourism. *A Sentimental Journey*, narrated by the traveling bachelor Mr. Yorick, undoubtedly shaped Irving’s sense of comedy (though clearly Irving was less reliant on sex scenes). But it affected him in another way as well, because despite its often ironic representation of sentimentality, Sterne’s book is a full treatment of the problems and possibilities of sympathy.

Designed as an apotheosis of sentiment in order (in part) to parody it, the book is as bawdy as Sterne’s usually are, yet contains melancholy scenes devoid of double entendre. Tom Keymer writes that “in the very act of celebrating feeling he also mocks it, and in writing the widely acknowledged masterpiece of the sentimental vogue he also writes its subtlest and most wounding critique.” Yorick, having left England for France without a passport in the middle of a war between the two countries, finds himself a

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44 Both writers influenced Irving’s writing from an early age. Roth points out that in Irving’s early travel writing, “The most prominent literary source is Laurence Sterne. Irving was already familiar with the novels of Sterne, for he had alluded to both *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* in *The Correector*. […] References to Sterne range from passages which indicate an almost total identification with the mood of *A Sentimental Journey* to allusions and quoted fragments from Sterne’s two major works.” Roth goes on to show that the logic of some of Irving’s writing is structured entirely by quotations he makes from *Sentimental Journey*. Sterne was thus a guide to narrative tactics, and I argue to a mode in which the tropes of bachelorhood are engaged in an effort to model sympathy. Roth, 19.

45 Roth, 17. Roth also notes that he brought a copy of Joseph Addison’s “Letter from Italy.”

tourist unable to ignore the intrusions of politics into emotional life. At one point, he meditates on the obstacles to ideal sympathy:

‘Tis true we are endued with an imperfect power of spreading our happiness sometimes beyond her [nature’s] limits, but ‘tis so ordered, that from the want of languages, connections, and dependencies, and from the difference in education, customs, and habits, we lie under so many impediments in communicating our sensations out of our own sphere, as often amount to a total impossibility.

It will always follow from hence, that the balance of sentimental commerce is always against the expatriated adventurer.... (8)

The very things – language, customs, habits – that Irving takes as his subjects in The Sketch Book are listed by Yorick as “impediments” to sympathy. His tone is that of the heroic rational man; a commercial metaphor is used to weigh the value of sentimentality between nations, while the rhetoric of philosophical proof, “it will always follow from hence,” urges the incontrovertible logic of the argument. The repetition of “always” does hint that Yorick protests too much – and indeed, this argument is overturned by his experience, for Yorick obtains both social and sexual favors in Paris along with his passport. But in these cases, it is Yorick’s ability to ascertain the desires and intentions of his hosts that makes a liaison possible; the sympathy is all on the side of the subject.

Henry Mackenzie’s The Man of Feeling problematizes Sterne’s conclusion that sympathy is all on the side of the sympathizer. When Harley, the book’s hero, encounters a local beggar who tells fortunes in return for charity, it is clear that the “object” of charity has his own sense of sympathy, too.47 To start, the man knows who Harley is, breaking down any distance Harley might have hoped for; “Ay, there are few folks in the country that I don’t know something of,” the beggar explains, “how should I tell fortunes

47Mackenzie, The Man of Feeling, ed. Brian Vickers (London: Oxford UP, 1967 [1771]). Mackenzie’s book remained popular throughout the nineteenth century; Bill Bell observes that Mackenzie’s Man of Feeling was included on board Robert F. Scott’s first voyage to Antarctica (1901-4), for reading by
else?" (20) His sympathy is "occupational," not leisured as Harley’s is — it is necessary for his survival. The beggar, customarily a mute object of sympathy, exposes the workings of sympathy both by making use of it and by saying, “I changed my plan, and, instead of telling my own misfortunes, began to prophesy happiness to others. This I found by much the better way: folks will always listen when the tale is their own” (21-22). Thus acknowledging sympathy’s real founding in solipsism, The Man of Feeling provokes for its readers some of the complications of sympathy.

At one point, Mackenzie goes so far as to suggest that the kind of “fireside” domestic feeling so central to Irving’s vision is itself dependent upon an awareness of distinction based on economic status: “Whence the luxurious happiness they describe in their little family-circles? Whence the pleasure which they feel, when they trim their evening fires, and listen to the howl of winter’s wind? whence, but from the secret reflection of what houseless wretches feel from it?” (42) Built into Sterne’s and Mackenzie’s politics of sentiment is an open confrontation with the limits of sympathy, and perhaps a discomfort with the mass-market aspects of what had hitherto been idealized as a private transaction. Irving, an American catering to a substantial audience on both shores, and an increasingly female one at that, removes this element of self-consciousness, substituting a reliable, communal, sympathetic reflex for the recursive meditations on solipsism of Mackenzie and Sterne.

Despite these modifications, Irving retains the ideal of the masculine narrator capable of sympathy, who disdains the notion that sentiment is not a form of male subjectivity. As Stern writes of Charles Brockden Brown’s Ormond (1799), “it is in the the all-male crew of the Discovery. Bell, “Terra Incognita: Reading on the Edge of the World,” SHARP
affectionate bonds between women – ties of loyalty beyond race, class, and even epidemic illness, transmitted largely through narrative – that Brown identifies a remnant of the national body potentially capable of propelling the republic into the future.”48 But Irving re-masculinizes sympathy, with bachelor narrators whose pathetic domesticity or traveling life helps make them both pitiable and enviable: they see what others do not. Hendler argues that in the nineteenth century, “to constitute a female mass audience for their products… writers drew on the normative assumption that it is women – genteel, white, literate women in particular – who are characterized by their willingness and ability to sympathize with others.”49 As Henry Adams wrote, woman’s strength was “sympathy, not science.”50 Yet in an earlier literary situation, a masculine sentimentality was possible; a predominantly masculine audience facilitated the creation of characters like Mr. Yorick and Harley, and an increasingly female one did not preclude Irving’s adoption of the sympathetic male voice.

Writing during the rise of a rougher manhood that would be emblematized in Jacksonian politics, Irving was aware of the potential reactions to his tactics. In the final chapter of The Sketch Book, he confesses that his approach is “heterogeneous,” anticipating a class of reader who, “of truly masculine stomach, looks with sovereign contempt on those knickknacks, here and there dished up for the ladies” (362). Reviewers at the time did indeed object to Irving’s effeminate style. In 1850, Horace Binney Wallace complained that “the fine, strong, manly thought – the vigorous moral

48 Stem, 21.
reflection – the commanding tone of rational sense – which form so potent and grand an element in the magic of Scott’s creations, are not found in Irving.”

Sir Walter Scott’s trick of using “rational sense” to make “magic” is traded in Irving for an argument in favor of sympathy as a social ethos, but another reviewer doubted the long-term efficacy of his approach. “Does he really imagine,” John Lockhart wrote in 1824, “that he can be ‘all things to all men,’ in the Albemarle Street sense of the phrase, without emasculating his genius, and destroying its chances of perpetuating fame?”

For Irving’s work to persist, Lockhart argues, it should adopt a gendered style suited to a male author’s attempt at universality (“all things to all men”). Yet the success of Irving’s narrators and of stories like “Sleepy Hollow” demonstrates the competitiveness of very different varieties of masculinity. A more flexible, textured approach to weaving together politics and gender concerns continued to please audiences obsessed as much with the problems of gender as with its ideals.

Avuncular as they may seem, and as their authors represented them, bachelor narrators were as provocative as they were reassuring in the early nineteenth century. Even in mid-century popular advice and moral literature, there was a range of popular valuations of the bachelor. The uses I have outlined share the renovation of the bachelor’s social utility by converting his deviant idleness into constructive critique. Cooper’s narrator relies heavily on masculine rationality, giving a scientific report that fails to hide its “interests” in promoting the United States. Irving propagates a politics of sympathy capable of uniting

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a diverse readership. His substitution of sympathy for heroic masculine politics countered the demonization of bachelor idleness and the moral prescriptions of reproductivity by locating acts of fellow-feeling in the experience of reading.

The reviewer with whose characterization of Irving’s influences as “sweet” I began also said of this reading experience, “If, in the progress of ... [Irving’s] work, an emotion is excited by anything which his subject makes it necessary to say, he gives it a single stroke of his gifted pen, and it thrills to your very soul” (219). Irving’s good heart is always close to ecstasy. His self-pleasure, his “excited” emotions, his stroking, produce pleasure in us, as readers; they are carried out of their author’s private experience with his subject by the bachelor. Certainly, there is some voyeuristic potential in the use of this narrator of questionable character. Without doing violence to the relationships between readers and texts that held sway in the 1820s and 30s (which I may just have done in that reading, admittedly), one can say that the seduction of the bachelor, in both of the major texts discussed here, is channeled into his interest in social and familial harmony — that is, the issue of his sexuality does not disappear. It is used to fuel the reader’s higher ambitions, utopian visions of participating in the construction of social order — paradoxically, by reading fiction. The effect of this is to return authority to the bachelor, and by extension to an imagined international body of authority based in rational comparative thought — I would not call this “print culture,” exactly, but certainly imaginative fiction and, significantly, travel narrative. The bachelor’s domesticity, his constant position at the boundaries of affect and civility — thus allowed the heterogeneous reading publics that read Irving to be seduced despite their different reading contexts. Irving’s narrator posits what we might call the international domestic — our representative on the world intellectual stage, who reassures us that the lingua franca is emotion and
sympathy. It is a relative mechanism, that relies on audience categories – male, female, English, American, poor, nouveau-riche – endlessly setting up the other categories as needing sympathy (with the usual telltale exclusions – Indians, blacks, gypsies, are mute objects of pity rather than sympathy).

These exclusions throw into relief the fact that Irving’s sentimental narrator dodges the difficult questions of sympathy’s fundamental dependence on objectification and differentiation. Acknowledging the ruling class’s dependence on “others” to sustain its ability to sympathize would threaten the narrative’s hermetic substitution of sympathy for overt politics. Cooper’s text opted for politics, and was roundly criticized for its stiffness and ungeniality. Pleasurable and sympathetic narrative was designed – like the social conversation and ritual of the clubs Irving attended – to promote ideal citizenship. Viewed from one standpoint, Irving’s bachelors sacrifice themselves as potential husbands to promote a representative public sphere. On the other hand a pose like Jonathan Oldstyle’s, the self-proclaimed “uninterested spectator,” masks a power play.53 To regain the kind of patriarchal authority lost to the intransigently single man, the bachelor becomes a kind of roving surveillance mechanism, a mobile panopticon, if not quite a transparent eyeball – what Dana Nelson would call an “occluded authority.” Irving’s sympathetic Crayon depicts without rendering himself visible.54

53 Irving, Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle, 3.
54 See Nelson, esp. her Introduction. Nelson draws here on Timothy J. Reiss’s characterization of “the occultation of the enunciating subject in discursive activity” in The Discourse of Modernism (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982), 38-43. Nelson’s point is, in part, that this mechanism is unacknowledged or unknown by the subject enacting it. But looked at in a different way, in the case of Irving’s fiction, one could say that readers in fact sought out this occluded authority, it was a part of the fun of reading. That is, with Irving’s narrators, the “subject” enacting the authority can only be the reader; while sympathy ideally catalyzes democratic feeling, it is actuated by difference and hierarchy – in this case, the superior position of the narrator’s and the reader’s vision.
He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly, the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men, which both in affection and means have married and endowed the public. (Francis Bacon, "Of Marriage and the Single Life," 1625)\(^1\)

Shortly after they met in the Berkshires in the summer of 1850, charged with fascination and mutual admiration, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville would have discovered one of many shared desires: they wanted to add towers to their houses. It seems like an odd obsession for two financially unstable fiction writers. Melville and Hawthorne perhaps wanted better views of the storied Massachusetts countryside they lived in – but they also wanted to get away from their families to write. Unlike Irving, as married men in a society whose ethos of familial intimacy was becoming more elaborate every moment, they encountered privacy as a charged, difficult issue. Like Irving and his narrators, they wanted to see without being seen; the idea of acting out the ascetic philosopher’s part, locked alone in a tower writing works of genius, was a congenial one,

\(^1\) Francis Bacon, *Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, with Other Writings* (London: George Newnes, 1902 [1597-1625]), 18.
for reasons I will explore in this chapter. While, like Irving, they often chose the bachelor to embody arguments about ideals of masculine intellectual labor, the bachelor figure in Melville's and Hawthorne's work destabilizes its own mythical history of genius and its relation to domesticity. Francis Bacon, in the epigraph that begins the chapter, lays out in memorably stark terms this myth of definitionally male genius – one that ties reproduction (for it is "wife and children") to cultural representation, or representativeness (works "of greatest merit to the public"). My overall argument in this chapter will revolve around the issue of how Hawthorne and Melville handled the dominant ideology of marriage and reproduction of their day – the cult of intimacy – in the face of their struggle with this tradition of the genius's ideal (absent) domesticity. They reconstructed bachelor authorship, I will claim, by grounding it in privacy, rather than what they saw as the more fraught, if popular, paradigm of intimacy. In their narratives, vision, privacy and intimacy spiral together in an attempt to create a saleable self and a viable family. What precipitates from this volatile mixture – and part of my effort in this chapter will be to show how in fact intimacy and privacy were at odds – is a set of fictions that construct a masculine subjectivity that tended, despite all of its obvious contradictions, toward a married bachelorhood.

To set the scene and to indicate some of the issues and mechanisms that my argument will take up, we can begin with a complex and disturbing moment from Hawthorne's The Blithedale Romance of 1851.² Late in The Blithedale Romance the narrator, bachelor poet Miles Coverdale, returns to the city after spending some time as a

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participant in a socialist utopian scheme. The summer at rural Blithedale has been exhausting, physically and emotionally, for the urbane Coverdale. He looks forward to re-immersing himself in the comforting anonymity of the city, that “muddy tide of human activity and pastime.” But of course it is a small world, and almost immediately upon looking out his hotel window Coverdale is surprised to see two of his former fellow utopians, Zenobia and Priscilla, accompanied by their mysterious male companion Westervelt (181). This familiar narrative tactic allows the third-party narrator to maintain contact with the main players in the story. Yet in this case, there are two twists. First, Coverdale’s encounter is no mere happenstance meeting in the street; he comes upon them only after peering through the windows of the buildings in the block behind the hotel. Second, once he realizes he is violating a tacit privacy, Coverdale continues to watch from afar. Even after he is caught and rebuked in this act of voyeurism – Zenobia pulls the curtain shut – he insists on maintaining a “revengeful sense of the insult inflicted by Zenobia’s scornful recognition.” His is “no mere vulgar curiosity,” Coverdale tries to convince us (194). In the same spirit with which Irving created his bachelor narrators, Hawthorne’s Coverdale claims he is the best qualified to “learn the secret which was hidden even from themselves,” attempting thus to justify any tactic, even what to our time appears a deliberate invasion of privacy (194). Yet while Irving’s narrators lurk invisibly in graveyards at night and spend weeks as guests sharing the most intimate moments of the families they visit without ever causing tension, Hawthorne’s Coverdale places the increasingly problematic relationship between observation (and vision more broadly) and privacy at center stage in the discussion of intimate relationships. Thus in the course of

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3 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance* (New York: Dell, 1968 [1852]).
making my argument about authority, privacy, and intimacy, I will move through a discussion of the role of vision and surveillance.

Issues of vision and surveillance – of who is watching whom – always involve at least two positions and critical acts. Thus this chapter will also pay attention to the performative nature of the notions of authoritative manhood being worked on by Hawthorne and Melville. Blithedale, for example, is famous for undermining the notion of the authoritative, reliable narrator. Coverdale’s bachelorhood and its relationship to previous uses of the urbane, bachelor narrator can figure as a critique both of narrative authority and of concepts of masculinity because it is based on changing ideas about subjectivity and privacy. How, I will be asking, did these writers negotiate the invention of what Jürgen Habermas has glossed as a “privateness oriented to an audience”? As T. Walter Herbert puts it, “A subtle, intuitive, and inscrutable interiority... lies at the heart of self-made manliness.” My use of the term subjectivity will be meant to evoke this interiority, which is something as much performed as contemplated by the individual; my sense is that individuals generated it based both on lived experience and on their

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4 Richard Brodhead points out that the theme of “prying curiosity” is everywhere in Hawthorne. Brodhead finds it difficult to reconcile “Coverdale’s authoritative irony as commentator on the comedy of Blithedale with his unreliability as the hero of a Jamesian tragedy of a prying narrator”; this chapter attempts in part to show Hawthorne problematizing the connections between surveillance and masculine authority. Brodhead, Hawthorne, Melville, and the Novel (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976), 91.

5 Herbert, following G. J. Barker-Benfield, refers to this interiority as “the sacred essence of nineteenth-century ‘femininity,’” but in fact it is merely an analog of the limited, reproductive subjectivity men imagined women had (Herbert 73). Barker-Benfield ties this metaphorical “interiority” to physical interiority, an important distinction: with regard to metaphysical interiority, men struggled to contain women’s subjectivity within domestic and religious – “natural” – bounds. For discussions of performative subjectivity that helped shape my inquiries in this chapter and the next, see the articles by Richard Lowry (“Domestic Interiors: Boyhood Nostalgia and Affective Labor in the Gilded Age,” 110-131), David Lubin (“Modern Psychological Selfhood in the Art of Thomas Eakins,” 133-166), and Joel Pfister (“Glamorizing the Psychological: The Politics of the Performances of Modern Psychological Identities,” 167-215) in Pfister and Nancy Schnog, ed., Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997).
apprehension of what the outside world would recognize (and reward) as interiority.\textsuperscript{6} This performed and perceived interiority was in large part constitutive of notions of "character," which historians of the antebellum United States, following Habermas, have situated as a prime middle-class technology of participation in public and economic spheres.\textsuperscript{7} While subjectivity emerged as an increasingly integral part of the bourgeois experience and as an essential tool for competing in the marketplace, some men began to question the idea that domesticity was its ideal breeding-ground. The entanglements of masculine ideals, privacy, and domesticity seemed procrustean for two authors who worked at home. Hawthorne and Melville feared that subjectivity's development was sometimes hampered by the lack of privacy that marriage and domesticity imposed upon an individual; this theme emerges strongly in Hawthorne's stories "The Birthmark" and "Wakefield." Privacy was key to the development of an inner self - or let us say, to the self-conscious differentiation of an inner from a public self - which Hawthorne explores in "Monsieur du Miroir." Marriage was an invasion of privacy (a mutual one; certainly many women resisted this as well). As such, intimacy and domestic privacy (meant as the aggregate of relations, material and social, designed to produce the ideal individual) could be at odds with each other. For domesticity to succeed, it must not be too intimate, or

\textsuperscript{6} The literature on subjectivity is vast. For a good variety of angles on it see Regenia Gagnier, \textit{Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920} (New York: Oxford UP, 1991); J. Hillis Miller, \textit{Victorian Subjects} (Durham: Duke UP, 1991), and Raymond Williams, "Subject," in \textit{Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society} (New York: Oxford UP, 1985): 308-312. Williams urges that "[s]ubjective and objective... need to be thought through - in the language rather than within any particular school - every time we wish to use them seriously" (312).

My use of subjectivity to explore Hawthorne's relationship to bachelorhood is premised on work Pfister has done to historicize psychological criticism of Hawthorne's work: "At stake here is a recognition of Hawthorne's 'psychological' preoccupations as historical evidence of his contemporary social concerns." Pfister, \textit{The Production of Personal Life: Class, Gender, and the Psychological in Hawthorne's Fiction} (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991), 17.

\textsuperscript{7} Habermas, \textit{Structural Transformation}, Ch. 2.
subjectivity could be lost. The bachelor character in Hawthorne and Melville stages issues of privacy and invasion of privacy, productive domesticity, and the development of subjectivity, dramatizing fundamental doubts about the harmony promised by domestic ideology.

PRIVACY AND PANOPTIC VISION

The starting point for my argument about privacy and male authority, then, is the question of the relations between modes of vision and modes of privacy. Miles Coverdale's name itself calls our attention to his panoptic tendencies; Coverdale is always situating himself to invade others' privacies. His panoramic explorations of city, country, and human character may immediately remind one of the figure often referred to as the "flâneur," but it is important to draw a distinction in this case. The flâneur is a roving single man commenting on the city and its morés. Epitomized in the life and writings of Charles Baudelaire, the flâneur has recently been made popular among critics as an index of masculinity and consumerism through the scholarship of Walter Benjamin. Like the flâneur, the bachelor is used as an observer-narrator because he is free to roam and comment, but in an important way the use of the bachelor figure by Hawthorne and Melville is distinct. The flâneur reads the city from its streets; he is fundamentally non-domestic, more interested in typology than in intimacy. For Hawthorne and Melville, the

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9 Coverdale also bears the same name as the 16th century Cambridge priest who translated the Bible and the Apocrypha and made the Prayer-Book version of the Psalter. See Douglas L. Hollinger, "The
bachelor as observer functions from within both the space and the expectations of family behavior. The bachelor is ultimately the subject, in a sense, of investigation, in that his role as observer refracts a familial ideal.\textsuperscript{10}

Blithedale's canvass of Coverdale's social world begins, unlike the flâneur's, with an \textit{interior} panorama. Early in the novel our narrator's ability to manage his own privacy and publicity emerges as central to his happiness:

My pleasant bachelor-parlor, sunny and shadowy, curtained and carpeted, with the bed-chamber adjoining; my centre-table, strewn with books and periodicals; my writing-desk, with a half-finished poem, in a stanza of my own contrivance; my morning lounge at the reading-room or picture-gallery; my noontide walk along the cheery pavement, with the suggestive succession of human faces, and the brisk throb of human life, in which I shared; my dinner at the Albion, where I had a hundred dishes at my command, ...; my evening at the billiard-club, the concert, the theatre or at somebody's party, if I pleased;--what could be better than all this? (64)

The half-finished poem is Coverdale's ideal; half labor, half leisure, "sharing" in the life of the city. It is as if the proximity of the bed-chamber and the haphazard disarray of the writing table -- implicitly contrasted with the prescribed order of the reproductive household -- are directly responsible for the ingenuity that can create "a stanza of my own contrivance." (Chapter Three will explore masculine interior decoration and labor in depth.) Coverdale can choose to enter society whenever he wishes, can roam freely through the city and its attractions, because he enjoys the kind of latitude that is ideal for a narrator and, as Griselda Pollock has asserted, that is the exclusive providence of males

in nineteenth-century cities. Contrast, for example, Coverdale’s reading of Priscilla when she first enters Blithedale:

The sense of vast, undefined space, pressing from the outside against the black panes of our uncurtained windows, was fearful to the poor girl, heretofore accustomed to the narrowness of human limits, with the lamps of neighboring tenements glimmering across the street. (59)

Coverdale’s projection of Priscilla’s fears here conceals the fact that he implicitly shares them. Blithedale’s environment, “vast,” “black,” and “uncurtained,” after all, is an exact inversion of the bachelor chamber – “curtained,” “sunny,” and “pleasant.” Based on the spatial associations set out by the book, Coverdale (who becomes bedridden with sickness almost immediately after arriving at Blithedale) is as much the “poor girl” as Priscilla. This projection of Priscilla’s fears is the beginning of a series of violations; Coverdale himself represents another thing “pressing from the outside” against Priscilla’s privacy when we find him “glimmering across the street” from his hotel into her windows just a few chapters later.

The weaving together of privacy and voyeurism returns us to that scene with which I began: Coverdale’s gazing down into other people’s houses. The trope of the bachelor narrator rising to a height to better observe the action is pervasive in Blithedale, drawing simultaneously on an often-cited literary antecedent and on contemporary visual

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11 Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” Vision and Difference (London: Routledge, 1988): 50-90; see also Deborah Parsons, Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000). Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Mystery of Marie Roget” may suggest otherwise; one of Dupin’s observations about the murdered girl is that her suitor, a businessman, would be familiar with the business sections of town, while Marie would have been familiar with the residential areas – in other words, that there would have been a gender-contingent, rather than gender-exclusive, experiential topography of the city. Regardless of their option to roam anywhere, it was unlikely, Poe suggests, that men in general did. Glenna Matthews, Linda Kerber, and Christine Stansell have argued powerfully that a woman’s public sphere opened up before the Civil War, giving women more latitude and power in print and on the street. Matthews, “Little Women Who Helped Make This Great War,” in Gabor S. Boritt, ed., Why the Civil War Came (New York: Oxford UP, 1996): 33-49; Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology.

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culture. One of the templates for this kind of scene was Alain René Le Sage’s *Le diable boiteux* (1707). Alluded to by Irving, Hawthorne, and many other English and American writers of the nineteenth century, *Le diable boiteux* fascinated because of an episode in which its title character, the “limping devil” Asmodeus, magically lifts the roofs from Madrid housetops so that the young bachelor who has freed him can see inside and learn from the follies of everyday madrileños. The story is a Rabelaisian moral tale, but its positing of the magical ability to see into people’s private spaces carried an attractive charge for writers in antebellum America. At the same time, new visual technologies were catering to similar fantasies of visual mastery and penetration. Among these, and structurally similar, if not quite congruent to Asmodeus’s view from on high, was the panorama—a wrap-around or scrolling painting depicting an extended view of a city or countryside—a technique that painters of the United States were adapting to the representation of American landscapes.

As Alan Wallach has observed in his discussion of Thomas Cole’s 1836 painting *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow; fig. 5),* “Landscape painting and landscape drawing went hand in hand with landscape tourism, landscape literature, and landscape aesthetics... Literature and imagery provided the necessary context for tourism, lending significance to such
Figure 5. Thomas Cole, View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow), 1836. Oil on canvas, 51 ½ x 76 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of Mrs. Russell B. Sage.
activities as visiting Kaaterskill Falls, … or ascending Mount Holyoke.”

Popular tourist views served as a metaphor for social ascendance; Americans by the time Hawthorne and Melville wrote were accustomed to climbing to well-known prospects for a panoramic vista. Cole and his followers in the Hudson River School depicted landscapes that carried both the picturesque and historical punch of classic landscape painting and the new weight of potential personal experience in a democratic country.

But the use of the panoramic landscape pioneered by Cole had deeper connections to the construction of social order. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s analysis of Jeremy Bentham’s “Panopticon,” a surveillance system proposed to regulate inmates of state institutions, scholars have teased out the powerful implications of the many nineteenth-century mechanisms of looking (fig. 6). What Wallach terms the panoptic sublime “drew its explosive energy from prevailing ideologies in which the exercise of power and the maintenance of social order required vision and supervision, foresight, and, especially, oversight – a word equally applicable to panoramic views and to the operation of the reformed social institutions of the period: the prison, the hospital, the school, and the factory.” It is this notion of oversight, literal and metaphorical, that made LeSage’s tale so powerful for early nineteenth-century readers. (The erotic force of voyeurism emerged

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15 This technique of representation was a national one, though in the south the depiction of a landscape shaped by slave labor required a somewhat different iconology; see my “Making the View from Lookout Mountain: Sectionalism and National Visual Culture,” Prospects: An Annual Review of American Studies 25 (Winter 2000): 269-280.

16 Wallach, “Making a Picture,” 84. For purposes of the discussion of Melville and Hawthorne’s use of the panoptic sublime in conjunction with issues of privacy, it should be pointed out that Melville and his sisters saw works by Cole and Asher B. Durand, including Course of Empire and Voyage of Life, while they were living in New York at the Gallery of Fine Arts on Chambers Street (Parker 496).
in part from its having become already a kind of power-play, an act that gave social
power to the viewer akin to that of giving charity or visiting an asylum for the insane—
another common nineteenth-century tourist destination.) In the American context, this
meant that the observer was participating in a surveillance that promoted civility and
good behavior; one could comfort oneself by imagining this to be, ultimately, a patriotic
objective. In painting, Thomas Cole’s *Oxbow* gave northern viewers, without the
awkward necessity of ownership in an urbanizing age, “a kind of Property” in everything
they saw, with the compensating ideological assertion that “a spacious Horizon is an
Image of Liberty,” as Addison wrote in “The Pleasures of the Imagination.”

It was certainly this new way of seeing that enabled, and perhaps inspired,
Melville and Hawthorne to dream of building towers. But as Wallach points out in his
discussion of a tower the wealthy landowner Daniel Wadsworth built around 1810, “a
view from a tower was not ipso facto panoramic or panoptic”; it was deliberately not so
in Hawthorne’s design, which he finally achieved in 1860. In the ideological context of
middle-class authorship, Hawthorne in his tower (a view from which few others
experienced directly) acted as both overseer and vicarious tourist for his readers. By the
time Hawthorne and Melville imagined erecting their towers, the mode of vision they
implied would have been well-known to their middle-class readership. The
inaccessibility of Hawthorne’s tower thus indicated that no access to the sublime
overseeing vision was possible unmediated by its resident. The visible, asymmetrical
presence of the tower meant, however, that all who came there or read the accounts of

17 Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *Selections from “The Tatler” and “The Spectator” of Steele
Hawthorne’s famous home (which itself became a tourist destination) knew of his daily sublime ascent, and perhaps knew that they were the subjects of his vision. In this way Hawthorne appropriated the reputation of the tower for providing an experience of power. Yet while Wadsworth’s tower encouraged tourists to re-experience the sublime as the thrill of sudden property ownership, Hawthorne’s instead vaunted the value of the mediating artist. Finally, Hawthorne’s noblesse oblige in letting us occupy his eye of power during our reading of his fiction is always domestic – unlike the public experience of the panoptic sublime in landscape tourism or picture-viewing in a gallery. That is, to access the tower we must first be invited into its author’s home.\(^\text{19}\)

Time after time in antebellum fiction, bachelors are positioned on high, or given a privileged vantage point from which to observe society; the physical trope borrowed from Le Sage and landscape representation places them in the position to narrate for us the experience of the panoptic sublime. Hawthorne’s short story “Sights from a Steeple,” for example, with its approaching storm and detail of the city and countryside below, reads structurally very much like Cole’s Oxbow. But by the 1840s, private interactions are frequently the object of vision in fictional moments like this, often invading the institution whose privacy was protected in inverse proportion to that of the reformee – the home. “Sights from a Steeple” was also the title of an 1838 local gossip series from the


\(^{19}\) We might compare the effect of Hawthorne’s writing-room in the tower to Jonathan Crary’s discussion of the effect of the camera obscura: it “necessarily defines an observer as isolated, enclosed, and autonomous within its dark confines. It impels a kind of askesis, or withdrawal from the world, in order to regulate and purify one’s relation to the manifold contents of the now ‘exterior’ world. Thus the camera obscura is inseparable from a certain metaphysic of interiority: it is a figure for both the observer who is nominally a free sovereign individual and a privatized subject confined in a quasi-domestic space, cut off from a public exterior world.” In the case of Hawthorne and Melville, the space for representing the public world was more than “quasi” domestic. Crary, 39.
Albany *Microscope*, a paper Melville read, authored by “The Spy.”\(^{20}\) As John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman outline in their history of American sexuality, both the legal concept of property and the public morality of the middle class emphasized the privatization of the family during the antebellum, in conjunction with a shift to the romantic model of intimate relations.\(^{21}\) But this did not mean that the family home was constituted as a zone of actual privacy. For at the same time, the consummate act of seeing in public, the mastery of the panoramic vista, was invested with the imaginative potential to invade the sanctuary of the family home, and more importantly, of private individuals’ interrelations. Tensions were generated by the confluence of the necessities of narrative invasion and the necessities of privacy. Hawthorne’s tower, like his fiction (certainly in moments such as Coverdale’s urban voyeurism described at the beginning of this chapter), showed a fascination with structures of visual power, while at the same time complicating them – suggesting that the public and the private were, in fact, mutually constituted by conflict, reconnoitering and violating each other.

**PRIVACY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN HAWTHORNE’S FICTION**

But if, as I want to argue, Hawthorne reconstructed bachelor authorship by grounding it in privacy, then what, exactly, did privacy have to offer an imaginative writer whose “world” was often characterized in ethereal terms? And where did privacy

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\(^{20}\) Cited in Parker 127. This seems to have been a common “spying” theme title, much like the “wandering bachelor” title was for travel literature, going back at least as far as Restoration proto-newspapers like the *London Spy*. While the use of the steeple deliberately evoked God’s omniscience, it equally resonated with the experience of new technologies like the panorama and its use in landscape painting.
in this sense reside—was it the privacy of the marital home, or was it something more specific, something defined by an individual? Privacy seems necessary, for example, for Coverdale to generate his sense of subjectivity. His contemplations in the narrative happen often when he is alone; this association, common in first-person narratives, explicitly designates analytical effort and its validation as private activities, done when the crowd has gone, rather than on-the-fly in social circumstances. Furthermore, throughout the novel Coverdale resists both the kind of affective frankness necessary to the utopian dream of his companions and the physical togetherness that hinders his close observation of them. Hawthorne made this—the sense of privacy as necessary to masculine subjectivity—the central theme of two other stories, “Monsieur Du Miroir” (1837) and “Wakefield” (1835).

“Monsieur du Miroir” is a story about the divided self, what we might think of as Lacan’s “mirror stage” of the modern bourgeois masculine mind, coming to realize its own various selves and their appearances—and to realize too that they are in competition with each other.22 The narrator complains of being dogged by a man who we come to realize is himself, reflected in the many mirrors that surround him in his bachelor life. Curious at first, and willing to entertain the idea that his other self can be a source of solace, he eventually concludes Monsieur du Miroir’s “sympathy to be mere outward show,” and is more upset when he finds that his doppelganger “stares me in the face in my closest privacy” (160,164-5). Here, then, is a man invading his own privacy; that is, seeing that his outward, or public self, intrudes on the inner self by needing consideration

21 This process was conflicted on many levels, and the place of the single person in it was a locus of concern. D’Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters.
22 “Monsieur du Miroir,” in Mosses From An Old Manse (New York: Three Sirens, n.d. [1846]).
and calculation. The need to be superficial impinges on the attempt to be private and "authentic." The vertiginous terror at the heart of the story is the possibility that there might be no authentic – that the separation of the inner and the performed selves cannot be maintained.\(^{23}\)

It has become commonplace to assert that the range of social spaces, material and discursive, encompassed by the "private" in America expanded in the era of industrialization. Yet except in Habermas’s formulation, the private has generally been assumed to be congruent with the intimate. Habermas points out that the availability of private space within the home became a sign of distinction in Europe over the course of the eighteenth century:

> Festivities for the whole house gave way to social evenings; the family room became a reception room in which private people gather to form a public. [...] The line between private and public sphere extended right through the home. The privatized individuals stepped out of the intimacy of their living rooms into the public sphere of the salon, but the one was strictly complementary to the other.\(^{24}\)

While Hawthorne and Melville may have tried to create this structure within their own homes, in many ways domestic ideology in America resisted this tendency to multiply internal, individual, private spaces. Melville’s short story “I and My Chimney,” for example, stages the struggle between the narrator and his wife and daughter over the renovation of their home. The hearth and chimney – familiar to us from Chapter One for their tropic centrality in domestic discourse – occupy the center of the house. While appropriate metaphorically, physically this placement fractures the layout of the rest of the rooms into a kind of hyperbolic version of Habermas’s bourgeois home. The layout,

\(^{23}\) Lionel Trilling’s discussion of authors’ performances of authenticity and depth in his *Sincerity and Authenticity* spurred my examination of writers’ uses of the bachelor to develop masculine subjectivity. Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1971).
as Melville describes it, sounds much like the Panopticon, except with the chimney as the central tower, whose openings offer heat, not surveillance (see fig. 6). The narrator of the story likes this arrangement, reveling in both the phallic quality of the chimney and the ironic contradiction between its domestic associations and the architectural barrier it offers to his wife’s desire to open and conventionalize the space. For the narrator, the pleasure of the chimney lies in the fact that with it in the center of the house, family members face each other as they sit in front of the fire in the evening – even though they do not form a “public,” as Habermas says, because they are all still in different rooms. The wife urges the creation of public spaces within the home, threatening to literalize the husband’s imaginary family togetherness. Habermas’s observation helps us understand that this fiction about a fight over domestic architecture suggests very real contemporary tensions about how to publicize the family.

But Habermas’s metaphorical geometry of lines and complements glosses over the physical and emotional fluidity of middle-class interiors, particularly in the case of American homes. Karen Lystra’s study of romantic love in the Victorian age points out that if the kernel of the private family was the heterosexual marriage, that relationship required absolute intimacy in order to be created:

The nineteenth-century Victorian experience of love was rooted in the concept of an ideal self. Not fully expressed in public roles, this ideal self was meant to be completely revealed to one person only. Individuals were taught to reserve their truest or best or most worthy expressions for a single beloved.25

24 Habermas, Structural Transformation, 45.
In practice, the privacy of the letter (which forms Lystra's documentary base) was followed, as couples' relationships developed, by the privacy of a home as the field for the production of the "intimate" self. Intimacy, in other words, led to marriage, which led in turn to shared domestic privacy. In turn, this "intimate" self formed, in a sense, the core of the bourgeois concept of self, and the foundation upon which men built their public "character." Yet the fictions of the early nineteenth century return again and again to the idea of the home as an invasion of privacy ("I and My Chimney," just discussed, is an example). This suggests that we think of privacy as a property of the individual, despite the language of intimacy that eradicates it in descriptions of ideal domesticity.

Kirsten Silva Gruesz has recently suggested that instead of seeing masculine sentimentalism as moving in on the public domain of women's writing, we see it as often "a kind of sanctuary from domesticity, subversively located within the domestic sphere." Many of Hawthorne's works stage this tension between the private and the intimate, but two of his short stories do so with particular vividness: "Wakefield" and "The Birth-Mark."

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The former is “a story, told as truth, of a man – let us call him Wakefield – who absented himself for a long time from his wife” (64). The convolutions of this short sentence exceed even Hawthorne’s customary nested qualifiers: Wakefield did not just leave his wife, he “absented himself,” as if he were leaving himself, in some sense, as well as his wife. Simultaneously clarifying – in the sense that it distinguishes his departure from one having more “naughty or nonsensical” motives – and confusing, the first sentence hints immediately at the possible complexities of domestic “truth,” which is always merely “told as truth.”

Our narrator says his story is “as remarkable a freak as may be found in the whole list of human oddities,” yet his effort over the course of the tale is to normalize it (if not to explain it). Briefly, as the tale is summarized in the first paragraph,

The man, under pretense of going a journey, took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends...dwelt upward of twenty years. During that period, he beheld his home every day, and frequently the forlorn Mrs. Wakefield. And after so great a gap in his matrimonial felicity — ... he entered the door one evening, quietly, as from a day’s absence, and became a loving spouse till death. (165)

The narrator justifies his exploration of the case by the observation that “We know, each for himself, that none of us would perpetrate such a folly, yet feel as if some other might” (165). It is certainly men that Hawthorne refers to here; despite some dramatization of Wakefield’s wife’s apprehension of his eccentricity, her willingness to be a loved “spouse till death” after his absence is never explored. To rephrase this, Hawthorne suggests that all married men somehow anticipate that at any given moment one of them might not-so-inexplicably stray, not just from a wife, but from marriage itself back to bachelorhood.

The narrator goes on to decide that Wakefield is an exceptionally unexceptional man, underlining this sense of his conformity to the cultural norms of husbandhood: "Had his acquaintances been asked, who was the man in London the surest to perform nothing today which would be remembered on the morrow, they would have thought of Wakefield."

Yet the question of Wakefield's individuality — of his subjectivity — appears to be the subject of the story. One of the contexts for this exploration is the city of London itself: "We must hurry after him along the street, ere he lose his individuality, and melt into the great mass of London life" (166-167). Wakefield has almost immediately recreated his own version of domesticity, "comfortably established by the fireside of a small apartment"; one has as much to lose of individuality in the city as in the home (167). Yet while Wakefield worries about the "busybodies" that may have seen him at his "project," he is in fact disguised by the anonymity of the city. He meets his own wife in the street and recognizes her, but she does not know him. As in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," the urban makes possible a terrifying, but sometimes useful invisibility. "The crowd swept by and saw him not," the narrator tells us; Wakefield's "project" to break his habits and become somehow exceptional, has failed. "It was Wakefield's unprecedented fate to retain his orginal share of human sympathies, and to be still involved in human interests, while he had lost his reciprocal influence on them," we are told (171). He returns home one rainy night, in an "unpremeditated moment," and returns to the "system" from which he came — now more empty than ever before (173).

Still, the narrator's insistence that Wakefield's foolish and petty vanity has led him on a twenty-year wild goose chase rings ironic on a number of counts. First, the story has indeed marked him as an exception, in that he has enacted a fantasy the narrator
acknowledges to be in circulation. His return home as well is marked with irony, as the narrator describes it: “This happy event – supposing it to be such…” (173). That Wakefield is imagined resolving, “I will not sleep alone another night,” (167) yet never even considers being unfaithful to his wife – in fact, that his wife remains the center of his being – argues against the “great moral change” that is claimed to have been wrought within him (169). For the other axis of Wakefield’s privacy is his home; without the potential for shared domesticity, his privacy has no meaning. Can it be that only a married man can be a real bachelor?

Wakefield’s project fails, it seems; the narrator tries to persuade us that it is his wife’s indifference that enables his return, not her sustained affection, and that Wakefield is too ignorant to appreciate what he has lost. Yet the irony that his story is both publicized (in the “magazine or newspaper” from which the narrator has remembered the story) and then dramatized as an exploration of marital subjectivity leaves other possible readings in tension with the moral one: Wakefield may be a fool, but it takes a fool to do what every married man imagines he might do if given the chance. The spatial relationships proper to marriage are restored, yet no emotional difference is effected – Wakefield’s return is as eccentric as his departure, and perhaps less explicable. (This is literally the case – the narrator “will not follow our friend across the threshold” [173]. At the same time, this perhaps suggests metaphorically that the narrator himself will not marry.)

The power of these spatial relationships to create and destroy the home is dramatized in a short story even more skeptical about the requirements of marital domesticity. “The Birthmark” is the story of Aylmer, a scientist, who, after many years of the single, intellectual life, “persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife.” (264)
Georgiana, his young bride, bears on her cheek a birthmark in the shape of a small hand, with which Aylmer becomes obsessed. In his urge to remove this “visible mark of earthly imperfection” (which in the story’s moral is the source of her potential to heal Aylmer’s too-objective soul) Aylmer, with the assistance of his life-long manservant Aminadab, contrives to remove the mark with a combination of environmental and chemical influence that ultimately kills Georgiana as it removes the mark. In her effort to reshape their marriage as a perfect union of souls, Georgiana submits to the operation; there are suggestions in the story that she knows perfectly well it will kill her, if successful. She is impressed with Aylmer’s goal of ideality, “so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection nor miserably make itself contented with an earthlier nature than he had dreamed of.” (278) This ideal is dramatized in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s famous poem “Excelsior!” of 1841. But in this story – unlike in “Excelsior!” – the woman, not the dreamer, dies.

The main thematic opposition in the story is the struggle between thing and spirit; Aminadab represents nature, inscrutable even in seeming imperfection, while Aylmer represents modernity’s urge to tame the natural and supplant the divine. But as it stirs up the gender issues of marriage, a number of other dialectics rise to the surface, including the tensions between intimacy and privacy. The first step the couple takes in its

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29. This theme, evidence of Hawthorne’s clinging on one level to the ideal of intellectual labor as a necessarily autonomous activity, recurs in the “yeoman and the scholar” passage in Blithedale: “The clods of earth, which we so constantly belabored and turned over and over, were never etherealized into thought. Our thoughts, on the contrary, were fast becoming cloddish. Our labor symbolized nothing, and left us mentally sluggish in the dusk of the evening. Intellectual activity is incompatible with any large amount of bodily exercise” (Hawthorne, Blithedale, 93). Melville urges the same inverse relation in Pierre: “Yoke the body to the soul, and put both to the plow and the one or the other must in the end assuredly drop in the furrow. Keep, then, thy body effeminate for labor, and thy soul laboriously robust; or else thy soul...
attempt at self-therapy is a move to the interior of the house: Aylmer converts “those smoky, dingy, sombre rooms, where he had spent his brightest years in recondite pursuits, into a series of beautiful apartments not unfit to be the secluded abode of a lovely woman.” (271) Aylmer’s sense of the domestic both surprises and pleases Georgiana, and she seems happy with their time together in the “impurpled” chamber. (271) Yet her healing is in fact premised on Aylmer’s privacy. When he finds her reading his journals, he looks displeased and warns her that “it is dangerous to read in a sorcerer’s books.” (276) This revelation of his interiority make her feel closer to him, precipitating a more dangerous intrusion, described in a strangely sexualized language:

Hastening after her husband, she intruded for the first time into the laboratory. The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment, with its naked walls and brick pavement, looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir. But what chiefly, indeed almost solely, drew her attention, was the aspect of Aylmer himself. (276-277)

She catches Aylmer and Aminadab, apparatuses in hand, “hung” over the white-hot worker of the furnace. The violence of the furnace striking Georgiana’s eye is followed by the scientist’s recoil: “Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever, on beholding Georgiana.” (277) This defensiveness, and the feverish tone of transgression that characterizes the description of this invasion, resonate with the psycho-spatial concerns of Hawthorne’s audience (and perhaps with their anxieties about effeminate for labor, and thy body laboriously robust. Elect! the two will not lastingly abide in one yoke.” Melville, Pierre, 297.
Everyone is transgressing at this moment — Aylmer and Aminadab in their manipulations against nature, Georgiana against the sanctum sanctorum of the “sorcerer,” and everyone against the ideals of romantic intimacy. Georgiana’s intrusion provokes a guilty reaction, a start at the discovery of the homosocial realm of intellectual production. The sexualized language distracts a little from the fact that this privacy of men is in fact hierarchical — Aminadab is the man of clay, the worker, while Aylmer is the gentleman scientist. As much, then, as this is a moment in which a conspiracy against woman (through the scientific construction of an ideal beauty) is “discovered,” it is also the moment when Georgiana uncovers the male manipulation of hierarchy — betraying the dream of equality through fraternity. Their embarrassment is as much at the fact that the female intrusion reveals their relationship to be an unideal masculine one as anything else.

Aylmer eventually concedes to Georgiana’s invasion and tells her all his worries about the operation. This act usually fulfills the requirements for the shared intimacy of the romantic couple. Yet what should be, and appears to be, a redemptive moment, turns out to be the beginning of the end. Instead of this newly found intimacy healing the couple, Aylmer still ends up making a potion to cure Georgiana, and she still agrees to take it, knowing that it will not heal their marriage even if it succeeds. She dies; presumably Aylmer returns to his academic partnership with Aminadab. Lystra’s analysis of Hawthorne’s letters to his wife Sophia from this time show a profound intimacy, but this story dramatizes the dangers that so powerful an invasion as intimacy can pose.

We might think of this structure in terms of concentric circles of privacy. In order for a couple to perform the kind of intimacy called for by the notion of romantic companionship, they had to share each other’s deepest thoughts and feelings — feelings
that were otherwise deliberately hidden from the rest of the world. This meant that privacy had to precede intimacy as the locus of the generation of the kind of affect that made companionship meaningful. To make companionship meaningful to the outside world, another layer of privacy was required, that of the marital home, of property. Within this space, however, maintaining individual privacy was difficult. Georgiana transgresses the boundaries between the shared space of the boudoir and the homosocial space of the laboratory, the place where the man is made (and in this case, where men imagine themselves making woman as well). Intimacy, privacy, and property were thus inextricably intertwined in middle-class ideology, even as each concept simultaneously functioned within other discursive realms independently of the others.

The difficulty of the bachelor's position, then, lies in the dialectic of revelation and concealment he represented to a culture in which privacy, the family, and property were coming to be associated both in the symbolic order and, as much as could be imagined and codified, in legal relations. Given that middle-class masculine pursuits in urban areas during the antebellum increasingly involved both the bourgeois commercial center and the social mélange of places like New York's Bowery, the single white man suggested by the term "bachelor" would have had a tremendous amount of latitude. A cartoon from *The Judge* in 1882 dramatizes the centrality of looking practices to men's association (fig. 7). The cartoon - reminiscent of the "man in the club-window" discussed in Chapter One - is a defensive inversion of the viewing practices open to men, a scolding feminization of them. The cartoon shows the way in which gender and spectatorship are intertwined; men's spectatorship makes hens out of them, taken from the popular metaphor for gossiping women, and the object of their gaze is women. But women are supposed to be observed in public (notice that the women in the cartoon are in
Figure 7. "Bellew," "The Old Hens' at the window of the Union Club enjoying their afternoon cackle." From The Judge 2:34 (June 17, 1882).
fact dressed up splendidly, one woman sharing feathers in her hat with the “birds” in the club) – so the abstraction of the club and the window are significant reminders that what is being parodied here is the private masculine social space’s reliance upon feminine spectacle despite its reputed homosocial autonomy. Miles Coverdale’s peeping and the observations of the “hens” of the men’s clubs take the feminine world, and the domestic world, as their focus – a practice increasingly uncomfortable to the needs of bourgeois privacy, yet seemingly necessary to the matrix of consumption and display that propped up class performances. To make matters worse, the emotional life of the bachelor was concealed from public view – even though he was often a renter, and spent much of his time in public, on the street, in clubs, at work. His singleness enabled a kind of extended masculine subjectivity to develop, and opened the possibility that he was engaging in practices both physical and metaphysical that ran counter to the aims of the reign of domestic democracy.

Yet as explored in Chapter One, this imagined subjectivity could be useful – the bachelor’s privacy and his autonomy were his source of cultural wisdom. The emblematic young loner was on a higher plane, above contemporary suspicions of uncontrolled men in the cities and the dangerous “solitary vice.” Longfellow’s “Excelsior!” is an over-the-top example of the ideal of transcendent solitude, one that goes so far as to argue it as a kind of martyrdom. Arguing a powerful abstraction out of domestic detail, Longfellow’s poem claims that the content of this sacrifice is not as significant as its form; stanzas one, three, five, eight, and nine read as follows:

The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, ’mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device,
   Excelsior! [...]
In happy home he saw the light
Of household fires gleam warm and bright
Above, the spectral glaciers shone,
And from his lips escaped a groan,
Excelsior! [...] 
“O stay,” the maiden said, “and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast!”
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,
But still he answered, with a sigh,
Excelsior! [...] 
A traveller, by the faithful hound,
Half-buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping in his hand of ice
That banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!
There in the twilight cold and gray,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
And from the sky, serene and far,
A voice fell, like a falling star,
Excelsior! 30

In the young man’s quest to attain higher goals he explicity refuses woman’s embraces,
his elder’s warnings, and domesticity – “household fires” – to carry the banner of
sublimity into a blizzard. The frozen, still body resulting from this self-imposed
alienation emblematizes the supposedly heroic still-life of the autonomous creative
subject.31 The sentimentalism of this sacrifice was enabled by a pervasive cultural myth
that autonomy was the precondition of genius (epitomized in the epigraph from Bacon
that starts this chapter) – a myth that often brought together the discourses of
reproduction, representation, and subjectivity in the body of the bachelor.

(Boston: Osgood, 1876), 42. An indication of the political power of this myth is its use as the New York
State motto; this version of self-sacrificial, solo masculinity was persuasive as an emblem of civic duty to
the state. The state flag contains, at bottom, a white banner with this strange device.
31 Tim Barnard pointed out to me that “lifeless, but beautiful, he lay” inverts Edgar Allan Poe’s
gender formula for beauty in art: the death of a beautiful woman. Poe quotes Francis Bacon on beauty,
coincidentally, in “Ligeia.”
AWFUL PRIVACY

Privacy, then, offered the bachelor-author a ground from which to take on the ideal qualities of the cultural critic— to become, as it were, a self that could be performed as representative in public. But *Blithedale* ends, after all, with both a perennial bachelor and, as usual in the romance, a married couple. And if Coverdale’s authority is undermined by his inability to turn his privacy into genius (he remains a minor poet throughout the novel), as it were by his tone-deafness to his own story, then the marriage of Hollingsworth and Priscilla is not much better a model. In the next section I will argue that in *Blithedale* male privacies from and intimacies with women are a ground of conflict, and that ultimately they require the careful cultivation of personal, affective ties in order to be contained or made understandable or productive. Gesturing toward the larger argument I am trying to make, Hawthorne depicts intimacy and domesticity as always at odds because of his developing sense that what made both intimate attraction and authorship possible was a subjectivity that could be threatened by marriage’s invasion of privacy.32

Coverdale is fascinated by the women around him who seem to be able to negotiate the boundaries of privacy and publicity: “In the case of the Veiled Lady... the interest of the spectator was further wrought up by the enigma of her identity”; the veil

32 A number of critics, including most recently Milette Shamir and Walter Benn Michaels, have pointed to concepts of property as foundations for the evolution and expansion of privacy. Shamir points out that “early American legal discourse... strengthened and shaped the rhetoric that designates the house as a sphere of privacy, a rhetoric that became more and more elaborate in the course of the nineteenth century.” Shamir, “Hawthorne’s Romance and the Right to Privacy,” *American Quarterly* 49:4 (Dec 1997), 754. Michaels, in “The Contracted Heart,” and Brown, in *Domestic Individualism*, argue that property was the key to subjectivity, and hence formed the foundation of the romance. Though I do not take up the issue here, my sense is that property’s role is more ambiguous when discussed by the bachelor figure. In addition
“was supposed to insulate her from the material world, from time and space” (26). Zenobia’s name itself provides this abstraction, “a sort of mask in which she comes before the world, retaining all the privileges of privacy” (28-29). Their inscrutable selves, however limited by social circumstances, appear to him both as objects of desire (labyrinths to be penetrated) and as objects to imitate (to enjoy vicariously).33 For all his intrusiveness, Coverdale never actually finds his way into Priscilla’s mind – and in the end, these subjectivities prove impossible to maintain. Zenobia commits suicide when unable to exercise her love for Hollingsworth, while Hollingsworth physically removes Priscilla from the public stage, absconding with her to a secluded cottage for life. The character of Priscilla represents both a fantasy of male control over the potential for female subjectivity and, simultaneously, a male fantasy of the ideal subjectivity. That is, part of what makes her desirable is precisely her mystery, her depth. Westervelt contols Priscilla’s public presentation of a titillating interiority, creating it as a commodity. Hollingsworth, who may have a financial interest in her as well, projects his moral superiority onto her, claiming her onstage from Westervelt, reforming her “true” self into one with the moral consistency to reject the crass public. Coverdale, finally, appropriates her relationship with Hollingsworth at the last moment of the novel in an attempt to make himself seem deep, frustrated, heroic, poetic. For Zenobia, Priscilla frustratingly presents

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33 As Sandra Tomec has observed, the veil was an important metaphor for Hawthorne’s conception of the author, appearing both in “The Old Manse” and in “The Custom-House,” two essays in which he treats authorship explicitly. Tomec sees Hawthorne desiring a more public, communal, and democratic version of authorship. Later in this chapter I argue that a better way of understanding this trope is to see it as a pose – Hawthorne’s insistence that he does not let you see into the “passages” and “chambers” (this language pervades “The Old Manse”) of his soul is an act of creating just the kind of mysterious, presumed subjectivity that makes a man (and certainly an author) competitive in the marketplace. The statement that eschews individuality simultaneously insists that much remains hidden. Tomec, “The Sanctity of the Priesthood: Hawthorne’s ‘Custom House,’” *ESQ* 39:2,3 (1993): 161-184.
an impermeable and naïve exterior. As readers, we feel that there is nothing to Priscilla, that she is a pawn of the narrative. Yet on one level she is the heart of the parody — the men’s fascination springs not from any direct sense of her manipulability, but rather from the feeling that they will somehow be able to "protect" her “secrets.” She is a performer, but what she performs is as much her own mystery and depth as it is prophesy or fortune-telling. (This is the case with the character Isabel as well, in Melville’s *Pierre.*) Equally, she provokes men into public performances of their own concepts of masculine paternalism, while her mystifying vacuity keeps those masculinities intriguing and deep, unresolvable into pat “Christian Gentlemanliness” or muscular prowess. Priscilla thus becomes the apex of a set of eroticised relationships — more than the triangle described by Eve Sedgwick, really, since Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Coverdale, and Westervelt are all interested in her, emotionally and/or financially — all of which hinge on Priscilla’s perceived depth.

Coverdale’s challenge, he tells us, becomes to sympathize with these characters — characters who already perceive him as competition — enough to see behind their veils. He quickly finds his acts of observation not only anticipated and rebuked — as in the incident at the hotel window described earlier — but strangely self-violating, as they were for “Monsieur du Miroir.” Coverdale’s first invasion sets the tone for the tensions between what he insists upon as the requirements of narrative revelation and the ethics of respecting private space. As mentioned earlier, upon arriving at the farm, Coverdale discovers his room is not remotely soundproof, and witnesses Hollingsworth praying — referring to it as his “awful privacy with the Creator” (63). It is almost as if Coverdale feels his own privacy has been invaded, at first, by overhearing Hollingsworth’s professions of faith. One of the difficulties Coverdale has with this moment is that he is
witnessing Hollingsworth’s subjectivity being created; this fervent but random interiority is a source of mysteriousness and depth for both the women and Coverdale. While our narrator may seem curious about everyone, this is a kind of meta-invasion of privacy, reflecting back on his own motives for solitude. Soon, Coverdale’s spying becomes more intentional, focusing on interactions among the others.

Invasions of privacy come to be integral both to the story’s plot and to its claim that revelation is constitutive of stable emotional relations. In part this is because Coverdale’s acts of creating his own privacy often are the moments when he is least noticed by others – as in the instance of his overhearing Hollingsworth’s prayer, and in the treehouse episode. Zenobia calls attention to Coverdale’s habit, and senses that his interest is more solipsistic than sympathetic:

Mr. Coverdale... I have been exposed to a great deal of eye-shot in the few years of my mixing in the world, but never, I think, to precisely such glances as you are in the habit of favoring me with. I seem to interest you very much; and yet—or else a woman’s instinct is for once deceived—I cannot reckon you as an admirer. What are you seeking to discover in me? (72)

Yet Zenobia subjects Hollingsworth to a similar surveillance; here (as throughout Blithedale) Hawthorne’s prose is thick with metaphors of vision and word-play about ocularity. Zenobia “would have given her eyes for such a look” as Hollingsworth gives Priscilla (losing one’s sight being the classic poetic price for forbidden affection), or for “one smile out of the hero’s eyes” (99). The exchange of glances constructs a dialectic of revelation and concealment crucial to generating these characters’ sense of self; again, Priscilla is the prism for these gazes.

Coverdale finds less illusionistic presentations of the self to be suspicious. Westervelt, for example, may be a cypher when he first appears, but the sartorial description of him evokes contemporary debates over fashion and personality that make
him much clearer. Hawthorne's readers would have recognized the stereotype of the slick, superficial young man on the make in the description of Westervelt; a cartoon from an 1854 Frank Leslie's New York Journal dramatizes nicely the interrelationships between class and gender ideals he would have suggested (fig. 8). "The New Collar Movement" shows two street urchins inspecting a high-collared swell with gloves, limp wrist, and superfluous cane. Straining to see the real person inside, one announces, "Why, I'm blest if there isn't a swell down there!" Though we cannot see his face, we know his type from his dress; the irony is that of course what is "down there" is the same thing as what is outside: a swell, and nothing more. The high-dollar high collar is a parody of a contemporary fashion, but it is also a metaphor for the failed attempt to generate a hidden self. In the middle-class vision of Frank Leslie's, the dandy fails as a model for bourgeois masculine public behavior; seducing the Frank Leslie's reader into identifying with street arabs helps, seemingly paradoxically, to create class boundaries.

Coverdale witnesses Westervelt and Zenobia from what he calls his "Hermitage" - a kind of tree house, in which he makes "loop-holes" to see through, without being visible from outside (128). It is difficult not to compare this space to Bentham's

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34 Coverdale is distinctly differentiated physically from the fop; we are told that work on the farm has put him in fine shape, almost rivaling Hollingsworth's. This is another case in which Hawthorne expresses a level of idealism in his narrator; he himself on several occasions showed a desire to exercise and improve his physical form. Michael Newbury persuasively argues that this was part of a more general middle-class negotiation of new forms of white-collar labor (such as authorship) in the language of manual labor. It strikes me that Hawthorne's rewriting of his experience at Brook Farm in the form of Blithedale, with its insistence that manual labor and writing are incompatible, shows a discomfort with the ideological appropriation of manual labor by the middle class. He did not, after all, exercise. Newbury, "Healthful Employment: Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Middle-Class Fitness," American Quarterly 47:4 (December 1995): 681-714.

Figure 8. "The New Collar Movement." From *Frank Leslie's New York Journal* 2:8 (March 1854).
Panopticon (fig. 6), which proposed a similar structure to regulate prisoners, encouraging the internalization of surveillance in presumably unsocialized inmates. Coverdale in fact refers to it as his “observatory,” and insists that “it symbolized my individuality” (129). Thus the combination of a private space with the ability to oversee generates his subjectivity; he wants to be alone, yet still to witness without entering the scene. Like Irving’s narrators and what Foucault called the “eye of power,” – but unlike the Panopticon, which relies on its visibility for its disciplinary function – he is inscrutable yet knowledgable, central yet somehow unintrusive.

As we will see, Hawthorne at times imagined himself in these ways, and almost in his character’s terms, as an author-isolato. Yet he also distrusted this vision of masculinity, and of authorship, and undermining it is the great narrative achievement of Blithedale. For Coverdale is an acknowledged actor in the tale – and in the novel’s final sentence he gives up his veil. He is the social counterpoint – the reminder of propriety and the eternal poetic – to the romantic triad of Hollingsworth-Zenobia-Priscilla. With Coverdale as an audience, they behave differently, and the value of their interiorized passions is increased. Almost immediately after talking to Coverdale, Zenobia kills herself. Zenobia’s poetic approach to Hollingsworth is fueled in part by the presence of an actual poet who might at any moment turn the whole story into a “ballad,” as she asks him to do at the end. Hawthorne’s narrative of the fallibility of subjectivity is told through a fallible subject-narrator. It is not so much that Coverdale is completely blind to his own role in the play, as that his presumptions – based on a self-critical and hence rational observation – are found to be inaccurate or incomplete. This then is a powerful inversion of Irving’s use of the bachelor: the failure of the bachelor narrator to achieve sympathy – to do what he had traditionally done for narrative fiction to that point – is put
to work here to show that a “genuine” interiority is inherently conflicted. Sympathy in
the Irving mode presupposes an unconflicted subjectivity in the bachelor; thus, if he
completes, or ‘enables’ the happy domestic circuit, it is only because he is a projection
that sphere which is projected through him. Coverdale’s schism exposes this game
as a kind of house of mirrors.

The climactic moment of this failure of sympathy is the scene at Eliot’s Pulpit
(Chapter 14), in which exchanges of glances among characters build to an emotional
climax wherein seeing, owning, and sexually possessing spiral together. Like Georgiana
entering the laboratory, Coverdale transgresses a zone he never considered private.
Coverdale stumbles onto the confrontation scene right after Hollingsworth has somehow
communicated his preference for Priscilla. What he describes is a different way of
defining property lines, and one central to understanding Hawthorne’s vision of human
relationships: “The intentness of their feelings gave them the exclusive property of the
soil and atmosphere, and left me no right to be or breathe there” (252). This comes from
the man who has been spying at them through city windows, where he insists he does
have a right to be. So powerful is affective display that the outdoors can be made part of
the private sphere. Of course, Coverdale does not leave; he is implicated in the action, as
it turns out, but he never recounts what was said among the three – the privacy of those
words is maintained, enhancing the allure of the book itself.

Coverdale’s final act in the narrative is to violate his own privacy. Revealing his
affection for Priscilla, a lame and by now obvious concession, Coverdale fails to maintain
the veil of mystery that would help constitute his own interiority, while simultaneously
trying physically to maintain it: “As I write it, he [the reader] will charitably suppose me
to blush, and turn away my face:—” (288). In a poetic emblematization of his struggle to
negotiate subjectivity and surveillance, Coverdale bizarrely averts his own gaze at the last moment — for after all, how can one write with an averted gaze? The reader is indicated with a masculine pronoun; Coverdale blushes for a male audience, when his tale is perhaps more shameful from a woman’s perspective, and when certainly he has spent much of the book embarrassing himself in front of the female characters.

Hawthorne questions both the narrative authority of the bachelor and the privilege of the voyeuristic gaze — critiquing both the mechanism and the ideology of Irving’s model of bachelorhood. Coverdale’s privacy is likened to the private experience of reading; but Hawthorne warns us that observers are always participants — that is, that they are always performing. By extension, part of the problem Blithedale presents is that of the knowledge of intimacy and privacy. More than just creating an ideal intimacy itself, the difficulty Hawthorne grasps is that the intimacy of the home is, like subjectivity, something that must be known, recognized, by others — and by the participants. Thus it is not strictly a matter of Coverdale’s gaining power over others so much as his struggle to enter himself — to affirm in his interest/fascination in others a capacity in himself that ultimately qualifies him not as marriageable, but as ‘genius’, as ‘author.’

This discussion of Blithedale suggests that with regard to the masculine myths associated with the bachelor, Hawthorne portrays the attractions of the unencumbered state while debunking the notion that isolation promotes rational abstraction. Read in

36 Pierre, interestingly, does just this at one point in Melville’s novel, with similar punctuation following it, as if to wink at the reader: “Sometimes he blindly wrote with his eyes turned away from the paper;—” (Melville, Pierre, 381). In his case it is an act of resistance to what Pierre sees as the necessity of writing for a living. In both texts it is an over-the-top act of irony on the part of the narrator, mocking the imagined invasion of privacy the author-characters perform on themselves.

37 As Herbert points out, Hawthorne’s first novel Fanshawe (1828) was an early and less tension-ridden version of the bachelor-genius mythos, more like “Excelsior!”: “Hawthorne’s ‘womanly’ seclusion and mysterious aloofness were built into the literary career he fashioned. He crystallizes these themes in
combination with the short stories discussed earlier, *Blithedale* promotes the freedom to observe wherever and whenever necessary, with the resulting ability to maintain an inscrutable privateness even in the midst of society. Finally, despite systematically undermining the ideal masculinities of his culture—Westervelt’s social confidence, Coverdale’s intellectual bachelorhood, and Hollingsworth’s earnest, muscular Christianity—Hawthorne gives us a vision of marriage that is no less problematic. The successfully-inscrutable Hollingsworth and Priscilla form the only marriage in the book.38 *Blithedale*’s lesson seems to be that marriages, romantic intimate relations, are unions of the inscrutable. They are relationships that require maintenance, conflict, and a constant awareness of the other options out there. In his last glimpse of Hollingsworth and Priscilla, Coverdale remembers Zenobia’s “Tell him that I’ll haunt him!” and realizes that “I knew… whose vindictive shadow dogged the side where Priscilla was not” (283). In the Hawthorne tales discussed in this chapter, family emerges as a site in which trust is inevitably tested, and membership is the result of a sustained consciousness of consensual participation. At the very moment his society was arguing that intimacy and privacy should work hand-in-hand to create both subjectivity and the ideal marriage, Hawthorne suggested that subjectivity and affect might precede intimacy, and indeed, be its enabling condition.

**THE MARRIED BACHELOR**

*Fanshawe*, whose solitary and sensitive hero treasures up “a dream of undying fame, which, dream as it is, is more powerful than a thousand realities.”” Herbert 72.
Of his own relationship to the intimate, reproductive ideal, Hawthorne would lament, as if in response to the statement by Bacon that begins this chapter, “When a man has taken upon himself to beget children, he has no longer any right to a life of his own.” Yet a look merely at his terse responses to autograph-seekers will show that Hawthorne could as easily have been talking about his literary fame as an impediment to “a life of his own.” As much as his prose, Hawthorne’s role as a family man urges us to reconsider this framing of domesticity as only sustainable in an atmosphere of contention. I bring this arena into my reading (and this will be true of my discussion of Melville as well) because, as with Irving, I am making an argument about how men imagined “authorship” as an embodiment and textualization of representativeness.

Methodologically, I would like to suggest that “reading” these men’s lives with the same attention I bring to their fiction does justice to the interpenetration of those worlds in the working practices of men who tried to become “public” through a home-work that often involved their wives, whose works never strayed far from issues of intimacy and domesticity, and whose obsession with the bachelor mythos seems so much at odds with their domestic (re)production. Their private letters and the public’s knowledge of their home lives were no less fictions than their stories; their tales of horrible intimacy were no less a source of imaginary selfhood for them or their publics than were their relationships.

Hawthorne was considered a recluse by his contemporaries. One discussion of the houses Hawthorne had occupied, for example, describes a “call” made on Hawthorne by

38 Coverdale tells us early on that he is a “frosty bachelor” looking back on these days. Hawthorne, Blithedale, 30.
39 Hawthorne, The English Notebooks, ed. Randall Stewart (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 210. Herbert tells us that “Sophia eliminated these passages from the version of Hawthorne’s notebooks that she published”; her occultation of Nathaniel’s private comment about lacking his own privacy seems a synecdoche of their relationship as Herbert describes it (Herbert, 265).
Emerson and Thoreau. Recounting that the extended chatter of Emerson and Thoreau was returned only by brief, pithy responses from Hawthorne, the writer laments, “But imprisoned in the proprieties of a parlor, each a wild man in his way, with a necessity of talking inherent in the nature of the occasion, there was only a waste of treasure. This was the only ‘call’ in which I ever knew Hawthorne to be involved.”40 Doubtless he did make other “calls,” but even Hawthorne’s carte d’visite presented an equivocal sociality (fig. 9). Hawthorne the writer is instead depicted reading, dressed in his traveling coat with a cap or scarf at his elbow. He is at his ease, disregarding the camera and by extension the host who might receive the card, as if to say, admit me or not as you please. But despite his thorniness, and within the walls of their homes, Sophia and Nathaniel Hawthorne have been famous for having a passionate, intellectual, devoted marriage. Karen Lystra uses the Hawthornes’ letters, for example, as crucial evidence in her story of the development of romantic love and marriage in the American nineteenth century. Three children, decades of marriage, and reputations as narrators of home life and the trials of true love made the Hawthornes premiere domestic ideologists.

But as Joel Pfister points out, the closer we look at Hawthorne’s life and his writings, the more problematic domestic ideology as he lived it seems. Why, for example, did some of his most disturbing writing about relationships—“The Birth-Mark,” The Scarlet Letter, “Rappacini’s Daughter”—coincide with his marriage and early child-rearing?41 T. Walter Herbert, in his psychological biography of the Hawthornes, attempts

41 See Pfister, The Production of Personal Life. In part my argument assumes Pfister’s point that “privacy harbors reality” because it is non-commercial. But at the same time, I see Hawthorne constructing a market space inside his own home, within which he could write. The ideological inheritance of the bachelor author helped him rationalize this attempt to share in masculine public culture from the heart of the
Figure 9. Nathaniel Hawthorne, n.d. Carte d'visite. Courtesy of the Concord Free Public Library.
to map this question over the course of the marriage. Herbert argues that gender ideals that seem clear-cut are in fact disturbed by the potential of their opposites; that is, that Hawthorne’s more effeminate qualities and Sophia’s independence and intellect complicated their domestic ideal, but in a productive way. Their relationship was “an uncontrollable mystery of love and loathing”; or as Herbert puts it elsewhere, “in the thematic structure of the Hawthornes’ marriage, as of The Blithedale Romance, the romantic ontology of domestic relations has been recast in a form revealing the subversive tensions within it.”  

This is another way of conceptualizing the dialectic Blithedale sets up between romantic intimate relations and the single observer. But Herbert misses the subjective dynamics of privacy that so frequently cut across gender issues in Blithedale and in the Hawthornes’ spatial relations within the home. To the oppositions Herbert lays out as constitutive of the Hawthorne family relationship—“tenderness/vengeance, male/female, dominance/submission, self/other,” I would add privacy/intimacy as one of the most powerful.

That the Hawthornes were an intimate couple is undeniable; their frank letters, written by two people skilled at the use of metaphor (and physically attracted to each

feminized home. This is equally a modification of Brown’s argument in Domestic Individualism, which both ignores the residual intellectual connotations of marriage and bachelorhood and insists on a binary of the private and the public delineated by the home.

Herbert 30, 17. Herbert’s argument for dialectical tension owes something, I think, to Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, as does my sense of the enduring relationship between marriage and bachelorhood, in which the two attempt to constitute themselves by a hierarchical differentiation from each other.

other) can make even modern readers uncomfortable. And while owing to Hawthorne’s reputation as a recluse their home life was collectively private from the world, when we examine the extensive domestic writings of this family, a privacy within their home emerges. Describing the daily routine of the couple just after they married, Herbert paraphrases Sophia:

Sophia rejoices when Nathaniel permits her the felicity of sitting silently in his company while he reads or writes. She herself struggles recurrently to paint, despite a besetting nervousness and drowsiness. More than once she cannot help interrupting her husband, without his permission, because she was ‘terribly homesick down stairs without him.’

Sophia is “homesick” in her own newlywed home! And what she is sick for is not her old home in Salem, but for her husband’s company – the other constituent of “home.” This reaction contrasts with Hawthorne’s frequent travels, which he clearly enjoyed, and which, as Lystra describes, left Sophia feeling anxious and sick. In his letters he tries to calm her down, obviously more comfortable being away from her than she from him.

As the passage quoted above suggests, Hawthorne isolated himself when he wrote, and the many houses the Hawthornes lived in had to accommodate this need. He even remembered his childhood workspace as a fundamental element of his nature: “If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed; and here I have been glad and hopeful, and here I have been...”

44 Herbert 149.
45 Lystra, Searching the Heart, 42-44.
despondent.” Despite protestations of “waste,” this lonely space is figured as enabling, or perhaps even generating, the kinds of emotions crucial to the authorial sympathy for which Hawthorne knew he was famous. Yet in truth this early isolation was a rewriting of the past; the room he refers to was in a house in Salem that the young Nathaniel shared with a great many relatives. The reimagining of it as isolated reveals that Hawthorne, like Irving, located the genesis of authorial authenticity in metaphorically isolated, internal spaces of composition.

But later in life Hawthorne took advantage of his ability to make this isolation real; generally he wrote on an entirely different level of the house from the rest of his family. Building his tower was both the emblem and the achievement of his desire for commanding isolation. As Hawthorne wrote in 1860 from their home “The Wayside” in Concord,

I have been very idle since my return to America, but am now meditating a new Romance, which ought to be the most elevated of my productions, since I shall write it in the sky-parlour of my new tower— which, however, is not quite as high as the tower of Monte Beni. In fact, it is a pine-built structure of very humble pretensions, and in good keeping with the old cottage to which it is attached.

Despite the punning about its elevation and the protestation of humility, Hawthorne was initially quite proud of his tower, and it featured prominently in tourist lore about the writers of Concord. The tower ideally should have added what Hawthorne’s

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47 Joris-Karl Huysmans’s A rebours (1884) dramatizes the relationship between domestic disunity and interior design, in the story of Des Esseintes’s encouragement of the dissolution of newlyweds. He foresees their separation “as soon as he learnt that his friend’s fiancée wanted to live on the corner of a newly constructed boulevard, in one of those modern flats built on a circular plan.” The personalities of the two people are insignificant, compared to the circumscribed possibilities for interior decoration and the “high words and squabbles” that would result. Des Esseintes is right, of course, and contemplates his victory in a reverie by the hearth. Huysmans, A rebours (New York: Dover, 1969 [1884]), 78-9.
contemporaries would have called “picturesqueness” to their home by approximating, as Hawthorne implies in his letter, the Italianate villa cottage. Andrew Jackson Downing claimed in his influential *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture* that the villa offered hopes for “the best and most complete manifestation of domestic architecture” for Americans, proclaiming in a voice that might have appealed to Hawthorne’s imagination, “Happy is he who lives this life of a cultivated mind in the country!” The house before the tower addition can be seen in figure 10. Despite adding picturesque irregularity, Hawthorne’s tower did not, apparently, achieve the romantic effect he (or his townsmen) would have desired (fig. 11). The locals did not think the tower was “in good keeping” with the house or the landscape, and eventually it even irritated Hawthorne – though more because it was expensive, drafty and ill-constructed than because it divided his home from within. Visiting writers like Melville and William Dean Howells, though, would make much of Hawthorne’s mechanisms for solitude within his own home, while stories were spread of visitors having seen Hawthorne fleeing from the back of the house after seeing them approach. This notion of Hawthorne lurking around the grounds fit well with the many scenes of intimacy set in the woodlands of Hawthorne’s novels, and a cabinet card from the second half of the nineteenth century shows a (probably apocryphal) “tree-house” associated with the Wayside, with the caption, “Hawthorne’s

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50 Sweeting, *Reading Houses*, 56. Downing believed that “romantic, irregular, and picturesque houses and grounds lead to feelings of heightened individuality and increased residential comfort. […] An architecture that devoted equal attention to gentle associations and individual expression inevitably accompanied this belief” (Sweeting, *Reading Houses*, 56).
Study, Concord, Mass." Reminiscent of Coverdale’s “Hermitage,” the tree-house image represents another example of the positioning of the author on high, and in this case, completely removed from the domestic sphere.

Why did Nathaniel Hawthorne go to the lengths he did to procure physical privacy? What did he have to hide from the wife he repeatedly professed oneness with, in phrases such as, “I feel as if my being were dissolved, and the idea of you were diffused throughout it”? As it turns out, Hawthorne kept many things from his wife; two secrets strike me as the most powerful examples for the purposes of this chapter. When Nathaniel died, Sophia was approached to edit a collected edition of his works. When she was asked about Fanshawe, she did not believe in its existence. Not only had Nathaniel personally suppressed the novel, asking for copies back from the friends he sent it to, but he had never breathed a word to his wife about his first major fiction. While less public, this is equally as stunning a silence as Whitman’s avoidance of the word “bachelor.” Yet in a sense, it is a similar silence: Fanshawe was a work from Nathaniel’s bachelor past, representing a myth of male autonomy that he would quickly learn to problematize. Keeping the novel secret from his wife helped Nathaniel represent himself as a natural genius to her, hiding a feeble first effort that, perhaps not coincidentally, lauds the bachelor ethos.

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52 In at least one contemporary article on Hawthorne's house, Nathaniel's attempt to synthesize authorial career and political preferment worked - his obtaining the custom-house position is described as a result of the literary subtlety of "Twice-Told Tales": "Bancroft, then Collector in Boston, prompt to recognize and to honor talent, made the dreaming story-teller a surveyor in the custom-house." Griswold et al, *Homes of American Authors*, 293.

Nathaniel got into the habit of reading his works to his wife before he sent them to his publishers. But in at least one case he made an exception: his campaign biography of Franklin Pierce. In Herbert’s words, Sophia “was stung when word arrived at the Wayside that Nathaniel’s biography of Pierce was in print. ‘It is rather too bad,’ she snapped, ‘that all the world should read it before I do.’”54 Though the Pierce campaign biography was written during his married years, Hawthorne’s connection with Pierce was forged during their college days at Bowdoin. The biography was an effort to tap the male politics of the day, and regardless of sales was one of Hawthorne’s most successful works; it got him the Custom-House post. With Fanshawe his silence was calculated to enhance the image of himself as genius that constituted a large part of his relationship with Sophia; with the Pierce biography the silence helped separate the domestic from the public life. As Herbert points out, Nathaniel also tried to prevent Sophia from learning the details about their financial situation and about his exact contractual obligations. For Hawthorne, then, privacy and secrecy were necessary to maintain his public self, but also a vision of the home as gendered.55

Did Sophia have privacy, or feel the need for it? Sophia Peabody came from a family full of intellectual women, and married late in life. She was by that time the author of a respected book on Cuba, written during a therapeutic stay there. There are intimations from her family that Sophia had a concept of self that perhaps accommodated

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54 Herbert 210; from the Hawthorne Family Notebook, September 8, 1852.
55 Recalling the moment in “The Birthmark” in which Georgiana discovers Aylmer and Aminadab creating male hierarchies, I think that reading may make sense here as well: Hawthorne’s concealment may have had something to do with the fact that the relationship with Pierce consummated in his biography and its publication was precisely not one of democratic manhood, but rather a give-and-take designed to result

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Nathaniel’s, but did not integrate it. Her sister Elizabeth suggested that their marriage was a union of “self-sufficing worlds,” rather than the romantic “diffusion” Nathaniel describes in his letters to Sophia.\footnote{Quoted in Herbert 188-9.} Herbert suggests that Hawthorne’s insistence that his wife keep a daily journal while he was gone was felt by Sophia to be an invasion at times, and shows convincingly the dissatisfaction that emerges in the journal at this act of unreciprocated revelation. But for Sophia and Nathaniel this was a new experience, and in a sense experiment, in domesticity; Sophia as time went on made attempts to integrate her husband’s privacy from her into her view of the world. She criticized both Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson for improperly understanding “true” marriage. When her sister (who appears to have been something of a troublemaker) proposed that the Emersons and the Hawthornes had comparable marriages, Sophia rebelled, charging Emerson with a profound lack of intimacy. So integral was this notion to her that, in her criticism of Fuller, marriage becomes the way in which women learn about their true selves:

If [Margaret Fuller] were married truly, she would no longer be puzzled about the rights of woman.... In perfect, high union there is no question of supremacy. Souls are equal in love and intelligent communion, and all things take their proper places as inevitably as the stars their orbits. Had there never been false and profane marriages, there would not only be no commotion about woman’s rights, but it would be Heaven here at once.\footnote{Quoted in Herbert 188-9.}

This platonic assertion illustrates the centrality of marriage in the Hawthornes’ minds, and the particular way in which intimacy was foundational for it. But Sophia’s comparison of marriage to heaven is a loaded and a self-undermining one – there is no

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\item in an inequality of power and dependence, on Hawthorne’s part – as he discovered later and argued with himself about in the Custom House piece.
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marriage in heaven, after all, so by the logic of this statement, marriage is both source of
and solution to the problem of woman’s rights and identity.

Thus the Hawthorne’s marriage itself appears to have been a constant test of the
dynamics of intimacy and privacy. That Sophia came to represent it to friends as a true
romance and Nathaniel came to represent it in more skeptical terms should appear as a
logical extension of the conflicts between the cultural value placed on intimacy and the
increasingly demanding perception that privacy was necessary for the success of the
“self.” Hawthorne often writes to Sophia asserting that he has “found nothing in the
world that I thought preferable to my own solitude, till at length a certain Dove was
revealed to me.”58 Yet once they were together, he retained that solitude in order, as he
imagined, to interact with a masculine public world.59

That Hawthorne’s vision of romantic marriage was not clearly in line with the
more general, developing notions of companionate marriage and complete identification
between spouses did not go unnoticed. Margaret Oliphant, reviewing Blithedale in 1855,
attempted to express her dissatisfaction with his model:

You may sneer at the commonplace necessity [of materialism], yet it is one; and it
is precisely your Zenobias and Hollingsworths, your middle-aged people, who
have broken loose from family and kindred and have no events in their life, who
do all the mischief, and make all the sentimentalisms and false philosophies in the
world. [...] Wise were the novelists of old, who ended their story with the
youthful marriage, which left the hero and the heroine on the threshold of the
maturer dangers of life, when fiction would not greatly aid them, but when the

57 Sophia wrote this to her mother. From Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife:
A Biography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 1:257.
58 Hawthorne, The Letters, 1813-1843, 494-495.
59 An extreme version of the inability to negotiate the contradictions among ideologies of privacy,
intellectual work, and sexuality can be found in the case of William Minor, told in Simon Winchester, The
Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary
There is a powerful collapsing of fiction and “reality” in this passage: Hawthorne’s characters are “middle-aged people,” while characters of the “novelists of old” are projected as needing “aid” from something other than “fiction.” And the force of this argument relies on its reader imagining that, in fact, fiction was essential to the creation of— or destruction of— very real home lives. And indeed, here the challenges to domesticity, while experienced emotionally, come from outside the home. I am arguing that ironically, it is this notion that Hawthorne sets up as a “sentimentalism” and a “false philosophy.” Hawthorne’s challenge, in fiction and in his house, was to negotiate the dialectic (as it appeared at the time, and may still) of genius and family. Critiquing both the Baconian male ideal and the cult of intimacy (which relied on the romantic materialism Oliphant demands above), Hawthorne reconstructed authorship by grounding it in a fictionalized, bachelor-like privacy that he was at pains to create in his lived environment. If his saleability—his authority—was grounded in the domestic romance, certainly Hawthorne suggested that volatility was the nature of domesticity. The difficulties of materialism and the problem of the romantic’s struggle with the world also form the central subject matter of Melville’s Pierre. Written when Melville himself was “on the threshold of the maturer dangers of life,” it proposed an even less optimistic version of the single life and of marriage than Hawthorne’s.

PRIVACY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN MELVILLE’S PIERRE

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Pierre, written in 1852 immediately after Moby Dick, is generally recognized as heightening Melville’s attack on Romanticism. Both novels bring together critiques of domesticity, masculine ideals, and the ocular authority of bachelor narrators. In the “mast-head” scene of Moby Dick, for example, as in Coverdale’s hotel-voyeurism, the usual authority of the panoptic sublime is uprooted. In a powerful inversion of Irving’s Geoffrey Crayon, who mused sublimely from the riggings of the ship he took to England to start The Sketch-Book, Melville’s Ishmael warns us that mast-head musings are in reality disorienting and dangerous. The undifferentiated landscape of the sea is more likely to prove confusing and to lead down disastrous philosophical paths, at a time and place in which awareness of one’s immediate physical environment is paramount. In general Melville’s choice to challenge narrative expectations, his “ambiguityizing,” as it has been called, is in large part dramatized on the stage of the formation of manly consciousness. The notion of the all-seeing, all knowing, solo masculine bachelor so close to the heart of Irving’s writings is a major target for Melville’s.

Robert K. Martin, in Hero, Captain, and Stranger, argues that Herman Melville engaged in a “life-long search for a way to repudiate the power-lust of Western man,” dramatizing in his works a set of human relationships that vie with power structures for control. This is a wonderful way of thinking about Melville’s projects, but it is worth remembering that Melville had some lusts of his own. Fundamentally suspicious of the


cultural freight of the bachelor – the character emblematic of cosmopolitan power-
mongery in “The Paradise of Bachelors” – as he was, Melville relied on the power of an 
imaginary bachelor like Ishmael both to sympathize with and to critique American 
culture. This paired critique of and fascination with the bachelor-genius myth extended 
to his suspicions about private and public space – hence the perversions of the family 
house in “I and My Chimney,” the invasions of privacy driven home time and again in 
Moby Dick, and most interestingly for the concerns of this chapter, the problematics of 
partnership in a domestic space in Pierre.63

Pierre begins with a family that is both the intimate ideal and a therapist’s City of 
Gold: Pierre and his mother. In the absence of his long-dead father, Pierre and his mother 
have come to refer to each other as brother and sister, two unmarried people living 
together “in one orbit of joy” – in part particularly because they are not hampered by 
“that climax which is so fatal to ordinary love” (37). The narrator leaves undetailed the 
precise nature of this always-fatal climax; it suggests some form of sexual, marital, and 
domestic coming together that erodes the mystery and dalliance of courtship. Pierre’s 
relationship with his mother is much like a courtship, and the woman he is (consciously) 
courting, Lucy Tartan, gives him a lesson in its fundamental mechanism. Exploring a 
strange distraction from which Pierre suffers – caused by his having encountered the

62 Martin, Hero, Captain, and Stranger: Male Friendship, Social Critique, and Literary Form in the 

63 Tara Penry has recently suggested that Melville’s alternative to the Romantic sensibility is not 
the hyper-masculine but rather the sentimental mode – which would align him more closely with Irving than 
with Hawthorne in his revision of authorial masculinity. She suggests, for example, that Pierre’s book 
reflects “his own fantasies of protective and literary masculinity, fantasies he has had to fashion on his own 
in lieu... of any adult hands extended in sentimental fellowship.” But one could argue that we are meant to 
think that these fantasies come from Pierre’s eighteenth-century reading, and are mocked in the narrative as 
unsustainable responses to a sudden need to participate in the authorial marketplace. Penry, “Sentimental 
and Romantic Masculinities,” 231.
beautiful, haunting Isabel, who eventually claims to be his sister—Lucy insists that he must completely reveal himself. “Thou must be a wholly disclosed secret to me,” she says (60). This is the romantic ethos in its essence: Pierre must remain a secret, but to others; wholly disclosed to Lucy, whether or not others know that she knows. Pierre resists, beginning a series of refusals to open his soul to the women that love him. His resistance, of course, creates a perceived subjective complexity, and Lucy thinks to herself, “I see layer on layer deeper in him” (61). As in many of his narratives, the first half of Pierre is difficult to interpret, so laced with irony is it in light of the end of the novel. But by the novel’s end, the angelic Lucy willingly foregoes normative domesticity to be with Pierre, even though he is supposedly married to Isabel. If we take this act seriously, it is an outrageous hyperbole of romantic affection. The earlier scene, then, which seems to show Pierre failing to participate in the virtuous ethos of sharing, in fact equally shows that ethos as distressingly idealistic: Pierre knows that if he speaks his mind, it will give a coherence to his affection for Isabel sure to ruin his hopes with Lucy.

Lucy also has a difficult challenge in competing with Isabel, because Isabel is a self-described mystery (155). Isabel gives Pierre some complexity by problematizing his purportedly pure aristocratic blood. Her mysterious origins, undetailed despite her prolonged, abstract account of them, give her a kind of spiritual impenetrability that mimics her physical impenetrability—she is Pierre’s ideal, both mate and model.

Pierre meets with Isabel and hears her story, her claim that she is the illegitimate daughter of his father. Immediately upon his returning to the house, his mother senses that he is no longer sharing his “self” with her—the technology of intimacy has worked to reveal emotional duplicity. But Pierre is unmoved; she futilely prays, “Pierre, unbosom. Smile not lightly upon my heavy grief. Answer, what is it, boy?” (159) Clearly more
upset that he has begun to dissemble than that he may have had an affair with a “poor and vile” girl, his mother demonstrates precisely the rigidity of bourgeois domestic virtue that Pierre is afraid to approach with his secret knowledge of his father’s possible philandering (159). Pierre’s difficulty with his father’s secret history and this pulling away from his mother-sister anticipates the necessary future of their relationship: Pierre must seek sexual intimacy outside the union, like his father. Thus his non-marriage intimacy recapitulates the married intimacy of his father and mother. The difficulty of intimate domesticity here revolves around the filial terms brother and sister, signifying both the uncomfortable eroticism between Isabel and Pierre and the shifting intimacy of Pierre and his mother. But where does Pierre get this resistance to categorical intimacy? Why does he constantly refuse to be a “wholly disclosed secret” to his potential female companions?

In one sense, he is just taking his mother’s advice. “Always think of your dear perfect father, Pierre,” she tells him (40). Pierre keeps his father – or at least, “a small portrait in oil, before which Pierre had many a time tranceedly stood” – in the closet (97). His mother hates this picture, so Pierre keeps it locked up, and they never talk about it. (His mother keeps a formal portrait of her husband from the “best and rosiest days of their wedding-union” in the drawing-room [108].) Pierre’s picture is of his father in his single days, “a brisk, unentangled, young bachelor, gayly ranging up and down in the world; light-hearted, and a very little bladish perhaps…” (97). A bachelor cousin captured the portrait by stealth in the big city, because the elder Pierre objected to sitting for one (and never saw the resulting picture). The narrator presents this open secret between mother and son with heavy irony (especially in light of the ensuing fracture over Pierre’s privacy): “Love is built upon secrets, as lovely Venice is built upon invisible and

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Incorruptible piles in the sea. Love’s secrets, being mysteries, ever pertain to the transcendent and the infinite” (107). The logic of intimate domesticity requires the eradication of the former self and its intimacies, be they male or female. But Pierre (whose father died when he was very young) is fascinated by his father’s former self. Staring at the portrait after learning that Isabel might be his illegitimate sister, he fantasizes about what his father’s message in the secret portrait might be:

In mature life, the world overlays and varnishes us, Pierre; the thousand proprieties and polished finenesses and grimaces intervene, Pierre; then, we, as it were, abdicate ourselves, and take unto us another self, Pierre; in youth we are, Pierre, but in age we seem. [...] I am your real father, so much the more truly, as thou thinkest thou recognizest me not, Pierre. (109)

This admonition suggests that the bachelor portrait represents the kernel of his father in late life, rather than a past self (as his mother, in tune with popular representations of bachelorhood as a stage of manhood, imagines).

Pierre, made uncomfortable by his father’s apparent unwillingess to follow his heart and marry Isabel’s mother (even though she was allegedly a “Frenchwoman” [108]), tries to eradicate this influence by burning the portrait in a Werter-esque gesture:

Steadfastly Pierre watched the first crispings and blackenings of the painted scroll, but started as suddenly unwinding from the burnt string that had tied it... the upwrithing portrait tormentedly stared at him in beseeching horror.... [...] “Henceforth, cast-out Pierre hath no paternity, and no past; and since the Future is one blank to all; therefore, twice-disinherited Pierre stands untrammeledly his ever-present self! – free to do his own self-will and present fancy to whatever end!” (232)

The damage is done, though, despite Pierre’s declaration that he enters an eternal present tense. The way in which Pierre carries out his quest for independence shows that he has already imbibed his father’s model of a complex, secretive, autonomous masculinity.

64 The beginning of the chapter “The Cousins” discusses this logic in some detail.
This masculine subjectivity, to situate it in terms of the discussion of Hawthorne’s Blithedale, combines the ideal autonomy of Bacon’s representative genius with the mysterious performative subjectivity that Coverdale felt he needed privacy to create. Pierre is convinced he has mastered the performative part of male selfhood – the mystery of Isabel and the mystery of their relationship (both between the two and the pair as seen from the outside – as Pierre exploits the question of the knowledge of intimacy) provide the complex interiority he seeks. The narrator foreshadows the explosion of this self-confidence in a vertiginous moment during Pierre’s preparations for their departure from his native town to the big city. Pierre stumbles metaphysically, while Melville’s prose stumbles rhetorically: “Then he staggered back upon himself, and only found support in himself. Then Pierre felt that deep in him lurked a divine unidentifiableness, that owned no earthly kith or kin. Yet was this feeling entirely lonesome, and orphan-like” (115). Melville is struggling to do two things at once here: he attempts to get at the heart of subjectivity – something “unidentifiable” and “lurking,” yet powerful enough to support a man, even though he has no idea what it is. He also tries to show the interconnectedness of the notions of subjectivity and self-made masculinity, especially in the mind of a poetical character like Pierre, for whom the impossibility of being “self-made” must be unimaginable. After all this is not all there is to masculinity, especially as modeled on his father (and his older relative the general, whose old army camp bed Pierre uses in the big city). Pierre must successfully negotiate his subjectivity and masculinity as an author in the urban marketplace, supporting the women he is “saving” – women who keep threatening (Isabel with her guitar lessons and Lucy with her sketches) to be better breadwinners than he is.
Physically and intellectually, Pierre satisfies almost any of his contemporaries’ requirements for masculinity; he is well-educated, muscular, and cultured – like Miles Coverdale after a few weeks’ work at Blithedale, Pierre is “a thoroughly developed gentleman” (38). He has published some poems and sketches, and plans to make money by publishing a “mature book,” as the narrator lamentingly describes it. To do this, he needs the privacy to write and an interiority that is capable of producing a readable fiction; these are things that Pierre, as a bachelor, should have already. The problem is that he is living as a married bachelor – in a sham marriage to Isabel, to cover up their bizarre domestic arrangements without exposing his father. (To make matters worse, in addition to the eventual arrival of Lucy, Pierre has also taken in Delly, a woman from his village shamed by unmarried pregnancy.) The effect of this plan is to foreclose Pierre’s chances of getting married; he will be an eternal bachelor:

Isabel, would... willingly become a participator in an act, which would prospectively and forever bar the blessed boon of marriageable love from one so young and generous as Pierre, and eternally entangle him in a fictitious alliance, which though in reality but a web of air, yet in effect would prove a wall of iron; for the same powerful motive which induced the thought of forming such an alliance, would always thereafter forbid that tacit exposure of its fictitiousness, which would be consequent upon its public discontinuance, and the real nuptials of Pierre with any other being during the lifetime of Isabel. (206)

Pierre’s old friend Charlie Millthorpe (a bachelor) lays out the common notions that predict Pierre’s inability to reconcile marriage and producing a mature work of fiction:

Well, I suppose it is wise after all. It settles, centralizes, and confirms a man, I have heard.—No, I didn’t; it is a random thought of my own, that!—Yes, it makes the world definite to him; it removes his morbid subjectiveness, and makes all things objective; nine small children, for instance, may be considered objective. Marriage, hey!—A fine thing, no doubt, no doubt: the world, my boy! By marriage, I might contribute to the population of men, but not to the census of mind. The great men are all bachelors, you know. Their family is the universe: I should say the planet Saturn was their elder son; and Plato their uncle.—So you are married? (318)
Though Melville is clearly making fun of the stance articulated by Bacon in the epigraph to this chapter and the connection I have emphasized as the fundamental residual attraction of the bachelor myth, Pierre seduces himself with it just the same, as much as he seduces himself with the idea of the women who follow him. 65 It is through Pierre's "morbid subjectiveness," which constitutes Pierre's authorial substance and motivation, that Melville mocks the Kantian terms of subjectivity and objectivity. Pierre is torn between the seduction of making a grand moral contribution, which seems to require autonomy, and the effeminate domesticity of a shared life with first his mother and then Isabel.

Much of the last third of the book focuses on this shared life with Isabel, and in particular on the physical domestic arrangements they make to accommodate Pierre's chosen career. Pierre, Isabel, Delly, and eventually Lucy all live in four chambers of a converted church known as the Church of the Apostles, which is filled with the petty intellectuals and impoverished clerks of the city (all bachelors, enhancing the ironic comparison with a monastery).

In a spectacular inversion of the presumed continuity between bachelorhood and panoptic authority, the Apostles are overseen, literally and figuratively, by an elusive intellectual character known as Plotinus Plinlimmon. (Plinlimmon's name itself evokes the heights of Plinlimmon Mountain in Wales, long a popular subject for landscape writers.) Pierre is never introduced to this "master," but through his own dirty window

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65 Hollingsworth could also be seen as a dramatization of this myth; like Pierre, he is metaphysically married to two women. Equally, as he points out to Coverdale at the conclusion of Blithedale, he has never built his reformatory, having been "busy with a single murderer" (287).
sees Plinlimmon’s face staring from his room in the church tower, peering at the Apostles’ quarters below:

Now as to the mild sun, glass is no hindrance at all, but he transmits his light and life through the glass; even so through Pierre’s panes did the tower face transmit its strange mystery. [...] By and by the blue-eyed, mystic-mild face in the upper window of the old gray tower began to domineer in a very remarkable manner upon Pierre. When in his moods of peculiar depression and despair; when dark thoughts of his miserable condition would steal over him; and black doubts as to the integrity of his unprecedented course in life would most malignantly suggest themselves; when a thought of the vanity of his deep book would glidingly intrude; if glancing at his closet-window that mystic-mild face met Pierre’s; under and of these influences the effect was surprising, and not to be adequately detailed in any possible words.

Vain! vain! vain! said the face to him.... (330-1)

The “tower face” (Plinlimmon’s) is the panoptic gaze, turned on Pierre’s privacy, making him feel guilty and encouraging him to self-mockery at his lack of self-discipline.

Covering his window gives the gaze even more power: “Pierre knew that still the face leered behind the muslin. What was most terrible was the idea that by some magical means or other the face had got hold of his secret. ‘Ay,’ shuddered Pierre, ‘the face knows that Isabel is not my wife! And that seems the reason it leers”’ (332). The face behind the muslin echoes as well the face on canvas of his father’s portrait, which went from being an object to being part of Pierre’s subjective world by being “burned” onto it.

Pierre struggles to maintain his privacy within the apartments, too. “The three chambers of Pierre at the Apostles’ were connecting ones,” and Pierre’s writing-room with the window is the inmost and coldest. As Hawthorne and, as we will see, Melville did, Pierre locks himself away from the women of the house, though the clothes he has to wear to keep warm while writing almost completely immobilize him. Isabel wants to leave her door open so the heat can get to him, but “Pierre would not listen to such a thing: because he must be religiously locked up while at work; outer love and hate alike

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must be excluded then. In vain Isabel said she would make not the slightest noise, and muffle the point of the very needle she used. All in vain. Pierre was inflexible here” (337). This controvery is reminiscent of contemporary approaches to heating advocated in popular domestic architecture books by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Downing, and others. On the one hand, these writers and designers argued that the fireplace and the circulation of heat inspired the gathering of family and the sharing of ideas in the intimate home. Yet at the same time, reformers tended to encourage – at least for literary types – the construction of libraries with their own external entrances “so that his comings and goings would not disturb the rest of the family” (or, as was as likely the case, vice-versa).66 Pierre’s chamber and his practice of isolation get caricatured in the novel as emblematic of the failure of the old-style philosophical bachelor ethos to prepare one for the modern literary marketplace – his writing room is his “fatal closet” (389).

Pierre succeeds in creating his autonomy, yet in succeeding too well, it achieves him nothing. If Irving argued that the freedoms of bachelorhood could be used to create a productive sympathy, Melville questions the potential of this mode to prevent total isolation in an urban world: “Pierre, nevertheless, in his deepest, highest part, was utterly without sympathy from any thing divine, human, brute, or vegetable. One in a city of hundreds of thousands of human beings, Pierre was solitary as at the Pole” (380). His inscrutability is intact; as Isabel warns with her final words as she joins Pierre in suicide, “All’s o’er, and ye know him not!” (405) The use of the present tense is important here; what is important is not that we did not know him, but that we will always not be knowing Pierre. He has succeeded in mystifying his peers, yet as readers we do not feel

66 Clark, Jr., The American Family Home, 114. Catherine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe,
that there was any thing to know—like Priscilla’s, Pierre’s subjectivity has no content but form. Pierre’s final gesture seems as empty as Miles Coverdale’s; his is the same kind of self-construction that provoked Hollingsworth to insist that “Miles Coverdale is not in earnest, either as a poet or a laborer” (95).

The question Melville poses here about masculinity might be phrased this way: why is it that Pierre’s father survives his youthful dalliances, and Pierre does not? Melville’s answer is not easy to pin down. On one level, he ironizes the romantic notion described by Lystra as the dominant courting mode of the nineteenth century. In this critique, subjectivity and a complex reaction to social contingency are the best responses to social experience. Pierre fails to respond to his emotions, instead succumbing to the ideals of romantically saving women and fulfilling family obligations; this sends him down the spiral to prison and suicide. On the other hand, that emotional complexity is framed as pejorative by Pierre’s inability to transform it into artistic labor (in the form of writing). Lucy’s emotional purity is praised as a higher ideal, and Pierre’s most open affective responses are generally the most productive. Pierre preserves the old-style masculinity of his father, who mystified his bachelorhood in order to create a married persona, and suffers for it; the sympathetic persona he creates fails because it is created in the image of his father before his “fall”. Pierre dies celibate, having victimized himself with the reproductive ideology of married intimacy. To set this conclusion in the larger context of my argument, then, it seems that while privacy and performance are as central to Pierre’s selfhood as to Coverdale’s, the compatibility of authorial genius with domestic

intimacy is even less likely. The married bachelor cannot even get married literally, and
the unmarried bachelor cannot get published, cannot turn authorship into authority.

Reviewers were less appalled by the domestic perversities in Melville’s novel than
they were by his insinuation that, in the words of Evert Duyckinck, the “moral of the
story... seems to be the impracticability of virtue.” 67 They did claim that Melville was
not capable of handling domestic scenes as well as he did nautical ones - of leaving
behind the subjects of “the forecastle and the virgin forest, for the drawing room and
modest boarding-house chamber.” 68 But the reviewers treat Melville’s rendering of the
domestic as a formal issue, and his depiction of virtue as a moral or political one. As I
have argued, masculine virtue and domesticity were dark twins for Melville. Reviewers
resorted to typifying Melville’s characters as “mad” or insane (most of the contemporary
reviews used these terms at least once) because they failed to see Pierre’s behavior as a
critique of the way in which notions of “virtue” had come to depend upon familial bonds
that had to be enacted in private domestic spaces. The “closest and holiest bond” Pierre
has learned from his mother as a model of the family is the one he applies to “saving”
Isabel; his book indict both the drawing room and the boardinghouse chamber as zones
for the production of social and sexual relationships more ambiguous than harmonious.

Because Melville refuses to synthesize domesticity and subjective interiority, his
readers lack a vision of accommodation; we see no potential arrangement that balances
authentic earnestness with familial happiness. If Melville is earnest about his mockery of
the publishing world, then Pierre’s persistence is heroic, at least on one level – though the

67 Evert A. Duyckinck, Literary World 280 (21 Aug. 1852), 118-20; republished in Brian Higgins
and Hershel Parker, ed., Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995),
430.
product of a twisted domestic life and a suicidal autonomy. Pierre's early productions (Coverdale-esque, perhaps), written in the happy domestic situation in which he and his mother refer to each other as brother and sister and act like married people, are mocked as shallow, as "puffs," even by Pierre.

Melville's struggles with fame and his fears for Pierre no doubt are at work here. As Melville's biographers have pointed out, Pierre draws in many ways on Melville's life, and in particular on his experiences with the composition and reception of Moby Dick. As a minor example, the narrator's description of "how Isabel herself in the otherwise occupied hours of Pierre, passed some of her time in mastering the chirographical incoherencies of his manuscripts, with a view to eventually copying them out in a legible hand for the printer" describes precisely the role Melville's sister Augusta took in preparing Herman's manuscripts (321). Disappointed by bad sales of Moby Dick and the consequent shallowness of the Harpers' offer for Pierre, Melville revised the manuscript, making Pierre turn to authorship for survival in the city; this effort justifies the vindictive satire of the literary marketplace in the "Young America in Literature" section. Other issues, ongoing from the start of Melville's own decision to become an author, resonate with Pierre's tropic nests of space, vision, and privacy.

MELVILLE'S LIFE: TOWER AND CHIMNEY


69 See Parker's introduction to his reconstruction of the pre-angst Pierre in Pierre, or The Ambiguities: The Kraken Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1995). Priscilla Wald situates Pierre's dramatization of the tension between autonomy and the requirements of publicity in the context of what she...
As in the case of Hawthorne, the problematics of domestic space, intimacy, and authorial privacy emerge significantly both in *Pierre* and in the circumstances of Melville’s marriage. Melville was a relative newlywed when he published *Pierre* in 1852, having married Elizabeth Shaw of Boston less than five years earlier. Immediately after their honeymoon, Melville not yet having established himself as an author capable of supporting a house alone, the two moved in with Herman’s brother and his new wife, their mother, four sisters, occasionally their youngest brother Tom, and at least one servant. The house, in the middle of New York City, was large, but the occupants were many. The family, however, went out of the way to create a separate room in which Herman could write. Elizabeth helped enhance this privacy by cleaning the room in the morning, while Herman was out walking, so that he could work uninterrupted as long as he pleased upon his return. Still, the work-room was in a suite with the newlyweds’ bedroom; the circuit of authorial labor and domestic intimacy – the topic dominating *Pierre* – was very short. Even before he was married, Herman’s mother made exceptions for his potential career by creating space in one of the formerly public rooms for a study. This did not work; Melville was uncomfortable in his mother’s home, ended up traveling frequently, and disliked living in New York. He only seemed to be settling down when he made the family (minus his brother and his brother’s wife) move to the Berkshires, into a new home, named Arrowhead.70

It was at Arrowhead (where they lived from 1850 until 1863) that Melville wanted to build his tower. He had gotten the idea of returning to his family’s old stomping

calls national narrative, and in particular the Young America literary cabal, in *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995)
grounds when on a visit to his spinster aunt Priscilla. She wrote to his family about his visit, 

I am really sorry that Herman has been disappointed in his plans for passing the time during his short stay with us—especially since he has manifested so much constancy toward the object of his first Love our Berkshire farm—as to tear himself from the idol of his heart to indulge again in the unfetter'd freedom of Batchelor days—but his appearance in our midst, gave us an agreeable surprise & we have enjoyed the opportunity for enquiring into each others welfare & prospects & a mutual interest is raised in our hearts—he has drawn for us, a pleasing picture of your family arrangements.71

Priscilla's letter is polite, but we can read irony in her comment on the "pleasing picture" he drew of New York, given Melville's hasty (and expensive) move to Massachusetts shortly thereafter. Before the house was even completely set up, Melville set to work, as his wife recalled "under unfavorable circumstances," finishing Moby Dick. The unfavorable circumstances were many, and included the continued presence of a large part of his family and the dissatisfaction of his wife with her new rural surroundings. (Elizabeth was not happy in New York, either; there was non-stop visiting and the physical latitude of middle-class women within the city was not as great, as she experienced it, as in her home town of Boston.)

There was also some conflict over the physical layout at Arrowhead—it contained an enormous chimney at the center of the house. This was "an arrangement so totally devoid of grace & beauty," as Augusta described it in 1850, that there were disagreements over whether or not to alter the interior.72 The story "I and My Chimney," mentioned earlier, is in part an amplified and euphemistic version of this domestic conflict. Though

70 For this story, told in painful detail, see Parker, Herman Melville: A Biography, chapters covering the years 1847-1850.
71 Priscilla Gansevoort to Augusta Melville, 1848; quoted in Parker, Herman Melville: A Biography, 594.
clearly tongue-in-cheek, the story depicts, on at least one level, a gender struggle for control of the house. The narrator, whose obsession with protecting the house as it stands leads him to become a completely non-productive recluse, clings to the labyrinthine architecture caused by the central chimney. The women in his house, led by his wife, want to convert it to a completely public space – a central receiving hall. With an enormous phallic object as its fulcrum, the boundaries of the debate become as much sex as gender, the narrator identifying himself and the chimney as one body, protecting the impenetrable authenticity of his house from the women who would make it conventionally attractive, public, penetrable. The reader’s sympathies are engaged on behalf of the chimney; we are interpellated as more sincere, yet more nostalgic than the women of the house. But the story’s end, which depicts a rather paranoid, obsessive narrator refusing even to leave his house, seems to undermine that sympathy. Again, as with Hawthorne’s fiction and as with Pierre, a desire for a masculine version of domesticity that can create (or preserve) a seemingly authentic self comes into conflict with the ideal of intimate partnership.

Far from removing the chimney, Herman contemplated adding the further imbalance of a tower to Arrowhead, that could serve as his writing-space. But Melville gave in to the needs of the female laborers in the house. Needing to make some additions to the house to accommodate modern kitchen and laundry needs, and already deeply in debt by that time, Melville put off the tower – and it never materialized. What is striking about Melville in the long run is not so much that he came to despair about his domestic arrangements as that he kept tinkering with them for so long. While in England,

72 Augusta Melville quoted in Parker, Herman Melville: A Biography. 788.
attempting to sell his fourth book to a publisher, Melville kept a journal of his travels, and frequently described his living and dining arrangements. He returned time and again to cozy bars and inns, where late at night he could smoke, drink, and think in relative quiet. As he recorded it in his journal, the young author had a splendid time in this environment, including “Elm Court, Temple,” where his later tour-de-force attack on bachelorhood, “The Paradise of Bachelors” and “The Tartarus of Maids” (1855), would be set. For Melville as for Hawthorne, the imagined world of authorial production was a masculine one. In part their dilemma was precipitated by the increasing number of female consumers of literary productions. Writing at home – unless carefully regulated – brought the two worlds of public authority and intimate pleasure (whether of reading or of sexuality) into uncomfortably close contact. But certainly the attractive tensions embodied in the bachelor stance at a time when the inescapably intimate middle-class marital ethos was rising precipitated a dramatic narrative struggle with privacy and invasion, with intimacy and authority.

CONCLUSION

Works by Hawthorne and his fellow tower-dreamer Melville revise the bachelor authorities of the past and question rational masculinity, even as they dramatize shifts in the kind of social surveillance performed within the novel and by the novel as a popular form. The bachelor was a narratological site for working out problems with both domesticity and subjectivity; Pierre, Blithedale, and other fictions by Hawthorne and

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73 Melville quoted in Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography*, 685.
Melville use this figure to make a claim about the inextricable, awful intimacy of performance and privacy. Authorship and genius become in these men’s works a product of particular masculinities. Thus subjectivity – the payload of masculinity and the justification for social power – is a product not merely of historical context or imaginative experience, but of a self-conscious negotiation of the two, against whatever boundaries we try to construct between those notions. The deeply reflexive nature of both these writers and their texts, particularly in their representations of domesticity, point us to a larger sense of individuals “authoring” themselves, in uneven ways, in history.

Hawthorne’s tower propped up a powerful myth of inscrutability that endured after his death. Decades of tourists and historical reconstructions have furthered Hawthorne’s work of negotiating his public identity through a private mysteriousness that he had cultivated within the home as well as outside it. And as other men of Hawthorne’s era grew up, learning the intertwined technologies of masculinity, economics, and distinction, many encountered as much tension as comfort in the ideal of romantic intimacy. But it was as authors, men who worked at home for “public” ends, that these two men encountered the tangle of character and intimacy. As with Whitman and Irving, questions about the relationships between the fictional versions of masculinity posed in these men’s stories are made more urgent by the facts of their daily lives; Melville drew extensively on his own life for content, and Hawthorne’s negotiation of privacy and intimacy resonates with his re-vision of the bachelor type. Bachelorhood was seductive, and its ready privacy – its coziness – make Coverdale a not wholly objectionable narrator; in a sense, we may say that Hawthorne, at least, attempted in his career to “pass” for a bachelor.
For Hawthorne the family was a haven, but one maintained by constant struggle and negotiation. His notion of this tension was shaped by his own demand for privacy within his family and by his attempt to create a comprehensively inscrutable subjectivity for the world. To the outside world, the Hawthornian family had to be difficult to enter. Priscilla's purses, as described in *Blithedale*, serve as a metaphor for both the family and subjectivity: "Their peculiar excellence, besides the great delicacy and beauty of the manufacture, lay in the almost impossibility that any uninitiated person should discover the aperture; although, to a practised touch, they would open as wide as charity or prodigality might wish" (58). Family and individual character must be carefully wrought, yet in a way that is self-evident, so that all can see the "beauty of the manufacture." The bourgeois secret was essential to protecting the reproductive machinery of class culture, yet also to creating a self that was richly layered enough to negotiate the shifting discursive territory on which the boundaries of class were enacted.

But Priscilla and her purses also suggest that an interdependency of genders underlay the production of male subjectivity. Priscilla and Sophia labor to produce the family's "cover," but also represent foils for the privacy of the man trying to imagine himself as a purely self-made actor. Sitting up over her husband's dead body, Sophia Hawthorne wrote a poem:

In the most retired privacy it was the same as in the presence of men.  
The sacred veil of his eyelids he scarcely lifted to himself.  Such an unviolated  
sanctuary as was his nature, I his inmost wife never conceived nor  
knew....  
To me — himself—even to me that was himself in unity—He was to the last the  
ohly of holies beyond the cherubim....  
A tenderness so infinite—so embracing—that God's alone could surpass it.
It folded the loathsome leper in as soft a caress as the child of his home affections.\textsuperscript{74}

Sophia here rewrites their physical privacy as a partnership, but acknowledges a kind of spiritual privacy as well – for what could it mean to be the “inmost” wife? She concedes a separation while trying to insist on an amalgam; Sophia claims both to know that Nathaniel was the same in “the presence of men” as at home, yet also that she “never conceived” his true nature. Her husband’s “home affections” are here even extended to the public tragedy of leprosy as much as to his own children, in an “infinite” emotionality that jars with most accounts of Hawthorne’s social personality. Our conclusion can only be that for all his tenderness, what Hawthorne shared with “men” and with the “leper” was only riddles about his interiority. In her editing of his notebooks, Sophia would take up the role Hawthorne had maintained in negotiating his public identity through a private mysteriousness that he had cultivated within the home as well as outside it. But in that sense, she because the final authority: that is, another way of looking at Sophia might be to say that she created her own space of privacy within the Hawthorne home – a mutual dynamic of unstatedness, a codependency of privacies, a more interesting figuration of their necessarily productive relationship. She did not, after all, want to be an ideal housewife, and she wasn’t; and without downplaying her struggles or the pain recorded in journals filled with accounts of her headaches, in her work after Nathaniel’s death we could say that her forced privacy ultimately became a source of a private subjectivity – one that this poem shows going public. It is not saying too much to re-read this poem as, far from wishing Nathaniel back, recording a feeling of catharsis: a variation, perhaps, on Emily Dickinson’s letter to the world that never wrote to her. “To me – himself—even to

\textsuperscript{74} Quoted in Herbert, 278.
me that was himself in unity” raises almost to explicitness the fact that if Sophia and Nathaniel were one, it is she who now authors him, unregulated by having to run her text — or her self — against the litmus test of his affective response. It is Sophia, we may project, who pulls the curtain shut to end Coverdale’s gaze from the hotel window, helping create the subject as an object of desire. An author herself, and an engaged, passionate reader of her husband’s work, Sophia’s chronic headaches themselves perhaps represented a prolonged effort to suppress her own subjectivity. Sophia and Priscilla share the effort to create themselves with “delicacy and beauty,” like Priscilla’s purses, yet also like them, to appear to serve only as gatekeepers and vessels. While I have been arguing that masculine subjectivity involved a protracted effort, crafting a public complexity and assuaging private anxieties, it was a struggle that relied on female labor. It was hard work to create the abbreviated, supposedly “natural” sympathies that delimited female subjectivity, work that overlapped with hard physical labor in creating and maintaining the “domestic sphere.” That sphere was essential to creating a saleable male self, an authoritative self, since domestic intimacy represented both a threat and a solution to the problem of male privacy.

The tragic domesticity that Hawthorne and Melville present also distracts, for example, from the fact that romantic intimacy was considered a powerful tool by reformers. Abby Morton Diaz, a well-known Boston feminist, saw companionate, romantic marriage as essential to the success of her ideals, writing in 1875 that “a sympathetic couple are to such a degree one that a pleasure which comes to either singly can only be half enjoyed, and even this half-joy is lessened by the consciousness of what
the other is losing.” The innate quality of “sympathy” for each other, in this sense, leads a couple to the more active, cognitive involvement of “consciousness.” Both feminists and the two writers discussed here critiqued their contemporaries’ expectations and uses of domesticity, but for writers like Diaz, marriage could generate a shared subjectivity—not merely inhibit the development of a male one.

The problem, put differently, was that property and privacy did not ensure manhood. Masculinity was subjectivity—that is, they were inseparable as something men imagined themselves trying to achieve. A man of “character” needed to be able to demonstrate both public competency and private complexity. The bachelor faced a dilemma. If subjectivity became the standard for personal ascendency, for the “self”-assurance necessary to independent competition in the marketplace, then masculinity, which in its incarnation as bachelorhood guaranteed genius and rationality, could only be sustained by a bachelor with a private place and an independent, but public, self. In Hawthorne’s fictions the masculine self is necessarily conflicted, because privacy and “great enterprises” are incompatible. That Hawthorne became restless in his tower and that Melville never built his must have powerfully corroborated this notion for the two men. Thus, if this chapter began with the jovial bachelor Coverdale, it ends with a melancholy one, Ishmael, in a telling nineteenth-century volley to Bacon’s earlier idealization of the bachelor. Speaking during “A Squeeze of the Hand,” perhaps Melville’s most harmonious domestic scene, Ishmael tells us he is resigned:

For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable

felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side; the country....

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CHAPTER THREE

THE ART-WORK OF MANHOOD: TROMPE L’OEIL STILL LIFE AND DOMESTIC SELVES

"[A]rt forms generate and regenerate the very subjectivity they pretend only to display. Quartets, still lifes, and cockfights are not merely reflections of a preexisting sensibility analogically represented; they are positive agents in the creation and maintenance of such a sensibility. . . . It is in such a way, coloring experience with the light they cast it in, rather than through whatever material effects they may have, that the arts play their role, as arts, in social life.” (Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”)

[Fig. 12: John Haberle, A Bachelor’s Drawer]

“Isn’t it Thackeray who defines a gentleman as ‘one having high aims?’ Coloring meerschaums and ogling chorus-girls aren’t exactly ‘high aims’; are they, my laddie?” (Frank Chaffee, Bachelor Buttons)

My focus shifts in two ways in this chapter. First, in continuing to develop the genealogy of “bachelor” in the United States, my discussion moves to the end of the nineteenth century. In the first chapter, the figure of the bachelor emerged at the center of debates about authorship, the family, and politics in the early nineteenth century. Irving’s turn to the bachelor mediated a potentially dangerous, undemocratic identity, positioning him as an ideal social commentator despite his new republican context. In the second chapter, I
discussed the ways in which the Irvingesque bachelor, as a figure for negotiating popular authorship, was challenged at midcentury. Melville and Hawthorne problematized the authority of both the bachelor and the intimate family. Yet they clung to residual ideals of masculine authority – a sense that the author’s powers of supervision were both a masculine province and difficult to achieve from within the heteronormative domesticity being imagined and prescribed by their culture. By the end of the nineteenth century, the urban domestic landscape had changed. Among the major factors that altered the parameters within which the figure of the bachelor could function were ethnic immigration, the expansion and reconfiguration of manufacturing, Reconstruction, migration, the decreasing size of the middle-class family, and the emergence of mass print culture. Accompanying these major shifts were changes in the way privacy and publicity worked for individuals, in the ways men could perform masculinity, and in the spaces and rhetorics of performing gendered selfhood. It is these changes that I turn to in this final chapter.

The particular challenges of negotiating an increasingly urban, increasingly visual world spur the second shift in my focus, to the visual realm. From the themes and techniques of scopic power in the literary realm discussed in the previous chapters, I move to a discussion of the marketplace of the visual: painting, interior decoration, and gendered domesticity. Issues of visuality and identity were worked out in fascinatingly different ways in the art world, which found itself competing with a rapidly developing set of new visual technologies and leisure activities. The art market, broadly defined, asked some different things of artists than did the marketplace for fiction; manly creation in painting was associated with a different kind of creativity and subjectivity. At the same time, the productive conditions of life as a painter and as a writer – and the way the

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bachelor myth appealed to anxieties about a man's productivity - paralleled each other in many ways.

The two quotations and image that start this chapter outline the specific problem I take up here. Geertz is trying to get at the ways, apart from the more apparently deterministic structures of economy and material life in which it necessarily functions, that art creates and maintains, or as he puts it, colors, subjectivity. Still life paintings, for example, do not merely show us the daily life of things. They create a personal kind of relationship with us, evoking a set of experiences that seem to be uniquely ours - based paradoxically on a depiction of objects that are common to all. John Haberle's painting A Bachelor's Drawer (1890-94; fig. 12) evokes the sentimental side of the single male life, with its accumulation of the evidence of male experience: theatre tickets, chorus-girl cards, cigar-box lid, pipe. Certainly this painting could have generated and helped to define the kind of subjective experience to which Geertz refers.

Yet the final quotation, from Frank Chaffee's 1892 essay collection Bachelor Buttons, points back to the difficulty that subjectivity posed for nineteenth-century men in the United States. Haberle's still life makes reference to a self-conscious act of subjective contemplation and leisure; like Chaffee's speaker, it suggests that we all know about a certain nostalgic, mildly rakish bachelor life of leisure. And Chaffee's interlocutor points out that the always-present other component of subjectivity is the public world of greatness, high aims, even international fame (suggested by the reference to Thackeray). Geertz's formulation - "coloring experience" - might merely be "coloring meerschaums," the residue of unsubstantial consumption. That is, moments of reverie and indulgence are linked inextricably both to accusations of laziness and to the ideal conditions of aesthetic appreciation, of learning about the world. The material, economic
implications of the painting are at work even in the most intimate moments we spend with it. As this dilemma was phrased in chapter Two, men wanted to be subjective in order to have depth of character, yet objective in order to be authorities. In this chapter I turn my attention to still life paintings of masculine scenes as a way of exploring how the negotiation of the domestic realm – the relationship between a man’s labor and his leisure – posed ideological challenges to single men at the end of the nineteenth century.¹

The paintings of American manhood that leap to mind from this time period, though, may not be still lifes. Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, Frederic Remington, and other artists depicted a rugged, outdoor male life in images that have come to emblematize their era’s idealization of a strenuous white masculinity. Like the writers discussed in the previous chapters, these artists maintained a public image of their personal lives that encouraged audiences to draw connections, even causal ones, between the ascetic, sometimes iconoclastic private life and works of virility and genius. Sarah Burns, who has written extensively about Homer, puts it this way:

Ostensibly detached from worldly affairs, Homer achieved a nearly perfect mesh of artistic sensibility and creativity with the masculine, risky, all-American world of big, swashbuckling business enterprise, equally a masquerade in its way, but essential to sustaining an indispensable myth of heroic individualism.²

¹ As Robert Nelson pointed out to me, the idea of marriage could hide the fact that the ideological complexities of balancing gender, class, and public life were not resolved by marriage itself. Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” Daedalus 101 (1972), 28; Chaffee, Bachelor Buttons (New York: Allen, 1892), 86. On masculine objectivity and images, see David Lubin, Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996), esp. 310.
² Burns, Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), 217. Burns expands this argument elsewhere to argue for Homer’s synthesis of gender and realism, his masculinity bracing New England’s flagging reputation as the lifeblood of the nation: “In his hands, the New England of such artists as Eastman Johnson – archaic, nostalgic, bucolic, and domestic – became a place for the metaphorical renewal of the masculine energies necessary to not only maintain the social and cultural order of a changing America, but also fuel American progress, prosperity, and expansion.” Burns, “Revitalizing the ‘Painted-Out’ North: Winslow Homer, Manly Health, and New England Regionalism in Turn-of-the-Century America,” American Art, 9:2 (Summer 1995), 22-23.
Burns goes on to suggest that Homer's paintings evoked the "perilous seas of finance" for fin-de-siècle American men; they portrayed the difficulties of surviving in the business world. In Homer's *The Fog Warning* (1885; fig. 13), for example, men could see their own difficulties negotiating a market that seemed as much a force of nature as an invention of man, identifying with the plight of the fisherman who has made his catch but may not reach land with it. The "language of power" and themes of force in the series of paintings Homer made at Prout's Neck attracted notice, Burns argues, for their dramatization of individual struggle and triumph in the marketplace during a time of wild economic fluctuations. The boundaries between commerce and this imagery of lone seafaring masculinity were even more permeable than Burns depicts them; a *Cosmopolitan* soap advertisement from 1902 shares many of the same compositional elements as *The Fog Warning*, and may indeed be inspired in part by it (fig. 14).

Certainly Eakins, too, in his sporting pictures, depicted a series of more overt contests between men. Since Elizabeth Johns's compelling examination of Eakins in his social context, critics have been interested in the way in which Eakins's rowing pictures participated in a culture of male fitness and sporting competition. His later boxing pictures depicted what was in some ways the quintessential masculine contest: physical, one-on-one, public fighting. And again, by focusing on a single fighter in these pictures — *Salutat* (1898) for example — the struggle of the lone male for success and recognition seems to be emphasized (fig. 15). Though their images differ in style and setting, Homer

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3 Burns, *Inventing*, 191, 199.
The use of this wonderful cleanser throughout the entire household not only ensures perfect cleanliness but also ensures freedom from the danger of infectious diseases. Lifebuoy is a sanitary disinfectant soap which can be used everywhere the same as ordinary soap.

Five cents at dealer's, or by mail, two cakes ten cents
ILLUSTRATED BOOKLET, "THE GREATEST LIFE SAVER," FREE
LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, 110 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK

Figure 14. Lifebuoy Soap advertisement. From The Cosmopolitan 33:6 (October 1902).
Figure 15. Thomas Eakins, *Salutat*, 1898. Oil on canvas, 127.3 x 101.6 cm. Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA., anonymous donor.
and Eakins appear to have tapped into and extended the same myth of manhood. Like Burns, Martin Berger sees Eakins, particularly in his rowing pictures, depicting “an evolution from a community in which individuals, supervised by elders, work together for the common good, to a society in which men strike out on their own for personal fulfillment.” And as Eakins’s friend Sadakichi Hartmann protested, using the critical metaphors for aestheticism that increasingly blurred the boundaries between character and style, only the works of Eakins and Homer countered “the lack of rough, manly force and the prevailing tendency to excel in delicacy.”

Yet recent scholarship on these painters has revealed some new contours in their visions of ideal male sociality or the possibilities for masculinized identities. Eakins, for example, turns out to have been a very complex character with regard to gender. According to a number of critics, he may have been working into his paintings both what appeared to be a heteromasculine ideal and the resonances of a homosexual signifying practice nascent in his culture. Whitney Davis has pointed to the dialectic of revelation and concealment of homosexual desire in Eakins’s construction of Swimming (1885; fig. 16), a painting that at least ostensibly depicts not only a masculine world of shared physical experience but a non-competitive one as well. Certainly, too, Eakins’s “heroic” male figures are not always strenuous; they are often scholarly. Saul E. Zalesch’s work on Homer suggests that Homer’s paintings and the engravings made after them may have

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5 Berger, Man Made, 13. Berger here suggests, as does Whitney Davis in his analysis of The Swimming Hole, that the companionship behind the scenes in Eakins’s studio was erased from the big pictures once they were finished – this chapter will argue that it is still there in important ways that would have been visible to nineteenth century Americans. Whitney Davis, “Erotic Revision in Thomas Eakins’s Narratives of Male Nudity,” Art History 17:3 (Sept. 1994): 301-341.

6 From Hartmann’s A History of American Art (1902), quoted in Berger, Man Made, 8.
Figure 16. Thomas Eakins, *Swimming (The Swimming Hole)*, 1885. Oil on canvas, 69.5 x 92.4 cm. Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX.
sent different messages about the marketplace and labor, complicating the idea that his pictures were unadulterated advertising for masculine modernity.⁸ And the nostalgia that marks still life painting so noticeably is subtly at work in hunting pictures by Eakins and Homer as well; all of these artists lived in a time when the Eastern wilderness was being impinged upon by industry, settlement, and tourism.⁹

When we look at trompe l’oeil still life painting in the United States, we find what seems to be an insistently masculine group of paintings with a form, subject matter, and social function radically different from the big canvases of Homer and Eakins. The scenes are non-figural, and are usually set in a shallow space (frequently what appears to be an interior). They share a focus on leisure activities with Homer’s and Eakins’s sporting pictures, yet set these in a singularly intimate, often domestic setting, away from the muscular confrontation between man and nature. Still life has from the earliest times been associated with the domestic – often set in interior spaces of female labor like the kitchen or the laundry, or depicting household ornament such as flowers. As a result, readings of still life painting have been overdetermined by the gendered concepts of domestic space that dominated its various historical, cultural contexts. This was certainly the case in nineteenth-century America; as we saw in the previous chapter, the notion of the home as a feminine space posed a serious challenge for men who had to do their work there during an era in which male work was moving out of the house.¹⁰

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⁷ See Davis, “Erotic Revision.”
⁸ Though they disagree about Homer’s relationship to industrialization, Zalesch anticipates Burns’s argument that “Homer’s career became a glorious crusade to heroicize the mythic, rugged Yankee individualist.” Zalesch, “Against the Current: Anti-Modern Images in the Work of Winslow Homer,” American Art Review 5:5 (Fall 1993): 120.
¹⁰ Bryson, Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), chapter four, “Still Life and Feminine Space.” Bryson observes that the opposition between
The feminization of still life was also grounded in a hierarchy of artistic subjects that was only beginning to lose its hold at the end of the nineteenth century. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his influential *Discourses on Art*, gave a characteristically condescending assessment of the place of still life in the generic hierarchy of painted subjects:

> Even the painter of still life, whose highest ambition is to give a minute representation of every part of those low objects which he sets before him, deserves praise in proportion to his attainment; because no part of this excellent art, so much the ornament of polished life, is destitute of value and use.11

The move Reynolds makes in this phrase is to transform the dichotomy of "high" and "low" into a synthesis of "value" and "use," leaving still life painting crystallized not as an academically or historically valuable form of labor, but rather a transient, social one. Reynolds’s project in the *Discourses* was to raise painting as a whole to a higher level of respectability. But as Norman Bryson points out, "for Reynolds, still life’s position as craft rather than liberal art was the inevitable result of its inability to abstract itself from sensuous particulars and attain the level of general ideas where alone, Reynolds maintained, great art could be made."12 Melville’s Pierre has the following reaction upon entering a small urban gallery:

> All the walls of the world seemed thickly hung with the empty and impotent scope of pictures, grandly outlined, but miserably filled. The smaller and humbler pictures, representing little familiar things, were by far the best executed; but these, though touching him not unpleasingly, in one restricted sense, awoke no

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dormant majesties in his soul, and therefore, upon the whole, were contemptibly inadequate and unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{13}

This may be irony; as discussed in the last chapter, Pierre is, after all, looking for help with his masculinity, frantically trying to provoke those “dormant majesties.” His inability to manage his domesticity (the “little familiar things”) is patent. Yet the use of the same argument Reynolds found to deride still life—praise of execution qualified by the condemnation of subjective effect—reminds us how enduring and pervasive the hierarchy of subjects was. Small, humble, domestic, obsessed with detail rather than form, with the home rather than history: still life and the effeminate fluidly mapped each other.

But if still life—and the particularly imitative trompe l’oeil even more so—was so feminized a genre, and if the “big,” independent masculinity of Eakins and Homer was so persuasive as a projection of potential manly identity, why then did the works of the masculine trompe l’oeil flourish?\textsuperscript{14} William Harnett, John Peto, and John Haberle were only a few of the many painters of still life at the end of the century; in the aggregate their works sold frequently, were displayed in academy exhibitions, bars, barbershops, even in Wanamaker’s department store.\textsuperscript{15} If Homer, Eakins, and painters like them were offering

\textsuperscript{13} Melville, Pierre, 394. This passage may also refer to genre paintings; Pierre’s publication coincided with the rise of genre painting in the United States. See Elizabeth Johns, American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991).

\textsuperscript{14} I have exaggerated the separation between these two groups of painters in order to give artistic form its due weight in relationship to social context. Eakins, for example, was a teacher of Harnett’s for awhile, though Harnett had already had still life instruction at the National Academy in New York by the time he enrolled in Pennsylvania Academy classes. The concluding section of this chapter contains more specific information about the circulation of the images under discussion by all of these artists; see also Bolger et al, ed., William M. Harnett, 152.

\textsuperscript{15} In general, the period 1880-1890 saw the height of still life’s competitiveness with other genres. In 1885, for example, 40% of the paintings shown by women and 13% of those by men at the National Academy of Design exhibition were still life or flower paintings. That same year, at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 26% of women’s and 8% of men’s paintings were still life or flower subjects. See Appendix, Table 2, in Kirsten Swinth, Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of
a definitive vision of American manhood, how could still life as a domestic genre also be a popular version of manly representation – how could it have functioned simultaneously with these “big” masculinity images to form, enact, shape, or elicit masculine subjectivity? This is the question that will drive this chapter.

On one level, of course, this question is rhetorical, for we know that there were many spheres within which masculine identities took shape, and the resulting ideals were often very different. The previous chapter, for example, explored the ways in which available notions of the bachelor as ascetic intellectual served to bolster the creation of a public authorial power premised on manly achievement. Kevin White, in The First Sexual Revolution, powerfully shows the ways in which masculine ideals differed by class, and implicitly along rural/urban lines. And with the expansion of the art market and buying power in the United States, possibilities proliferated for appealing to particular audiences’ notions of politics, gender, or race. If there were multiple coeval masculinities, in other words, there could easily be multiple modes of masculine visual culture.

But this answer is only partial; these two different groups of paintings appear alongside each other in today’s influential museums like the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

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17 As Lubin puts it, “With the development by midcentury of a democratized art market that could stand independent of academic accreditation, painting that served to please the eye by tricking it finally found its audience.” Lubin, Picturing, 276.

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(MFA) and the National Gallery. Also, to take Harnett as an example, we know that his paintings were exhibited in a range of venues, from bourgeois fine-art galleries and the National Academy of Design’s annual exhibitions to industrial expositions in smaller western towns and the Columbian Exposition. Furthermore, the content of these paintings, both in “big” and “small” masculine images, bears further reading if we are to move toward a deeper understanding of the cultures to which they were being displayed and sold. I would like to suggest that these paintings share an appeal to – and a reliance on – a culture of masculinity that is premised on male companionship.

To make this argument I will begin by revisiting representations of strenuous masculinity that are famously “individualistic,” looking for evidence of a more complicated set of implied relationships among men. The chapter then moves the question of the presence of companionate masculinity into the realm of paintings that depict no one at all; how could still life paintings be “social”? In pursuit of that question, the chapter discusses the place of interior decoration in single male living. As both a decoration for and a representation of the male domestic space, the trompe l’oeil still life exhibits the complicated relationships between public and private male spaces, the fluidity of comradeship and commerce. To round out the discussion of those relationships, the chapter concludes by exploring how these paintings themselves went “public”; that is, how and why they moved from being predominantly owned by individuals to being prominent parts of major museum collections in the United States. These paintings, I will argue, that once tapped in to and furthered a debate about masculinity and aesthetics, came to represent the beginning of masculine modernism – an interpretation that has limited our sense of the ways in which gender, class, and representation constituted urban male experience at the fin-de-siècle.
PICTURING MALE COMPANIONSHIP

Let us return to some of the images of masculinity cited earlier, those reputed fables of the lone male’s confrontation with the world. Eakins’s *Salutat* was originally called *Dextra Victrice Conclamantes Salutat* — “he salutes the cheering crowd with his victorious right hand” — a title that focuses our attention on the apparent subject of the painting, already spectacular for his ruddy, near-naked body, centered in the composition. Yet as in so many of Eakins’s paintings of athletes, a series of formal links within the image leads us to think of sporting masculinity as a group project. Most obviously, the praise of the “conclamantes” suggests the interdependency of audience and athlete. Like a beacon, the fighter’s body contrasts with the dark clothing of the men, while focusing their stares.\(^\text{18}\) The fighter salutes the onlookers, but his glance is above and beyond the immediate crowd; he is the crowd’s bearer of “Excelsior!” in a sense, glowing and transcendent, linking the drab mass to the ideal for which he strives. The man in the crowd at left with uplifted hat forms a balancing mirror image, but he is a dim reflection, his reach delimited by his hat, his celebration a product of the fighter’s work. But some in the crowd appear to be looking at the two men walking behind the boxer; we find ourselves looking at them too, as they are the only other full-length figures in the image. The rolled-up sleeves of the tenders testify to their active participation in the victory. Their anatomy is on display for us as well, in contrast to the men whose forms are


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concealed behind the walls of the arena. Their glances are not upward toward the victorious head and hand of the fighter, but at his back (and perhaps even his buttocks, in the case of the sponger), as if they are still concerned about his physical integrity, still “watching his back.” An oval of heads, with the boxer’s and the toweller’s at the ends, links the audience, the fighter, and the tenders in a kind of cycle. As Martin Berger has suggested recently, “by tying the boxer formally to his audience, the painting acknowledges the complex production of fame, success, and manhood at the close of the nineteenth century.” He also points out that the six men depicted standing along the railing were friends of the artist; this representation of community within the painting – as much an arena of consummate individual achievement as the boxing ring – is a common feature of Eakins’s work.

Both the victory of the boxer and the performance of the artist are thus depicted as not only a service to the community of men but in fact a product made possible by it.

Eakins’s shooting pictures exhibit this structure of masculine companionship more explicitly. A subset of his sporting pictures, these images usually depict one or more pairs of men hunting rail in the marshes of the Schuylkill River near Philadelphia. At the Boston MFA is Starting Out After Rail (1874; fig. 17), a composition Eakins repeated in at least two other canvases — Harry Young, of Moyamensing, and Sam.

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19 Berger, Man Made, 113. In places, Berger extends this argument to say that “in picturing the self-made man’s demise through reference to the ways in which an individual’s identity is wrought by institutional affiliation, markets, patronage, and the press, Eakins compelled his audiences to confront the anxiety-inducing manner in which Gilded Age men were made” (120). Yet elsewhere, Berger claims that Eakins is the builder of a new kind of manliness: “to counter problems stemming from the multiple meanings his paintings surely generated... Eakins proactively used his art to amend the means by which men were made manly during the century’s third quarter” (41).

20 Berger, Man Made, 112. Berger also observes of Eakins’s Swimming that “Eakins points subtly to the recreation available to men of the middle class because of the changes wrought by industrialization” (92).
Figure 17. Thomas Eakins, Starting Out After Rail, 1874. Oil on canvas mounted on masonite, 20 x 24 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Hayden Collection.

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Helhower. “The Pusher,” going Rail Shooting (1874) and Sailing (1874).21 The painting is, and seems, small, at 24 ¼ x 19 7/8 inches. One-half of the image is sky, the other half is water. Strong light from the right and the shadow of the sail suggest that it is morning. The painting’s surface varies strategically from near impasto on the wave edges to a thin application in the depiction of the canvas sail.

The painting depicts two men in a small sailboat, setting out among at least thirteen other small craft, a steamboat, and a tall ship. They are presumably headed for the reed marshes (Eakins’s other rail-hunting images are set there). One man steers, leaning over to balance the tilt of the boat. The other looks at us, holding a double-trigger shotgun upside-down; presumably he is not helping steer, merely putting his weight on the right side of the boat. The navigator may be wearing waders, or perhaps just overall-style pants. This suggests that he will be the pusher once the marshes are reached (the pushing pole is leaning in the left side of the boat). The position of the men’s heads makes them look like a two-headed man – as in most of Eakins’s work, this is almost certainly a deliberate juxtaposition. (That the arrangement is preserved in all the versions of this subject also suggests this.) The composition as a whole is very strictly balanced – despite the overlapping of the men’s bodies, there is still a larger harmony that frames them. The tilt of the sail into the lower left is balanced by a craft in the distance upper right; a long reflection of this craft’s sail goes all the way down to the men’s boat, completing a central square with the horizon as its top line.

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21 Moyamensing was the departure point for bird-hunting parties; the two men were friends of Eakins’s. See Carol Troyen, et al, *American Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston: The Museum, 1997).
Eakins’ two-headed hunter/pusher — a symbiotic unit wherein the physical labor of one man enables the leisure of another — offers a companionate model of masculinity. Manly interdependence, not independence, is being depicted here, as in the other rail-shooting pictures. Certainly Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting (1876) and The Artist and his Father Hunting Reed-birds in the Cohansey Marshes (1874) depict the hunt as teamwork, the triumph over game a product of collective effort and compatible skills (fig. 18). In a Nathaniel Currier print, Catching a Trout, from 1854, that moment of triumph is expressed by the laborer in the boat, a black man, whose comment forms the caption of the image: “We hab you now, sar” (fig. 19). (In this image the black man is depicted simultaneously poling and landing the fish.) The “We” of the fishing party here is as ironic as the formal address to the fish (“sar”), spoken as they are by a figure who cannot participate fully in the fellowship between the two white men. Here the two white men bond via the body of the servant and his labor, his parodic “we” made impossible — and thus safely binding — by his subservient status. This structure also represents the nexus of race and class: the polers literally make possible the ‘self-madeness’ of the men for whom they work.

Figure 18. Thomas Eakins, Rail Shooting (Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting), 1876. Oil on canvas, 56.2 x 76.8 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, bequest of Stephen Railton Clark.
Figure 19. Nathaniel Currier, "Catching a Trout," 1854. Lithograph.
On one level these images depict simultaneously competitive and hierarchized masculinities; hunter and poleman, passenger and sailor. Pushing was difficult physical labor, so it was often assigned to servants; as John Wilmerding has observed, two of Eakins’s rare images of blacks are from this series and its preparatory sketches. Yet in *The Artist and his Father Hunting Reed-birds*, Eakins himself takes the role blacks take in the other images (fig. 20). This substitution suggests a striking foregrounding of the economic relationship between Eakins and his father. Eakins as laborer here uses a pole that looks much like one of the tools of his artistic trade, the maul stick. That career as an artist was made possible in large part by money from his family; Eakins was thus supported in his overseas study, and wrote famous letters home to his father about his plans to do some painting that would make money. The *Artist and his Father Hunting Reed Birds* was painted not long after his return from France, and read biographically it seems a repayment of sorts, based on filial understanding: bare-armed Eakins, with his enormous maul stick, pushes the painted vessel that will enable his father’s leisure.

(Despite this projection, his father ended up helping Eakins his entire life, while Eakins continued to paint homages to him.) The hierarchy in the case of Eakins and his father

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Figure 20. Thomas Eakins, *The Artist and His Father Hunting Reed Birds*, ca. 1874. Oil on panel, 17 1/8 x 26 1/2 in. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Paul Mellon.
may be one of age or experience rather than race, but at the most basic level, all of these paintings foreground the construction of the ideology of the hunt: less an individual triumph than the product of men’s collaboration, even if that collaboration is formed as a tension between men demanding or exacting support from each other.  

Recent scholarship on Eakins has revealed the intricate ways in which his images drew on and evoked both cultural context — from sculling to surgery — and the personal context of his artistic and familial circle, making it easier for us to apprehend his readings of masculine companionship. Winslow Homer, however, presents serious challenges, in part because very little is known about his personal life. But again, if we read The Fog Warning, discussed earlier as an example of individualist mythmaking, for evidence of companionate masculinity, a different set of possibilities emerges. The fog warning is presumably emitted by the ship in silhouette on the horizon, suggesting the community upon which fishermen are dependent. The boat may also be a reminder of the forces of the marketplace, but then, the drama of the painting is generated by our anxiety over whether this fisherman will even make it to the boat, much less the market. Given his dependence upon the ship and the bounty of nature, the fisherman can signify here as much as a creature woven into a fabric of interdependencies and equivalencies as a lone adventurer. And to return to the Century advertisement, which on one level seems a kind of literalization of Homer’s picture as read by Burns, it is significant that here the advertised product is one related to domestic labor; the masculinity of the seafaring man

26 Homer’s Coursing the Hare (oil on canvas, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond) also takes as its subject the constructedness of the hunt, but it foregrounds the female labor required to make the rabbit hunt more exciting (or even possible) for the men. The painting hangs, interestingly, in the hunting pictures room, among more straight-faced, traditional images of the manly hunt.
in one interpretive sphere validates self-interested market competition, but in another sphere authenticates the potency of a household cleanser.28

Many of Homer’s works, particularly those resulting from his stay in Cullercoats, England in 1881-2, depict men and women working together in more obvious ways than The Fog Warning. But another strain of paintings depicts the same labor-leisure companionship that underlies Eakins’s rail-shooting pictures. While some of Homer’s most famous images – Winter Coast (1890) and A Huntsman and Dogs (1891) for example – certainly depict the triumphant, heroic lone male, many of his watercolors from the late 1880s and the 1890s show a pair of men hunting, fishing, or exploring together (fig. 21). The Guide and Woodsman, (circa 1889) and Homer’s several trout fishing images depict two men sharing a sporting outing. Usually one man rows or navigates while the other fishes, as in Ouanaiche Fishing, Lake St. John, Quebec, 1897 (fig. 22). Again, as in the Eakins images, labor is not suppressed in these images, but represented as an integral part of a companionate outing.

What exactly was at stake in these images of leisure? As studies of the nineteenth century United States have argued, middle-class male leisure time was both a source of therapeutic recovery from the enervating effects of white-collar work and a venue for the creation of potential business relationships. Mark Carnes’s work on fraternal orders

28 This image may well have appealed mostly because it implies the soap can handle the undeniable difficulties of removing fish odors, but it also participated in an advertising world that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, increasingly hailed men who lived alone and felt a need to maintain domestic hygiene. See T. J. Jackson Lears, Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America (New York: Basic Books, 1995); and Mark A. Swiencicki, “Consuming Brotherhood: Men’s Culture, Style and Recreation as Consumer Culture, 1880-1930,” Journal of Social History 31:4 (Summer 1998): 773-808; for a categorization of male-targeted advertisements. See also Ellen Gruber Garvey, The Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
suggests that it was even a time for the working out of gender contradictions – that men may have used fraternality to help improve their family lives as well as their relationships with each other. Eakins himself took some time off after his expulsion from the Pennsylvania Academy in 1886, and claimed that it restored him profoundly. It is no coincidence that one of Homer’s biggest patrons, the bachelor William Sturgis Bigelow, had an all-male retreat known as Tuckernuck, attended by some of the figures most familiar to those interested in late nineteenth-century masculinity, including Henry Adams and Theodore Roosevelt. While Adams claimed at Tuckernuck to have “aired my irascibility against the big storms,” he did so in a context that was explicitly a shared male experience.

Charles Warren Stoddard, in 1904, described life at Tuckernuck in The Ave Maria. He frames his tale as a letter to a beloved woman; the escape from society is thus politely justified to the emblem of it – “there are no women there – begging your pardon!” From the start, the narrator establishes simultaneously the companionate nature of the trip and its extreme importance, saying that “B. and I arrived” on a quest to “save our interest in life” (16). Their rough-and-readiness is tested immediately, when the boat promised to ferry them to Tuckernuck does not show up:


Carnes, Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989). Carnes argues that relationships within fraternities were structured by a familial, father-son hierarchy; I suggest that in less institutional contexts, these relationships are often formed around the labor of producing manly leisure. See also Wilson Carey McWilliams, The Idea of Fraternity in America (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) and Mary Ann Clawson, Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternality (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989).


Then awoke in B. all the spirit of his athletic days; and with one fell swoop he dragged a boat from her nest among the reeds, rigged her skilfully, placed me where ballast was most needed, and together we put to sea. (16)

Again, the dyad of leisure and labor is enacted, with our narrator as “ballast” and B. as the athletic toiler in the sea (the arrangement in Starting Out After Rail). The logic of this exchange appears to be that Stoddard becomes the laborer when he writes up their adventure, performing it to the men’s mutual advantage in his letter to the woman, or for the larger periodical audience. As with Eakins’s paintings of his father, the act of representation restores the equilibrium of the relationship from its momentary hierarchy (that small boats are so often the chosen setting gives the trope a naturalizing, physical reference point). Once they arrive at Tuckemuck, they find that even the toilet promotes camaraderie, while protecting the men’s uniqueness and health. All the men share the same washroom, and “each of us had his basin, his towel, his toilet articles neatly arranged in succession along the side of the room” (18).

THE STILL LIFE AS SOCIAL

This still life of the washroom — connecting as it does the material organization of everyday articles with a generation of manliness through partnership — returns us to the question of the presence of this logic of masculinity in still life painting. It would be difficult, it seems, for paintings that remove the figure altogether to share in or appeal to a dynamic of paired labor and leisure. Certainly some still life images make direct reference to the world of manly outdoorsmanship — in the context of Tuckemuck, perhaps Richard La Barre Goodwin’s Theodore Roosevelt’s Cabin Door (1895) is the best example. Borrowing tactics from Harnett’s widely-known After the Hunt (1885; fig. 23),
Figure 23. William M. Harnett, *After the Hunt*, 1885. Oil on canvas, 71 ½ x 48 ½ in. Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, Mildred Anna Williams Collection.
this painting posits Teddy’s triumph through the illusionistic depiction of the accumulation of the articles of the hunt. Intense photographic naturalism makes a kind of formal analog for hard-boiled late-nineteenth-century male rationalism: seeing things as they really are. The accumulation of objects evokes, as it did for the seventeenth-century Dutch masters of still life, a world of consumption and abundance that gives testimony to the physical and economic power of the absent subject (and by extension, the painting’s owner).32 If anything, the painting evokes a world of competition between individuals, not camaraderie.

To make matters seem worse for my argument, two American literary moments involving familiar trompe l’oeil subjects point to the same dynamic of competition, on the surface at least. In Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Purloined Letter,” the scene in which Dupin finds the all-important indiscreet letter in Minister D----’s study draws directly on a sub-genre of still-life painting: the letter-rack illusion (fig. 24).33 (A number of these images were painted in the United States by Raphaelle Peale, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, and others, before Poe wrote this story; it is also possible that he had seen their Dutch predecessors in some form as well.) Minister D----’s “illusion” is his creation of an image of the letter that will fool the eyes of the police. It does not fool the green-spectacled Dupin – whose glasses give him time to look for the illusion undisturbed, to

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Figure 24. Raphaele Peale, *A Deception*, 1802. Oil on canvas. Private collection.
evade being observed in the act of looking, and hence to penetrate D----’s illusion. D----, in fact, has in effect “painted” the letter, by turning it inside-out, dirtying it, applying ink to the outside to distract attention (he has redirected the letter to himself, just as he seeks to redirect the eyes of the police). This new, inside-out “composition” may be a reference to another still life sub-genre, the “back of the canvas” illusion. Dupin creates his own illusion in retaliation, copying the outside of Dupin’s fake and putting his own message in it. The still life thus becomes the locus of an intellectual battle between two bachelors, who exchange subjectivities by way of a game of hide-and-seek played out on what is essentially a trompe l’oeil canvas. At the time Poe wrote, still-life painting infrequently depicted insistently masculine content, but Poe participated in the ongoing fusion of gender concerns — in this case the residual theme of masculine intellectual perspicuity being the specific purview of the single man — with illusionistic still life.

The back-of-the-canvas illusion (for an example, see fig. 25) appears in Pierre, in connection with a scene discussed in Chapter Two. Disgusted with his father’s alleged affair and bastard offspring, Pierre goes to his closet and turns his father’s portrait around on its hanger. “This brought to sight the defaced and dusty back, with some wrinkled, tattered paper over the joints, which had become loosened from the paste. ‘Oh, symbol of the reversed idea in my soul,’” Pierre groans histrionically, putting the image into a chest

34 This act evokes the founding tale of naturalistic competition in art, between Zeuxis and Parhassius, when the latter wins the competition by depicting the curtain used to conceal an art object before its unveiling with such cunning that it deceives the eye of his opponent. The story was well-known during the period under discussion — it was mentioned by critics of Harnett’s work. See Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., “‘Sordid Mechanics’ and ‘Monkey-Talents’: The Illusionistic Tradition,” in Bolger, et al, ed., William M. Harnett, 19-29; esp. 28 n. 27.
so that he can no longer see it.⁵ The notion of the dark side of the father, masquerading the masculine, the construct that made a happy marriage possible, seems to undermine the “reading” of the painting’s verso in Melville’s preceding chapter, in which the image transmitted a tradition of legible masculine subjectivity. But Melville’s reference to the back-of-the-canvas illusion here reinforces one of the possibilities his reader must always keep in mind – that in fact, the dark side of his father may itself be an illusion of Isabel’s. Nevertheless, it spurs Pierre’s attempt to reconcile his own inconstancy (that is, his incestuous desire for Isabel) with his desire to correct his father’s mistakes – to improve on what had been his model, bringing him into competition with his dead father. The painting itself he soon destroys, suggesting that when the painting comes to evoke competition rather than cooperation, it loses its value.⁶

At least it is clear now that still life can, and may have been expected to, function as the nexus of multiple imaginary subjects. When we turn to some of the frequently painted themes from Harnett’s oeuvre, we find an equally sophisticated set of implied associations. Explicitly evoking male companionship is The Social Club (1879; fig. 26). The canvas is small, only a little over a foot high, with a composition divided at the bottom by a full-width marbletop table edge. This uninviting table edge is common in Harnett’s smaller domestic still lifes; more intimate in size and more focused in subject, their refusal to open the viewing space keeps viewers vibrantly aware of our act of intrusion. In this case, though, the intimacy initiated by the painting’s small dimensions

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⁶ In Hawthorne, Blithedale, 209-210, there is a more overt discussion of still life painting – Coverdale goes to a saloon and offers an extended discussion of the still-lifes on the wall, their technique, and the relationships among high realism, the real and the appetite.
Figure 26. William M. Harnett, *The Social Club*, 1879. Oil on canvas, 13 x 20 in. Manoogian Collection, Taylor, MI.
is protected by the pipe mouthpiece that transgresses the table’s edge, as if to ask us to join in on the smoke. The party is over, though – often, Harnett’s pipe images contain a still-smoldering bowl, but here the pipes are all extinguished. It is a scene of sharing, with eight pipes composed in a kind of wreath around the Cuban tobacco box. Some of the pipes share a “bed” of tobacco, while others recline in various poses of relaxation around the edges, as if in a kind of allegory of their owners after the smoke-orgy.

Interestingly, however, and disrupting this relaxation once the meticulousness of its construction becomes evident, even the pipes that are bedfellows in the tobacco do not touch each other. This is an uncharacteristic compositional decision for Harnett, whose objects tend both to overlap structurally as they do here and to lean on each other within the presumed physical logic of the image. If this is shared male relaxation, it is the relaxation of Eakins’s Swimming (1885; fig. 16), where homosociality resonates in tension with physical intimacy. (The composition of Eakins’s painting is strangely reminiscent of the Social Club, if the men on the rock are imagined as analogous to the pipes in the tobacco-box.) Putting so many pipes into so small a space without having them touch was not easy, and in the cases of the top right and top left pipes, Harnett has compromised some foreshortening in order to make it happen. The diversity of pipes, in terms of their age, style, and material composition, suggests a transgenerational, trans-class group. Beyond the pipes, tobacco, ten matches, and a match holder, the scene is bare – there is no distracting finery in the background, no glasses, no food. It is a scene of pure, just-ended, communal leisure-time consumption.

But consumption by whom? It is important to make explicit, I think, what makes this an image that projects a reading of masculine absence. The absence of figures should make it difficult to establish the gender of the smokers, and it gives us an opportunity to
ask why it is so hard today to read this image as a potential social club for women.37

Women, after all, in particular working-class Irish and black women, were often depicted
smoking, usually clay or corncob pipes, in nineteenth century art and fiction. There are
three quite cheap pipes in this image that would not have seemed out of place in one of
those depictions. If we are to read it as a gendered image, then, we must first make our
way through the details about class, as the material components of gendered sociality are
not independent of their class significations. Despite the starkness of the interior, the
detail of imported tobacco and the title of the piece are the main parameters for a middle-
class reading of the subject. Both of these simultaneously point to a dynamic of shared
masculine leisure focused around a somewhat disorderly interior space. The title, The
Social Club, may suggest that the space is not a domestic one, but rather a private club.
The absence of the men – that is, that they felt comfortable leaving their tobacco
unattended, also suggests this. But since it is already tongue-in-cheek, as so many trompe
l’œil titles are, it may also be an example of catachresis – referring to the absent group of
men who, unable to afford membership in a club, have gone in together on a box of
Cuban tobacco for an evening in someone’s apartment. (For an example of the size of
tobacco container more likely to indicate a single consumer, see The Smoker’s
Companions, 1878; fig. 27.) These irresolvable possibilities and the absence of any
particular characters in the scene would have allowed male viewers at the time to re-
imagine their leisure activities as producing middle-classness simultaneously as they
produced pleasure. Looked at this way, as a catalyst for imagining leisure as class labor,

37 Meyer Schapiro warns eloquently about the dangers of grounding readings of still life in our
own social outlook in “The Still Life as a Personal Object – a Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh,” in

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Figure 27. William M. Harnett, *The Smoker’s Companions*, 1878. Oil on wood, 9 x 12 in. Kennedy Galleries, New York.
the pipes read analogically as the class ascension myth of the bourgeoisie, progressing in sophistication and expensiveness from the clay and meerschaum one-pieces to the briar, walnut and brass of the larger pipes. In the still life tradition, this is a far cry from the image of nature's bounty or the memento mori; Harnett has harnessed the class dynamics of his culture to the still life mode, and his touchstone, the hook for his viewers, is their sense of the centrality of gender to accessing and expressing the self.

Most of Harnett's images do not evoke companionship in such a direct way. The Smoker's Companions (fig. 27) is characteristic of a great number of Harnett's works. These paintings depict a pipe, in use, with open tobacco pouch and matches, and usually a book and newspaper. The Smoker's Companions calls attention to material objects in terms of companionship, but ironically: depicting a moment of solitary pleasure, it contrasts with the group leisure of The Social Club. Yet even here the outside world - and companionship - are present. Matches from Baltimore, foreign tobacco, and English literature accompany the meerschaum, calling attention to the imperial economy that makes this leisure possible. The book depicted is easily legible as Samuel Butler's Hudibras. Inspired by Cervantes's Don Quixote, Hudibras is a story of masculine companionship, a burlesque premised on the cooperation of the practical intellect of Sir Hudibras and the inspiration - and labor - of his companion Ralpgo. This volume appears in another of Harnett's images, Still Life with Letter to Dennis Gale (1879; fig. 28). As in The Smoker's Companions, even in this solitary scene companionship is suggested, both by the titular subject - a letter to a Philadelphia picture-dealer and

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Figure 28. William M. Harnett, *Still Life with Letter to Dennis Gale*, 1879. Oil on canvas, 11 x 15 in. Private collection, Chevy Chase, MD.

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Harnett patron – and by the inclusion of Butler’s Hudibras among the books on the table. The embedding of the public within the representation of the private suggests that one of the things solace should produce is the desire for and the ability to communicate with friends, that is, to participate in the larger sphere of masculine interaction.

Norman Bryson has discussed the formal dynamics on which this collapsing of the public and the private are built, using the example of Pieter Claesz.’s still lifes:

The fiction is maintained that the place of eating and the place of viewing are one and the same, and through that fiction comes the idea that at this level of simplicity persons are interchangeable, and equal. As the viewer joins this space, solitude becomes intimacy... one which generates empathy and the recognition of mutual dependency and solidarity.39

Claesz.’s Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread (1642; fig. 29) is an example of this dynamic of empathy, which is generated despite the tiny size of many of these images. The subject is depicted at life size, with no distinguishable background: a meal about to be eaten, shown in a very limited palette of grays and browns. It is not a fancy meal, and could easily be a bachelor repast. Yet we are urgently forced into the image by the brandy bowl, leaning on some undistinguishable object on the table. Tilted precariously toward the viewer at the edge of the table, it seems about to spill onto us. This is almost a forced companionship, as if we have to leap into the painting’s space to prevent the double-disaster of losing one’s brandy and soiling oneself.

The illusionistic quality of Harnett’s paintings also encouraged this kind of entrance into the image, as reviewers often noted. At a Cincinnati exhibition, according to one critic,

[a]n old gentleman stood and gazed at The Old Violin last night, through his spectacles, and finally said: “By Jove, I would like to play on that violin,”

of companions in objects, see Harnett, Professor’s Old Friends (1891, oil on canvas, 27 x 33 ¼ in., William A. Farnsworth Library and Art Museum, Rockland, Maine).

39 Bryson, Looking, 113.

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Figure 29. Pieter Claesz., *Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread*, 1642. Oil on panel, 11 x 12 in. Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
enthusiastically judging that many a touching melody had been wafted from its well resined strings. The gentleman never noticed the deception until he went closer to and he was "completely got."40

Here the old man’s "spectacles," unlike Dupin’s, are trumped by the representer’s skill—but in the interests not of foiling, but encouraging participation. The masculine trompe l’oeil is welcoming; if we reach for the violin to play, as the old man does, we join in companionship the imagined resident of the still life’s domestic space.

Harnett, in fact, was commissioned to generate pictures directly evoking this sense of companionship. Thomas Walker, a Minneapolis lumber magnate, asked Harnett in 1887 to paint a work in the mode of After the Hunt in memory of his recently dead son. Walker’s son had seen Harnett’s works and enjoyed them; the patron requested that Harnett include one of his son’s guns and other personal hunting equipment in the composition.41 In this painting the usually generic tools of masculine leisure would have been appropriated to evoke a particular father-son companionship. Had this painting been executed, it would have constituted a bizarre fusion of the modern companionate ideal with the memento mori tradition. Harnett and other still life painters often included mention of specific individuals in their paintings, as in the painting depicting a letter to Dennis Gale discussed above, but this commission suggests a desire to make more explicit the connotations of fraternity—in this case, even of familial, if gendered unity—that the masculine trompe l’oeil generated. Furthermore, although he refused the commission, the request suggests that Harnett’s paintings presented themselves as a venue for this kind of masculine sentiment. But if still life could be thought of as social,
how then did it narrate the relationship of life “out there” to the inner life of the single man?

INSIDE OUT: ENABLING INTIMACY

Though the fact that trompe l’oeil still lifes turn up in masculine public spaces such as bars and barber shops suggests that male fellowship was the ideal environment for the display and consumption of these images, trompe l’oeil compositions posit the domestic realm as the venue for shared leisure – departing from the Homer-Eakins model of outdoorsmanship. To return, then, to the question with which this chapter began, even if “big” and “small” depictions of masculinity both appealed to a companionate ideal, how do we make sense of the relationship between the private and the public, the home and the marketplace, being suggested by manly painting?

As our understanding of the ideology of separate spheres has become more complex, we have learned that the discourses of the private and the public were interdependent and, at times, co-located in the spaces of work or leisure. This intertwining of play and work, public and private, was one of the things that enabled masculine intimacy.42 The dynamics of domestic privacy and space discussed at length in the previous chapters had changed by the fin-de-siècle; the lonely rooms of Geoffrey Crayon and cozy pads of Miles Coverdale give way, in representation, to apartments


42 Barbara S. Groseclose has discussed Harnett’s engagement with the play of public and private domains, arguing that the intellectual man is depicted here as a product of the synthesis of these domains. She concludes that this play derails the vanitas theme in Harnett’s paintings. Groseclose, “Vanity and the Artist: Some Still-Life Paintings by William Michael Harnett,” American Art Journal 19:1 (1987): 51-59.
where companions, work, and play flow in and out. Social historians have discovered that single men newly at work in the city often lived with each other or with families, usually with minimal privacy—a fact evidenced also, I will argue, by the images under discussion in this chapter. Still life painters of masculine domesticity seem to be representing predominantly internal spaces, but the sites of masculine self-formation, on closer inspection, appear to be shared with other, sometimes absent men. Reminders of the presence of an outside world, that place where an internally generated “character” would be performed, surface again and again in these paintings.

A formal key to Peto’s and Harnett’s play with the boundaries of public and private, interior and exterior, and business and leisure, is their rendering of nails. Nails perform symbolic functions in trompe l’oeil inseparable from their literal significations or uses and sometimes at odds with them. In the memento mori tradition, the rusting nail can signify the unstoppable passage of time, the decay of human constructs. But Harnett’s and Peto’s paintings frequently mix rusting and new nails, and Harnett’s images often downplay or altogether exclude the icons of memento mori. It is important to keep in mind that the depiction of the building elements—doors, drawers, tables, nails—is as detailed, deliberate, and apparently significant in these works as the depiction of the “models.” The nail is also the transgressor of two planes, the interior and the exterior, for the purpose of maintaining the exterior and protecting the interior. (It shares with gender ideology this structural role. Men and women could be said to perform their gender roles in and around the house in order precisely to constitute it as a home, as something separate from the street, the gutter, the factory.) Nails in the paintings of Harnett and Peto also suspend objects for display. But is this display happening inside a domestic space or on its outer surface? In several cases, it seems that under the guise of depicting
intimate objects in a domestic interior, these images put barriers—doors, cabinets—as much on display as the things they ordinarily conceal from view.

Harnett's Old Models (1892; fig. 30) is roughly twice as large as most of the trompe l’oeil still lifes discussed in this chapter. His “models” are the usual ones for Harnett, but they are displayed against a locking, worn, cupboard-like door. Unlike tabletop still lifes in which we are given a glimpse inside the home, here we are excluded—an interior space is left unexplained. At first glance we assume, given the kinds of objects depicted at rest here, that Harnett’s old models are inside some structure, perhaps a house. But rust on the door, running down, suggests that in fact this is an exterior door; this could be a shop door, for example, as in Peto’s The Poor Man’s Store (1885; fig. 31). Perhaps the old models are in fact an advertisement not in a theoretical way, but in a literal way, propped outside an antiques shop or even a music store. In this case the nostalgia that seems to pervade the image would be nostalgia for an “old model” of commerce. Old Models shows mostly rusty hardware; there are two new nails at the top left, from one of which a model, the bugle, hangs. Given that Harnett made explicit the constructedness of the image with the painting’s title, it is imaginable that these nails are depicted as having been driven recently, perhaps by the artist—constituting another reference to the labor involved in making a painting (here figured as a companion to the labor of builders), in order to “build” his composition. Rusty nails do not necessarily indicate an exterior, but rust running down from them suggests this. In Peto’s The Poor Man’s Store, for example, nails have rusted away in several places, letting the signs hang askew (fig. 31). This is clearly an exterior, but it is one that allows us a teasing access to interiors, physical and emotional, as well. In a sense, the pathos of the Poor Man’s Store is that dramatized by Hepzibah in Hawthorne’s The House of the Seven Gables, in which
Figure 30. William M. Harnett, Old Models, 1892. Oil on canvas, 54 x 28 in. Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Charles Henry Hayden Fund.
she opens just such a half-door shop out of the street level of the House. (The items for
sale, even, are the same, though the vendor is an “Old Maid” instead of a poor man:
gingerbread animals, apples, lodging.) That the commercial world is permitted to
intermingle with the private in order to sustain it drains the private of its value.43

While in Peto’s letter-rack paintings there are both new nails and old rivets – the
square-head door nails – the rust is not shown running, suggesting that these are interiors.
The new and old nails portray the passage of time as a message about human fragility, a
theme more prevalent in Peto’s works than in Harnett’s. Peto’s Old Time Letter Rack
(1894; fig. 32) is a small but not tiny painting (at 30 x 25 inches), in Peto’s customary
painterly style. There is more detail and in places (on Abraham Lincoln’s face, the
letters, and the stamps) a more linear rendering than his other works. The surface has
been built up in places, especially in the area of the bands of the letter rack, both to cast a
shadow and to convey the impression of aging leather. The central square of the letter
rack dominates the composition, but this Cartesian uniformity is broken both by a fracture
in one of the leather straps and by the kaleidoscope of letters fanned out around the edges
of the rack. That this is likely an interior wall is suggested by the presence of torn signs
and placards, which indicate that previous tenants have inhabited this space. The
ruptured letter rack and the inclusion of an image of Lincoln may suggest the fraying of
human order. This bringing to the surface an awareness of the impermanence of our daily
habitat is very different from Harnett’s reliable, always-there objects, which suppress the
discontinuity of year-to-year life in urban rental environments. The pipe in this painting

43 Hawthorne, House of the Seven Gables, Chapter Two, “The Little Shop-Window,” Peto’s dusty
and broken windows, too, suggest that he is putting the lie to the supposed transparency of imitative

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does not appear to be much used, and the match is new; putatively these belong to the current tenant. The worn ledger suggests a certain kind of nostalgia, but it is a reminder of work done, of contractual relations fulfilled. Positioned in the middle of the painting, it is literally bound together with a dinner ticket, pointing to the interdependency of work and survival. This is a very different kind of reflection than that posited by Harnett's paintings of books by Dante or popular sheet music. Peto's vision of the world in still life paradoxically evokes a life in constant motion, bringing to the surface not just our own impermanence, but our imminent replacement by the next person in a historical series. It is as much our uniqueness, our personality that is threatened here, as our belongings or our mortality. The way American painters handled this threat to the individual was to point to a community of male fraternity — one in which the threat to the self offered by community was counterbalanced by its being a venue for the performance or validation of individuality. The old-time letter rack was a kind of stage, a place to publicize one's connections, one's labor, one's beliefs, and one's pleasures. Transferred to the canvas, it becomes an image for sale by an artist we now know was relatively poor, an object in the poor painter's store: the painting's theme of selling the private to the public (one important to writers of the time as well) resonates all the way to the relationship between artist and patron.

Many fin-de-siècle masculine trompe l'oeil paintings, then, depict scenes in which the internal and the external are intermingled, in which these boundaries are transgressed — thus the theme of vanitas becomes a lesson for the viewer, but also for the artist who aspires to, say, Harnett's microscopic naturalism.
in an art object whose apparent purpose was to enhance the domestic interior.\textsuperscript{44} Combining the pictorial evidence of the nails with the mixture, in subject matter, of domestic objects and indicators of the market in so many of these works, it is clear that they do not offer "hermetic containment," as suggested by some critics.\textsuperscript{45} Yet for nineteenth-century viewers, this intermingling was not anxiety-inducing to provoke much comment; it did not seem to hamper the effect of these images. One way of understanding the social conditions that made such readings possible is to explore the domestic world of middle-class single white manhood at the time.

**LIVING TOGETHER: GENDER AND CLASS IN THE BACHELOR'S SPACE**

An idealized masculine interior appears in works by Harnett that take part in a long-standing discourse of opulence, as in *Ease* (1887; fig. 33). In this case, Harnett depicts a patron's interior decorating choices – often, as here and in *Still Life for Nathan Folwell* (1878), it is a male patron's decorating scheme that is featured. Musical instruments, rich fabrics, lamps, and books decorate the space. In images from periodicals and book illustrations of the time we often find features similar to those of the rooms pictured in Harnett's works, suggesting that this was a widespread aesthetic for

\textsuperscript{44}In *The Changes of Time*, Haberle mocks his contemporaries' obsession with private-public space tensions by positioning the lock to the cabinet door so that it is nailed to both the door and its frame, with a sardonically-grinning face for a lock and the (useless) key dangling in plain view. Elsewhere in the painting he positions a simulated photograph of himself at the end of a series of medallions with portraits of past presidents of the United States – thus moving his very private career into the most public of roles, in fun. Similarly, in *A Bachelor's Drawer*, the objects are not only mounted on the outside of the bachelor's drawer, but they are positioned so that the drawer cannot imaginably be opened – the censored nude photograph doubles this mockery of our desire to know what is within.

Figure 33. William M. Harnett, *Ease*, 1887. Oil on canvas, 48 x 52 ¾ in. Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX.
middle-class single white men. But we can add to our sense of how masculine
domesticity and companionship could reinforce each other by looking at a set of
photographs of young men at Yale from the collection of the Weston family. Herbert
Weston was in the 1898 graduating class of the Sheffield engineering school at Yale. The
photos probably date from 1897 (Weston and others were graduated early so they could
fight in the Spanish-American War; in fig. 26, the date “1/97” appears on the pan in the
bottom center of the image).46 The choice of these images is not random – Weston was
my great-grandfather – but his urge to take and preserve photographs of his experience
suggests the powerful connections among performance, friendship, and visual
representation under discussion here. Furthermore, though he was attending school in
New Haven with men who would become powerful figures in national and international
business and science, Weston was from a small town in Nebraska, and would live there
after school for the rest of his life. Yale became a shared experiment in white bourgeois
identity-formation, in learning what fraternity and democracy meant in practice.

In the first photograph (fig. 34), Weston stands in his room at Yale, showing off
both his college accomplishments and associations (sword-belt and sash from Michigan
Military Academy to his right, Yale class of ’98 pillow to his left) and his interior
decoration skills. The room can be thought of as divided into two realms of individual
experience based around four terms, work/family and leisure/the public. On Weston’s
right is his neat desk, complete with textbooks, ink and pen stands, visor, and ink rag.
Above his desk, reminiscent of the still life paintings we have been exploring, are

46 Weston Collection, Beatrice, NE. My relatives brought these images to my attention after I
began asking them what home life was like in the early part of the century. For one of several discussions
of manhood at Yale, see Robert J. Higgs, “Yale and the Heroic Ideal, Gotterdammerung and Palingenesis,
Figure 34. Photographer unknown, Herbert Weston in his room, ca. 1897. Weston Family Collection, Beatrice, NE.
arranged a number of objects, including a calendar, several pictures of Bert’s family, and
his military school football team. At his left is the bed, and another wall display. This
display includes a cascade of pictures of women – possibly acquaintances, but equally
possibly pictures of actresses – terminated at the bottom by a picture of a man. Prominent
on the wall is a substantially framed reproduction of the famous White City image from
the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893. Weston had marched with the cadets of the
Michigan Military Academy at the Exposition, as official escorts to the Infanta Eulalie of
Spain. Standing at the center of all of these things, figuring himself as in a sense the
product of them, is Weston, whose filial devotion, hard work, “high aims,” and
potentially reproductive heterosexuality are all on display in his room – and by extension
this photograph – as much for his male companions at Yale as for his own subjective
contemplation.47 The photograph itself constitutes evidence of Weston’s willingness to
perform his “self,” both for posterity (including his own, post-Yale self) and for potential
consumption by the circulation of the photograph. It is also likely that this is, in fact, a
room shared by two students, and that Weston’s corner was always on display.

Other photographs from this same group evidence the ways in which men shared
domestic space. The second image is a silly combination of school-chum pride and
domestic daintiness – formally, a mixture of group portrait and still life (fig. 35). On the
left, as in the previous image (Weston appears second from left), we see another Yale-
pillow-covered bed. A mandolin, another symbol of fellowship, lies on the bed, while on

1865-1914,” in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity

47 See Katheryn Grover, ed., Fitness in American Culture: Images of Health, Sport, and the Body,
1830-1940 (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1989); and John F. Kasson, Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect
Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America (New York: Hill and Wang,
2001). Weston and most of his friends were athletes, and many of them had been to military school as well.
Figure 35. Photographer unknown, Herbert Weston with Yale friends, ca. 1897. Weston Family Collection, Beatrice, NE.
the lower right of the image are a chafing dish, tea-setting and warmer. Katherine Snyder has argued that cooking with the chafing-dish - the nineteenth century’s equivalent of the microwave - was a locus of male companionship and performative domestic labor; its inclusion in this carefully composed image would have reinforced, for nineteenth-century viewers, the message of male fellowship encoded here. The dressing-screen (seen also in figs. 36 and 37) acts as an enormous dress, making the men into one five-headed, rose-bedecked being. Actually, there are six heads - behind the boys is a sculpture of some kind whose head appears second from the right. The other art in the room consists mostly of popular prints (including landscape images - see fig. 37 for more) and photographs like the team photo on the far right. Once again, the labor of constructing a space that both expresses individual sensibility and enables companionate masculinity, a communal male Yaleness, in this case, constitutes much of what is on display here.

The third image can be read as a stunning literalization of the relationships among male physical self-culture, companionship, and public manhood (fig. 36). Supporting the white-collar public man (with his watch fob and wool pants) was the sporting, physically-fit athlete he was during his leisure hours. But here, compensating for the fact that not all middle-class working men could claim this kind of fitness is a suggestion that fitness as a shared ideal could be a resource of a community of male friends. The hyperbolic “1000 lbs” that one friend can lift can be shared by all as an ideal physical capacity; reading somewhat hyperbolically, in tune with the play captured here, we have men embodying a base-superstructure model whose unifying premise is not capital, but friendship - a kind

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48 Snyder lacks any convincing visual evidence of the actual use of chafing-dishes; a staged photograph from a Cosmopolitan article is the only image of one. The Weston photos lend support to her arguments about masculine domestic labor and play.
Figure 36. Photographer unknown, unidentified Yale students frolicking, ca. 1897. Weston Family Collection, Beatrice, NE.
of economic athleticism. The masculine, muscular ideal supports the notion of the public
businessman, whereas in economic actuality the opposite relations hold sway. The fourth
image shows the dark counter-possibility, and that the athlete from image three
masquerades the fattened manhood both makes the image funnier and suggests every
man’s potential for lassitude (fig. 37).

The associations of exercise, education, and professionalism in these images
seem, on one level, to evoke Dana Nelson’s argument that national manhood substituted
self-discipline for its promise of fraternalism:

The federal plan offered men a reassuring unity in the brotherly exercise of
rational managerial authority. But the precondition for the white man’s
authorization as a civic manager would be his ability to model the ideal of
national unity in his own person: to train his own self-difference into a rationally
ordered singularity. [...] Rather than conceptualizing (equalizing) friendships
between men as a model for democracy, national manhood embodied democracy
in the competitive, self-subordinating individual. 49

But when we look at actual peoples’ enactment (and in this case recording) of fellowship,
we see that “local” manhood – here both the diachronic “Yale man” and the synchronic
version of it enacted by the class of ‘98 – powerfully shaped the ways in which men
performed their masculinity. (Outside the frame of the photographs, which were carefully
preserved evidence of his Yale companions, Weston would also have a life-long and
emotional friendship with military school comrade and fellow football team member,
Edgar Rice Burroughs.) 50 I am arguing that later in the nineteenth century, national
manhood had adapted to conceptualize friendships as a model for democracy, even if

49 Nelson, National Manhood, 11, 22.
50 See my forthcoming Brother Men: The Letters of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Herbert Weston;
Figure 37. Photographer unknown, unidentified Yale student “flexing,” ca. 1897. Weston Family Collection, Beatrice, NE.
agency (responsibility that one could claim, or tout) was ultimately to be embodied in a single person.

A look at recent research on the lives of young men in turn of the century United States cities suggests how these domestic images could have appealed to a new clientele with subjective experience to be “organized,” to use Geertz’s metaphor. Students of masculinity have ample social history to draw upon for a sense of the environment and demographics of the white urban single man in the late nineteenth century. George Chauncey’s Gay New York, Howard Chudacoff’s The Age of the Bachelor, and Peter Laipson’s recent doctoral dissertation all emphasize the powerful demonization of the bachelor (discussed in Chapter One in the context of Irving’s era) accompanying American culture’s response to immigration, urbanization, health risks, homosexuality, and new courtship and family practices.51 Laipson suggests why companionship with either gender might have been preferable to self-sufficiency:

[A] bachelor could not win. If he did not have sex, or had sex only with himself, he was psychologically troubled, antisocial and possibly homosexual. But if he had sex with women outside the ideological domain of marriage, he was selfish, immoral and potentially infectious.

To make matters worse for the bachelor, social scientists in the early twentieth century made much of the connection between male singleness and social pathology. Ernest Groves and William Ogbum… noted that a disproportionate number of single men were admitted to insane asylums and observed that “[I]t is possible that the marital condition may be the cause of the insanity, that is, the conditions of unmarried life may tend to produce insanity more than the conditions of married life.”52

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52 Laipson, “Safe, Sane and Single? The Bachelor as Deviant, 1870-1930,” Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, 1996. Laipson’s research also contributes to the philology of the word “bachelor” I sketched in the introduction; he finds that doctors begin to refer specifically to young single men as bachelors at the end of the nineteenth century. The quotation from this excerpt is from E. R. Groves and W. F. Ogburn, American Marriage and Family Relationships (New York: Henry Hold, 1928), 145.
This made it important for bachelors to try to negotiate male domesticity correctly, and perhaps together with other men, at least until marriage. A male friendship did not have the institutional and religious authorization of marriage, but it was considered a stage on the road to what some scholars have termed “heteronormativity.” On the broadest level, male companionship was a legitimating force. It helped men manage their own self-improvement — as in the Weston photos, balancing the athletic and the intellectual, the professional and the provocative — while warding off accusations or suspicions of abnormality, even insanity.

Snyder has recently explored the domestic material culture of male boarding houses and bachelor apartments. Her work reconstructs a dialog between defenders of the institutions of marriage and family (whose accusations against bachelors began to use the terms of social Darwinism, such as “race suicide”) and advocates of the new masculine domesticity. Emphatic writers for both viewpoints focused on the bachelor’s living space as an ideological battleground for the future of domesticity. The material basis for this argument was the rapid construction in the 1880s and 1890s of large

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55 Chudacoff’s analysis contains a survey of single male living situations based on census data from several United States cities at the end of the century. He found that while in some cities men did indeed live in mass rooming situations, often they lived with families — either with relatives or in rooms-toilet. Most of the statistical conclusions by historians of the late nineteenth century suggest that the single male living experience, both for working-class and middle-class men, was a communal one. Karen V. Hansen also finds that working-class men at midcentury “were active as visitors and hosts, laborers and nurses — all central roles in making social ties and building communities.” Hansen, “Our Eyes Behold...
apartment buildings designed — and advertised — specifically for bachelors. The successors to the “modest boarding-house chamber” depicted in Pierre, the rooms in these towering structures were often converted by entrepreneurs from spacious old hotel suites or family apartments into what were essentially cubicles for singles.56 These apartments were built without kitchens, meaning that to eat, men either had to go out or to use the chafing-dish to warm up a small dinner. In Snyder’s analysis, the chafing-dish emerges as an object that focused debates about masculine domesticity, in which men were accused of domestic incompetence or degeneracy at the same time that they appropriated cooking as a masculine art.57 Most persuasively, she observes that masculine domesticity began to be portrayed as a kind of labor — usually the thrifty labor that buttresses middle-class claims to virtue, but often with the kind of orientalist or racy tinge seen in the Weston photos.58 Snyder summarizes:

The threat that bachelors would be seen as feminized is at least partly counteracted by the invocation of an historical work ethic associated with production and manual labor, which enabled these representations of bachelor domesticity to reinvent woman’s (house)work as a form of manly play.59

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56 The quotation is from Anon., New York Herald (Sep. 18, 1852); republished in Higgins and Parker, ed., Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews, 438. See also Patricia Cline Cohen, The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York (New York: Vintage, 1999) for a description of male boarding houses during Melville’s day.

57 Snyder’s “A Paradise of Bachelors” is designed to challenge historians’ assumptions that single living tended to be deliberately anti-domestic, as well as the reputed “subcultural” status of bachelorhood. Though my critical focus is the interweaving of labor and leisure in the context of domestic male companionship, I should point out two things that Snyder observes as well: first, that, as Lily Bart’s early rendezvous with Lawrence Selden in Edith Wharton’s House of Mirth (1905) indicates, this companionship could include women and second, that it also included clubbing in many cases. See Snyder, “A Paradise of Bachelors,” on clubs as well as Anne W. D. Henry, The Building of a Club: Social Institution and Architectural Type, 1870-1905 (Princeton: Princeton School of Architecture and Urban Planning, 1976). For discussions of living situations slightly different from the one I analyze, see Philip Thomason, “The Men’s Quarter of Downtown Nashville,” The Tennessee Historical Quarterly 41:1 (1982): 48-66.

58 Another photograph from the Weston Collection shows a group of Yale students smoking a hookah together in a dimly-lit, heavily-pillowed interior.

59 Snyder, “A Paradise of Bachelors,” 268. Swiencicki, “Consuming Brotherhood,” itemizes a range of advertisements from men’s magazines that hailed both masculine domesticity and male.
This summary is a little misleading; woman’s work in the home had not been fully conceptualized as “labor” along the lines of work in the commercial sphere. Furthermore, manual labor appears in the examples that I will analyze more as a way of airing anxieties about the status and responsibilities of white-collar versus blue-collar labor in the new culture of professionalism toward which single men often strove. As in Thomas Eakins’s paintings of rail shooting, the visibility of physical labor by working-class men, black and white, shaped middle-class men’s depictions of the spaces of leisure.

In the case of chafing-dish cookery, masculine companionship is based on two roles; one man cooks, another man enjoys the fruits of this small labor. This is the formula we see in Eakins’s and Homer’s paintings of strenuous outdoor masculinity. Here, as in still-life paintings, the labor is as much productive of class as of dinner; the true work being performed is the learning of class behaviors – first, safely in a male-male environment, and ultimately in front of a mixed audience, with family and perhaps career companionship. These advertisements claimed to reduce the labor and expense of daily life, an appeal that simultaneously relies on a definition of housework as labor and pretends to reduce it through participation in the consumption of an object – say, a camp-stove or razor blade.

60 Marsh points to the beginnings of this understanding, referring to works such as Margaret Songster’s The Art of Being Agreeable (1897): “Furthermore, they insisted, the work of a housewife was ‘just as important’ as the husband’s breadwinning job, and therefore his wife was entitled to his income: ‘She earns it just as truly, and has just as much a right to it as he...’” (Marsh, “Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity,” 170). There is an extensive body of work on domestic labor in the nineteenth-century United States; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother: the Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave (New York: Basic Books, 1983) contains a good bibliography. For discussions of gendered work in a larger context see Barbara Drygulski Wright, et al., ed., Women, Work and Technology: Transformations (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1987).


at stake. Class may be in part inherited with race and family, but it is also something learned, and men practiced it with each other.

DECORATING LIKE A MAN

Several popular bachelor texts from the end of the century take the active creation of a masculine domesticity as a central concern. Oliver Bell Bunce’s Bachelor Bluff, a collection of essays that originally appeared in Appleton’s Journal in 1881, is narrated by Mr. Oracle Bluff, an Irving-esque old bachelor. He establishes his credentials as a commentator by bluntly voicing the myth of the masculine observer explored in the two previous chapters: “I am aware, of course, that all old bachelors are supposed to see things with jaundiced eyes only; but the real truth is, they are unbiased ‘lookers-on in Vienna,’ see what others can not see, and penetrate through disguises by which others are deceived” (13). To prove his acuity, early in the book Bluff denounces the living situation of a married friend, Mr. Appleby: “Appleby has no room in his own house, and a very small corner in the outside world, so completely does Mrs. Appleby fill the boundaries of Mr. Appleby’s sphere, and crush him into diminutiveness” (15). Though his focus is on decoration, the geometry of Bluff’s metaphor suggests that female presence itself is capable of expanding to fill any space. This metaphor also points to a physical space; Bluff does not like the breakfast-room in the Appleby house, and is

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63 See Snyder, “A Paradise of Bachelors,” and Marsh, “Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity,” for more of the many examples; see also Mrs. Burton Harrison, A Bachelor Maid (New York: Century, 1894), serialized that year in Century magazine, a text concerned with interiors and the relationships among gender, power, and domestic space; and Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr., The Decoration of Houses (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997 [1907]).

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inspired to contrast it with the layout of a bachelor friend’s little “book-room,” which doubles as the breakfast area. The room contains a vase, statuette, “rare print,” a bit of china, “warm upholstery,” “shining coffee-pot,” books, and “a new picture only sent home the day before” (17-18). Sounding like a catalog of the objects from a Harnett still life (including perhaps the still life painting itself) the description hints that men may decorate better than the Mrs. Applebys of the world. Later in the book, Bluff claims the traditional gendering of domestic space – that home is woman’s “area, her boundary, her sphere” – using the same trope he used to describe Mrs. Appleby’s intrusion on her husband: the issue of male domesticity resonates as a tension, rather than a given (23).

Bluff takes his suggestion about male decorating to another level by first claiming that decoration is an active enterprise, then acting as a decorating advisor himself. Active ideas and contemplation, Bluff claims, are required to “create a paradise of indolence, to fill the mind with an ecstasy of repose, to render home a heaven of the senses – women are usually too virtuous to do this. Daintiness in man takes an artistic form; in woman it assumes a formidable order, a fearful cleanliness, a precision of arrangements that freeze us” (27). If the earlier description of the contents of the still life painting seem familiar, the notion of “freezing” us in a “formidable order” here emerges as a formal parameter for the composition of the domestic still life. We might compare this imagery to that of The Social Club, with its calculated disorder, its precise messiness. In a way, Bluff argues that women could not make the kind of still life of domestic disorder that Harnett and Peto repeatedly produced, because of an inability to create “form” without

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64 Oliver Bell Bunce, Bachelor Bluff: His Opinions, Sentiments, and Disputations (New York: Appleton, 1883 [1881]).
In his description of the ideal home, Bluff includes both still life paintings and several examples of calculated disorder:

Even a little bric-a-brac enters my country-house.... Upon the walls hang several pictures of superb color - rich, still-life subjects that glow in deep tones, and catch radiant lights from the blaze on the hearth. Still-life subjects are chosen because this room with its dark walls might be somber were there not marked foci of color. But it is not somber. [...] There are large tables, massive and commodious chairs, many books...; they lie on tables, and fill low shelves that skirt two sides of the room. Warm-colored stuffs hang over the windows to exclude intruding draughts of air, and doors open into an adjoining room similarly furnished, save that a hospitable sideboard looks festive with china and glass. (65)

Just enough bric-a-brac, china, and glass, along with a few books lying out on tables, and the room has a “hospitable” look. Here masculine design creates a home that is at least as welcoming to the outsider as it is to the resident.

Kate Chopin, in The Awakening, provides a contrast to Bunce’s masculinist interior that clarifies the significance of a masculine decorating practice. Early in the book, Edna Pontellier’s husband Léonce comes home from an evening of masculine carousing and makes an ad-hoc still life of masculine disorder: “From his trousers pockets he took a fistful of crumpled bank notes and a good deal of silver coin, which he piled on the bureau indiscriminately with keys, knife, handkerchief, and whatever else happened to be in his pockets” (5). Léonce’s performances of this kind of interpenetration of the public and the private make Edna uncomfortable; his still life is not so much a memento mori as a reminder of Léonce’s power to control the boundaries

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65 On bric-a-brac and class, see Rémy G. Saisselin, The Bourgeois and the Bibelot (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1984). One of the things that is fascinating about Bunce’s book is the way it shares the fundamental consumerist-display mechanism (endless lists of interior details and vignettes of life in this environment) with decadent works such as Huysman’s A Rebours, yet uses that mechanism to opposite ends, to create a world of conventional morality.

66 Kate Chopin, The Awakening. (New York: Signet, 1976 [1899]).

67 There is a similar moment with a very different meaning, more akin to the nostalgia of the masculine tabletop still life, in Edith Wharton’s A Son at the Front (New York: Scribner, 1922), 50-51.
of the home and the family. For him the house and its contents are part of a social performance; because of his concern for social position, Léonce controls the interior decoration: "there were paintings, selected with judgment and discrimination, upon the walls. [...] He greatly valued his possessions, chiefly because they were his, and derived genuine pleasure from contemplating a painting, a statuette, a rare lace curtain – no matter what – after he had bought it and placed it among his household goods" (53-4). The tautology of Pontellier enjoying things "because they were his" turns out to be ironic; when Edna moves into her own "pigeon-house," he orders renovations to the big house in order to conceal the true story of their physical and social separation. Pontellier enjoys things because they are social evidence of "him." Edna’s house functions very differently:

It at once assumed the intimate character of a home, while she herself invested it with a charm which it reflected like a warm glow. There was with her a feeling of having descended in the social scale, with a corresponding sense of having risen in the spiritual. Every step which she took toward relieving herself from obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual. She began to look with her own eyes; to see and to apprehend the deeper undercurrents of life. No longer was she content to ‘feed upon opinion’ when her own soul had invited her. (101)

There is no hearth here, as in Bunce, to give color to the paintings; Edna herself is the source of that charm that her surroundings reflect. By extension, the interior is given meaning by the subjectivity of its resident, which that interior – by protecting one from "obligations" – in turn helps to foster. Wrapped up in this brief paragraph are powerfully literal associations of space, subjectivity, class, and vision, modeled on the ideal of ascetic bachelorhood we saw in the case of Hawthorne and Melville. Edna in a sense becomes not a late-nineteenth-century bachelor, but an older kind, generating her
subjectivity and making her home a “reflect[ion]” of it in a kind of “spiritual”
symbiosis.68

This is not to say that there is no labor involved with generating this interior. While Edna has some money to begin her new life with, the narrator stresses that she has begun to sell her own paintings. For Edna, painting is a product of domesticity; part of her struggle to clarify her own desires involves blurring the boundaries between labor and leisure (distinctions crucial to her husband insofar as they are gendered) until they no longer function categorically. For Bunce and most nineteenth-century commentators, the task was to describe how owning paintings could generate domesticity. Bunce’s inclusion of still life is tempered, in the quotation above, by noting that its chief contribution is merely color. Elsewhere Bunce (like many of his contemporaries) makes fun of “imitative” painting.69 But he also points out that heroic paintings do not belong in the home — and that still life is thus judged differently in this venue than it might be in the academy. In the home, “every place is for occupancy, and everything for use. We eat under similar pleasant conditions; our chambers have warm hangings, cheerful blaze on their hearths, good pictures on their walls” (66). Bunce’s claim to usefulness as a distinctively masculine characteristic of home decoration rings false to any reader of domestic reform and advice literature, such as The American Woman’s Home, for


69 See particularly Bunce, Bachelor Bluff, 93, “Mr. Bluff on Realism in Art.”
example. But his notion that certain kinds of images can be “useful” hints at more complex construction of the art world, and works hand-in-hand with his decorative motif of ordered disorder and pastiche.

The recurrence of the hearth in Bunce’s descriptions resonates with another extremely popular nineteenth-century bachelor text, Donald Grant Mitchell’s *The Reveries of a Bachelor*. Vincent Bertolini has explored the hearth in *Reveries* as the locale of erotic projection – a place where the material reality of a happy home intrudes into the bachelor lifestyle, evoking fantasies not of sex, but of marriage. While Bertolini explores this theme in the context of antebellum discourses of family and sexuality, his analysis ignores the fact that *Reveries* was popular throughout the nineteenth century; it went through many editions and was regularly referenced in critical discourse. In the case of Bunce, the hearth suggests a social fantasy – or at least, that the objectives of masculine domesticity may be conceived to be as much the generation of a space for male interaction as for a putative future married intimacy.

Mitchell’s text, like Bunce’s, insists on the productive qualities of disorder, but the hearth is not the only locale of masculine leisure. Mitchell’s bachelor, Isaac, wants

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72 Page numbers refer to Mitchell, *Reveries of a Bachelor*. The recovery of the bachelor’s authority in the home by converting his disorder and filth into “useful” narrative is reminiscent of Irving’s restorative deviance. Like Irving, Mitchell’s readers, he reports, write him letters of “sympathy” telling him that they find “heart” in the book (Mitchell, *Reveries of a Bachelor*, 55). Mitchell was a devotee of Irving, and can be read as modernizing Irving’s republican bachelor to appeal to an urban-industrial audience.
to smoke his cigar underneath his Aunt Tabithy’s favorite tree. She, despising his smoking as a dirty “abomination,” upbraids him while sweeping the porch (102). The bachelor makes a bet with her that he can prove that the cigar, far from being filthy and solipsistic, in fact promotes the transcendent thoughts, feelings, and conversation. If he is able to provoke her emotion, he wins:

On her part, Aunt Tabithy was to allow me, in case of my success, an evening cigar unmolested, upon the front porch, underneath her favorite rose-tree. It was concluded, I say, as I sat; the smoke of my cigar rising gracefully around my Aunt Tabithy’s curls;--our right hands joined;--my left was holding my cigar, while in hers, was tightly grasped—her broom-stick. (104)

Behind the sentimentalism of this contest, and symbolized by the cigar and the broom, is the contest of labor and leisure within the household, mapped onto the safer conflict between male and female. The wafting together of female adornment and cigar smoke foreshadows Mitchell’s victory. Even when his moment of triumph arrives, though, Tabithy is performing domestic labor, knitting, as he reads her his reverie and wins his smoking-place. What Isaac has done is to convince her that his leisure—smoking—is a form of labor: contemplation, which produces affect out of “a sun-shiny sheet of reverie” (103). But what was at stake, should he lose this contest, was Isaac’s “tobacco money,” which in the event of his affective failure was to go to his Aunt’s leisure consumption—to buy her ribbons. Offering her either entertainment or money, independent of the outcome Isaac’s “bet” is more of a “bribe.”

In his own space, the narrator brags about his destructiveness in the name of individual comfort: “I manage to break some article of furniture, almost every time I pay engaged with issues of work, leisure, and gender. That said, his seemingly studied avoidance of racial issues is worth further investigation. The meeting between the two men is described in Aderman, ed., Critical Essays on Washington Irving, 10.
it a visit; and if I cannot open the window readily of a morning, to breathe the fresh air, I knock out a pane or two of glass with my boot” (16).73 Compare this “inscription” with the boot to one by Mitchell’s contemporaries, Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne, in the panes of glass at the Wayside, a common practice at the time (fig. 38). The Hawthornes cause an irruption in the smooth surface of the glass – which functions as a barrier between the interior, domestic world, and the public. (If almost transparent, this barrier is the less transparent as a result of their inscription.) But it is a disturbance in the name of that world, performed on and for the domestic interior. Mitchell’s narrator forces the confluence of those two worlds, to “breathe the fresh air” by breaking the glass barrier, ironically, in the name of perfect privacy. Where Bunce envisions male domesticity as producing a space for male performances of the self, Mitchell’s Reveries wander less toward fantasies of companionship than to the ideal conditions for creating the self. For Isaac Marvel, as for Edna Pontellier, the goal of their roughly crafted spaces is reverie’s product – the ability to generate and then perform internal complexity.74

If Bunce and Mitchell describe different socio-sexual objectives for male domesticity, Frank Chaffee’s Bachelor Buttons lies somewhere between them. Unlike the other texts, which both hail and insulate a middle-class audience, Bachelor Buttons performs its work by a kind of uncomfortable semantic transgression, weaving the

73 The reveries themselves are organized around the “stuff” of bachelorhood: matches, cigars, and fire-grates. The bachelor awakens each morning to an environment like the one depicted in Haberle’s A Bachelor’s Drawer: “Out of this room opens a little cabinet, only big enough for a broad bachelor bedstead, where I sleep upon feathers, and wake in the morning with my eye upon a saucy colored, lithographic print of some fancy “Bessy” (Mitchell, Reveries of a Bachelor, 15).

74 A reviewer of the time apparently noted, and found excessive, the interdependency of the bachelor’s literal and metaphorical “interiors”: “If the phantasy life of the Bachelor is not real, he describes its furniture, its flowers, and its books well enough to permit his readers to construct his dwelling within their own parlors.” Quoted in Arnold G. Tew and Allan Peskin, “The Disappearance of Ik. Marvel,” American Studies 33:2 (Fall 1992), 11.
Figure 38. Herbert W. Gleason, photograph of inscriptions on a windowpane from the Wayside, Concord, MA. Courtesy of the Concord Free Public Library, Robbins Collection.

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language of labor and class into an ostensibly leisured narrative. The book’s title and its explication in the preface evoke the everyday material culture from which still lifes draw their energy. The narrator suggests that his text has a relationship to “literature” analogous to that of the still life painting’s relationship to “art” – that is, “not a tale with a moral, though, withal, not an immoral tale. [...] ’Tis but a thing of shreds and patches and steals into good company with all due humility” (vii). It is composed of fragments, eschewing the presumably higher values of calculated formal structure, yet the author insists that it has its “reason,” its utility. Given his book’s focus on detail and domesticity, the author concedes its status as “low” literature. But his argument for masculine domesticity and for domesticity as labor suggest a larger claim.

Chaffee’s book justifies masculine domesticity via class-coded distinctions between different kinds of labor and their rewards. The chapter “With One’s Own Hands” focuses on “taste” in decoration. There is a lot of labor implied, through descriptions of the decoration of a bachelor’s home, but what this labor produces is a particularly individual adaptation of the interior. Moreover, the decorator in this case is an artist – not a manual laborer, but one who labors manually in the spare time created by his white-collar work. Work here becomes “pleasure;” “with... your obedient fingers for the faithful and powerful slaves” (11). The actual work is disembodied, as the extremities of the body become subject to slavery, the extremity of labor. Equally, the issue of the cost of labor is defused – after all, how could one’s fingers be anything but obedient? Of course, one’s fingers were suspected to perform sexual labor for the bachelor as well. The appropriation of manual labor within middle-class leisure is enacted here to
normalize masculine domesticity (and, through double-entendre, single male sexuality). The chapter’s title also suggests this mélange of labor and sexuality, for what form of labor, after all, is missing from the bachelor’s house but reproduction; masturbation is positioned here as its substitute.

The knot formed by sexuality and labor in Chaffee’s narrative serves to displace questions about class. At the time Chaffee wrote, the social identifier “bachelor” was less class defined than ever before in America. Command over performances of sexuality—textual ones like double-entendre, for example, become a marker of class distinction. The labor of interior decoration is recounted in language that knits together a myth of class ascension with masculine exertion: “The rest of the house is just as quaint and pretty, but these two rooms serve to show what one man can do with an old country house, at the outlay of very little money, considerable work, and more good taste. My artist friend did all the painting and most of the other work with his own hands, and almost anyone with willing hands and reasonable ingenuity can do as much” (34). (Of course one must already have “good taste” and an “old country house” before one’s willing hands are of much use.) But it is leisure time performances that give real value to this newly genteel labor of masculine decorating, that cement and celebrate it. What do our bachelor decorators do with their spare time in the self-decorated haven? They watch working girls labor: “This western outlook is not upon New York’s sweetest quarter. The nearest building to the left is a huge factory, in which work a crowd of girls. When the ‘blond young man’ comes to see me, he spends half his time at the window nearest this factory,

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75 See Newbury, “Healthful Employment.”
76 This is among the conclusions in Laipson, “I Have No Genius for Marriage,” and Chudacoff, The Age of the Bachelor.
opera-glass in hand, gazing down at the ‘pretty maids, all in a row,’ as they deftly ply their trade of box-making” (73).

Masculine interior decoration, then, was a locus of powerful debates about how to maintain masculine privileges. Still-lifes of the domestic appealed to and aiding in the creation of a new market: bachelors or married men who wanted to create a new domesticity that both did not preclude leisure beyond the home and showed male decorating as a kind of thrifty labor. This raises at least two questions. The first has to do with the relationship between the feminization of the profession of painting and the choice of masculine still life as subject matter. Keeping in mind that with the exception of Eakins, the painters under discussion in this chapter were single men, did this new subject matter offer the possibility that art could be seen as masculine labor? If we are to see artists appealing to a masculine audience, making the previously feminine associations of the genre into a man’s affair, then does still life evoke the labor of the artist the way writers suggested interior decoration could for men at home? The second question is inevitably connected to the first: as Bryson reminds us, these appeals are never made independent of the status of still life as “lowly” art in the world of the circulation of images. Were still life paintings predominantly in private collections, serving as interior decoration, or on public display? What kinds of venues did they end up in, when – and why?

ART AS LABOR AND LEISURE

Was trompe l’oeil painting work? Contemporary experts were divided on the question. A reviewer of the painting The Social Club, discussed above (fig. 26), claimed
in 1879 that “this imitative work is not really so difficult as it seems to the layman… when we come down to works like this of Mr. Harnett, it is evident that only time and industry are necessary to the indefinite multiplication of them.” Far from a displacement of the artist from the image, the writer saw Harnett’s paintings as “works in which the skill of the human hand is ostentatiously displayed working in deceptive imitation of Nature.” The metaphors chosen by the reviewer stand in a fascinating tension with his claim for the ease of production of the image: what is required is time and “industry,” and the hand is “working” to deceive. A viewer of After the Hunt (fig. 23) was more openly impressed by Harnett’s ‘hidden hand’: “The extreme care which reason convinces the beholder must have been constantly exercised in finishing all the exquisite details of such a painting is entirely concealed. We see not the artist nor his method of working.”

Whatever the disagreement among critics, artists knew that trompe l’oeil painting was work. What Bryson says of flower painting can also be applied to trompe l’oeil as an approach:

Flower painting is labour-intensive to a degree that exceeds other still life genres: short-cuts are technically impossible. As a result, it can flourish only when the demand for painting is sufficiently buoyant to permit the necessary and

77 Quoted in Alfred Frankenstein, After the Hunt: William Harnett and Other American Still Life Painters, 1870-1900 (Berkeley: U of California P, 1953), 50. This reviewer’s language seems influenced by Ruskin; Harnett’s lack of the innocence of the eye is described as almost immoral in this article.


considerable outlay for the painter's labour. What the paintings therefore display, at a level distinct from their content, is the sheer skill and effort of their production, and the economic value and investment which this represents. (108)

As Maria Chamberlin-Hellman has discovered, by the 1870s, still life painting was a standard exercise in American art schools — something every art student had to do. As Trompe l’oeil aspired, then, to raise "exercise" to the level of the intellectual, the "laborious" part of art, to its apotheosis — while still humble, it posed conspicuous labor as the thing to be consumed and vice-versa. Other areas of artistic production were making a similar effort at this time; as several critics have recently explored, the arts and crafts movement in England and America attempted to bring down the ideological curtain erected by fine arts between the physical act of creation and the art object itself. It is important to remember that the division between hand and mechanical labor was not complete in the nineteenth century, and in particular when it came to the appreciation of images by residents of the United States. Images made by hand, by machine, and by both were widely available, from photographs and engravings to hand-colored prints in magazines like Godey’s Lady’s Book and Currier and Ives’s inventory, to mass-market cheap oil paintings, to paintings and sculptures. As Saul Zalesch has discovered of cheap oil paintings, "unlike other new kinds of goods at the time, these works not only offered utilitarian benefits, they also were widely perceived as status markers because of the longstanding association of oil paintings with sophistication and aristocracy. Americans

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80 Still life subjects were part of National Academy training; Lemuel Wilmarth, a teacher there, argued that both still life and casts were essential to mastery. "During the 1870s, the painting of still life started to enter the American academic curriculum. The drawing of such subjects had a long history in the art schools, especially those for women. [...] Painting courses dedicated specifically to still life were further institutionalized at other American art schools in the last decades of the century, fostering a greater interest in the subject among artists." Chamberlin-Hellman, "The Artist and American Art Academies," in Bolger, et al., ed, William M. Harnett, 142.
became so eager during the 1880s to own oil paintings that they bought the cheap oils despite stern warnings against them by prescriptive writers.”\textsuperscript{82} As the age of mechanical reproduction took hold in the visual arts, each medium and its audience attempted to bring old understandings of hierarchies of medium and subject to bear on the latest spectacle.\textsuperscript{83}

But did trompe l’oeil painters display this labor – did they make an issue of it? There is truth in Harnett’s critic’s claim that the hand of the artist is evident in his images, laminar though they may seem. David Lubin has claimed that the surfaces of Harnett’s works both are an analog for fin-de-siècle masculinity and demonstrate the kind of finished, perfect surface then becoming common in the machine-made commodities flooding United States markets. In Lubin’s formulation, their unruffled, stoic exteriors, eschewing fashionable stylistic fireworks for a down-to-earth professionalism, make these paintings like men. While men may indeed have tried to be smooth-surfaced both in visage and in affect, these paintings are not. Looking carefully at the surfaces of Harnett’s paintings, one will find that most of them use surface texture that transgresses the plane of the canvas as an illusionistic strategy, particularly in areas of highlighting. In Harnett’s \textit{Old Models}, for example, there are flecks of dried paint or some other tiny,
chunky objects painted over in the area that represents the ceramic mug, intermittently, to
give it surface texture. Elsewhere in this work the paint is built up on the torn pages of
sheet music and in the highlights on the horn and the bow. In The Old Violin (1886),
there is almost excessive impasto on the sheet music highlight, casting (in the current
lighting of the National Gallery, at least) a convincing shadow that constructs the
represented curl of the paper. Finally, as many critics have pointed out, Harnett refuses to
render typographic detail in the fragments of newsprint he simulates, reminding us that
this is a painting when we reach the closest level of scrutiny. Running the risk of
repeating Lubin’s mistake, it seems to me that in fact this serial irruption, combined with
Harnett’s refusal to render legibly the details of newsprint, is less reminiscent of manly
impenetrability than it is of masculine subjectivity at its mysterious best: the most
authentic masculine face was both inscrutable and demonstratively labor-intensive.84

The labor of still life is also demonstrated in the apparent contest between the
painter and the other forms of visual representation available to his audience. Like their
Dutch predecessors, American still life painters often depicted objects that had been made
with immaculate craftsmanship, trumping their counterparts in the decorative arts with an
illusion of the real object. As Bryson observes,

[a]s a result, there is an exuberant interplay between the labour concentrated in the
depicted objects, and that embodied by the painting. In part, the value of the
painting comes from the value of the objects, which puts the painter's labour in
the lesser and dependent position. But in as much as painting outstrips and

84 The surfaces of Jean Baptiste Simeon Chardin's famous still life paintings, which in their
rendering bring to the viewer's attention the limitations of the human eye, are smoother and more
predictable than Harnett's. In the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for example, wait until a guard isn't
looking, and crouch down on the ground underneath the paintings so that the surface is silhouetted by the
room lighting. The current hanging of Harnett's Old Models at the Boston MFA is a good comparison,
because it is hung near a window; the crossing of the natural light with the interior illumination makes it
relatively easy to see the surface texture of the work.
subsumes the other crafts, it establishes its own labour as superior, and from that position of superiority confers on the crafted objects its own greater worth. (124)

We might be able to read this contest into the sporting pictures of Homer and Eakins as well – are Homer’s Right and Left (1909) and his trout fishing paintings like Ouananiche Fishing (fig. 22) better catches than the best sportsman could make? Is Harnett’s After the Hunt better, since he is trying to fool sharpshooters’ eyes, and succeeds (a reenactment across disciplines of the classic contest between the painters Zeuxis and Parrhasius)?

Certainly the trompe l’oeil painters knew that they were going to be compared to photographers, and it is worth considering the world of photography as another target of this competition. Still life images were one of the earliest subjects for art photography, not the least because the subjects would sit still for long enough to expose a sharp image. The disadvantages of photography, from the painter’s point of view, included its lack of color, its size constraints, and its difficulty generating deep focus without excessive exposure. In a typical example (fig. 39), we see some of the by-now familiar ingredients of the masculine still life: the ceramic pitcher, the simple glass, a nut or perhaps a pipe-bowl. More specifically in the case of Harnett, Nickel has pointed out that the hunting still lifes of the studio of photographer Adophe Braun may have been both inspiration and competition (fig. 40). In the face of new technologies of representation, still life painters did not give up, but began to try to trump the camera as much as the eye.

The issue of competition between artists and craftsmen returns us to the question of what significance gender had for these artists in their understanding of their work’s place in the hierarchy of the fine arts. Harnett, at least, appears to be masculinizing both
Figure 39. Henri Le Secq, Still Life with Jug, ca. 1858. Photograph, 35.3 x 26 cm. George Eastman House, Rochester, New York, gift of Eastman Kodak Company.
Figure 40. Adolphe Braun, *Hare and Ducks*, ca. 1867. Carbon print. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, David Hunter McAlpin Fund.
domesticity and artistic labor here, in effect displacing or even reversing Reynolds's smooth logic of still life as “high” craft but “low” art. That is, labor that produces class refinement – be it domestic labor or a painting – could be seen as a “high aim.” I will argue that Harnett attempted to raise still life through gender identification. Certainly he did this by evoking the associations explored above, but there is other evidence of his production that suggests high aims. His attempt failed because of the way in which patronage and class trumped gender-focused techniques of representation – until the middle of the twentieth century, when still life was “recovered” as a predecessor to “modernism.”

ILLUSIONS OF MODERNITY: GENDER, AUDIENCE, STILL LIFE

Harnett was aware of the circuits of patronage and art criticism that affected his genre. In a rare comment on his influence, Harnett was reported as saying, “perhaps what I may say will be of some encouragement to young men who are situated as I was, and possibly my experience may prove to them that money and friends are not wholly necessary in beginning a career as an artist.” Harnett's patrons, by and large, were dry-goods merchants. His paintings, unlike those of most still life painters, sold on occasions for very high sums. As a point of comparison, Winslow Homer's *Eight Bells* sold for $4700 out of Thomas Clarke's famous collection in 1899. Over a decade earlier,

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87 See Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 212. See Swinth's discussion of the development of the gallery system of patronage, which made possible many of the purchases discussed here. For Swinth the question of the patronage mechanism is inseparable from the development of gendered practice of art: “The gallery and dealer system also appealed to male artists because it served the gender politics of the art world.
Harnett’s *Ease* sold for $5000, only a year after it had been painted. Famously, *After the Hunt* sold for $4000 to saloon owner Theodore Stewart in 1885; in 1889 *The Old Cupboard Door* sold for $5000. These paintings, in many cases, are quite large, and large uncommissioned still life canvases suggest “high aims” for a supposedly lowly art. Harnett was self-conscious about the development of his career as well. He spent time studying and exhibiting in Munich, a sojourn calculated both to hone his technique and to enhance his status at home; Harnett had little difficulty finding patrons with his exhibition record at home and overseas.

Peto’s works, on the other hand, focused more on traditional vanitas themes and eschewed the sharp-focus mimetic naturalism of Harnett’s images. As discussed above, they also more explicitly evoked the world of labor and exchange; even when he depicted leisure Peto’s moments of pleasure were sober compared to Harnett’s. In perhaps a more typical trajectory for the still life imagist, Peto went from selling paintings out of academy exhibitions for moderate prices (a version of *The Poor Man’s Store* sold for $200 in 1880) to making cheap images ($25) for individuals, businesses, saloons, and drugstores, to painting signs. An 1887 advertisement for a reproduction of Harnett’s *The Old Violin* gives a sense of what Peto was up against (fig. 41). Touted as “The Best

By the 1890s, men’s practice in the realms of refinement and commercial art loomed as problematic as women pressed tenaciously, and with noticeable success, for a place in the field” (Swinth, Painting Professionals, 100).

88 See Bolger, “The Patrons of the Artist,” 82.

89 Drucker points out that as Peto’s career goes on, the “tone of his works is more frequently intense, melancholic, and nostalgic, with his collection of materials approaching the theme of passing time of the vanitas far more closely than it does in his own commissioned rack paintings” (Drucker, “Harnett, Haberle, and Peto,” 45).

90 The Braun catalog describes still lifes as “suitable for decorating a dining room” (quoted in Nickel, “Harnett and Photography,” 179). We know from twentieth-century exhibition catalogs (discussed later) that many of the trompe l’oeil paintings by Peto and Haberle ended up in private collections; while some were undoubtedly gifts, the paintings were not prohibitively priced for middle-class buyers. As the

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"The Old Violin."

"Perfect finish, matchless color and absolute correctness of detail are commanding features of the most remarkable picture that has ever been shown in an exposition."—(Cincinnati Commercial Inquirer.)

"It is a fact that an officer had to be placed on duty behind the hall to keep skeptical people from attempting the removal of the newspaper scrap with their finger-nails."—(Cincinnati Register.)

"This remarkable still-life picture is by W. M. Harnett, of the Signific school, who seems to take a wicked delight in defying the possibilities."—(Cincinnati Times-Dem.)

Size 3x4, mounted on canvas and stretcher. Elegant zinc hard-wood frame. Sent by express carefully packed in box, on receipt of $2.50. Competent agents wanted.

THE F. TUCHFARER CO., CINCINNATI, O.


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Selling Picture Ever Offered to Agents” and coming at 24 x 35 inches (only very slightly shorter than the original), complete with “elegant 3-inch hard-wood frame,” the consumer could get this “most remarkable picture” for $12.00. At the end of his career, Peto was painting in bulk, reusing his canvases as tastes changed; late in life he sold cheaply or gave away to his neighbor James Bryant a large stack of canvases with prices of three and four dollars written on the backs.91 Peto's paintings are very small, usually around ten by fourteen inches, and in the catalog of the 1950 Brooklyn Museum exhibition, most of the owners (the images were predominantly in private hands at this point) were from New York or its vicinity. Though for years Peto and Harnett worked in the same Philadelphia neighborhood, knew each other and shared ideas, Harnett’s effort to develop his career, deepen his training, and compete with other masculinist painters and craftsmen led him to higher returns.92

Yet as Doreen Bolger has pointed out in her discussion of Harnett’s patronage-circle, Harnett’s buying audience in the United States was a small one, and one interested in the social and economic functionality of his canvases.93 The dry-goods merchants knew each other, and circulated praise of Harnett’s paintings, keeping up a ready market for his images. But ultimately, Harnett’s paintings were seen in places like Wanamaker’s

domestic writers discussed in this chapter suggest, still life was a notoriously inexpensive genre; see C.O.W., “Winglets,” Harper’s Weekly (Feb. 9, 1867), 91.


92 Many of Harnett’s paintings suffered a similar fate. Harnett’s For Sunday Dinner, which was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1888, sold with John Hedges’s collection in Philadelphia in 1889, and “eventually turned up in the back room of a junk shop in San Francisco, where the present writer found it in 1942” (Frankenstein, “John Frederick Peto,” 23).

windows or in Stewart’s saloon, attracting customers and depicting the stuff of masculine consumerism and leisure, not in museums, representing the best of American talent or depictions of life in the United States. We must remember that, though he had intimations of his early demise about a year before his death, Harnett’s later works were getting larger, more time-consuming, and more complex up until his death in 1892. But they were not getting the attention of the kinds of patrons who were building the public institutions of art viewership that gave authority to art criticism and that had the power to canonize artists. As a comparison, Homer’s *The Fog Warning* entered the collections of the Boston MFA in 1894, only nine years after its creation and only two years after Harnett’s death. Purchased by the Norcross family for the Museum, Homer’s work was in the museum for 45 years before a Harnett painting, *Old Models* (Harnett’s last completed work), joined it. Not until the second half of the twentieth century did most museums begin actively pursuing these paintings.

William Sturgis Bigelow, the bachelor host of Tuckernuck, was one of the Boston MFA’s most significant patrons. Given the seeming harmony between the masculine sporting culture of his island retreat and the images of Harnett, it would not be unreasonable to expect him to have purchased one of the artist’s images. Not only was Harnett not represented in Bigelow’s collection, only images by William Babcock and John La Farge represent still life at the *fin-de-siècle*. There is no trompe l’oeil, old or new. Formally Babcock’s and La Farge’s works were of the school Bigelow seems to have patronized most (with the exception of his extensive Orientalist collection): the American impressionists. These artists did many still life paintings, all using nascent aestheticist techniques; Henry Adams and William Gerdts have recently compared the styles and patronage of the impressionistic and the illusionistic still life schools in
For Bigelow, a friend of John Singer Sargent, style was a commodity, and Homer, La Farge, Julian Alden Weir, and painters like them were the appropriate sources for his purchasing. The signifying power of the masculine world of middle-class labor and leisure, of the new male domesticity, did not function in the elite, international context that Bigelow forged for himself. Not collecting trompe l’oeil still life, in fact, identified Bigelow as a proponent of cosmopolitan style and of a masculinity very different from that represented in the still life paintings. Companionship and fraternality may have bridged the class-delimited spheres of Bigelow’s and Harnett’s art-worlds, but gender alone did not move a painting from one into the other.

The question then becomes, if Harnett’s attempt to use gender to raise still life out of its usual feminine associations and into high art failed, why do these canvases now appear in almost every fine arts museum in the United States? Until the 1940s and 1950s, very few of these images were part of major collections. As mentioned earlier, the earliest Harnett acquisition by the Boston MFA was in 1939. The exhibition catalog from the first Peto retrospective in 1950 reveals that only seven out of fifty-one paintings were in public institutional collections; in 1962, in a catalog from the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut, 12 of 31 paintings were in museums. (The increased percentage was a product of the later date of the exhibition; by this time, museums had

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94 See Adams, “A Study in Contrasts”; and William Gerdts, Painters of the Humble Truth: Masterpieces of American Still Life Painting, 1801-1939 (Tulsa: Philbrook Art Center, 1981). Gerdts, it should be pointed out, was himself a still life collector who avoided trompe l’oeil; his investment in the genre (literally and metaphorically), along with his bizarre ranting about, among other things, art history that involves gender analysis, make his scholarship suspect. See his introduction to Danly and Weber, For Beauty and for Truth.

95 Henry James’s assessment of Walt Whitman’s work, that it was an attempt to raise prose “by a prolonged muscular strain, into poetry,” could be said to characterize the attitude of collectors of Bigelow’s class toward Harnett’s work with still life. James, Nation 1 (Nov. 16, 1865), 625-6.
been trying to acquire these now proto-modernist images for some time.\textsuperscript{96} As Elizabeth Johns has recently observed, Harnett (and other still life painters) were resurrected as part of the argument in American art history in the 1940s and 50s that something called American “conceptual realism” was an innate tradition of the society. “In recent survey texts used by students of American art history,” Johns finds, “Harnett is fundamental to the thesis that Americans had a strong attachment to realism, whether psychological or social.”\textsuperscript{97}

Certainly the projects of some collectors boosterized this nationalistic episteme. The M. & M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, donated to the Boston MFA along with collections of American furniture, watercolors, and drawings, is an example. The Karoliks, Martha and Maxim, agreed ahead of time with the museum that it would be the home of their collection, and bought art in consultation with it from the late 1930s until the 1980s (a fund in their name continues as a resource for image acquisition). The Karoliks were an odd and anachronistic couple. When Harnett first painted \textit{After the Hunt}, for example, Martha (née Codman) was 27 years old and a Boston heiress; Maxim would be born eight years later to a Jewish family in Russia. They appear to have bought American still lifes, however, only after they were married; it seems that the Codmans, like Bigelow, bought none in their time. Karolik wrote that the collection “was made for one purpose only: To show what happened in this country in the art of painting in the period of half a century – from 1815 to 1865 – and to show the beginning and the growth of American landscape and genre painting. The aim was to make a collection… of

\textsuperscript{96} Frankenstein, John Haberle exhibition catalog (New Britain: New Britain Museum of American Art, 1962). Elizabeth Johns’s findings, though based on later shows, agree with mine; Johns confirms that
American art for the nation.” These are actually three distinct goals, but here claimed as
“one purpose only,” they are elided, naturalizing the projects of history and nation-
building. “To show what happened” in United States art is thus to build not merely a
collection, but “the nation” itself.

But more influential for museum purchasers (and certainly compatible with the
itinerary of national collecting) was the way in which the works of these painters were,
and continue to be, reconstructed as part of the modernist movement by critics, painters,
and historians. Frankenstein himself was responsible in large part for this
contextualization; the exhibition catalogs cited above and one for a Whitney Museum
exhibition in 1970 all insist on an ambiguous connection between the trompe l’oeilists
and modern abstract art. In the three years following the 1950 Peto exhibition at the
Brooklyn Museum, Maxim Karolik bought one Peto each year; they are all currently in
the Boston MFA. Frankenstein’s book on Harnett draws very similar kinds of
connections. Barbara Novak, in her influential American Painting of the Nineteenth
Century, tried to draw a connection that is characteristic of this line of argument:

Harnett’s mellowed objects, splintered doors, and torn labels thus have an interesting relation to the rehabilitation of the discard which has extended from Cubist collage and Dada to the junk sculpture of the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. Quite apart from similar European practices, the ruined object seems especially at

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98 MFA Boston, Selections from the M & M Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815-1865 (Boston: MFA, 1976). The date of this publication, coinciding with the bicentennial, is significant for this argument. Karolik quoted in the introduction by Lucretia Giese and Laura Luckey, Department of Paintings.
99 Frankenstein, The Reality of Appearance: The Trompe l’Oeil Tradition in American Painting (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1970). To give some sense of its influence: in one year this show traveled to the National Gallery (where it was seen by over 100,000 people), to Berkeley, San Francisco, and Detroit.
100 See Frankenstein, After the Hunt, 4, 149, 82.
home in an American tradition within which the thing has always held a privileged position.\textsuperscript{101}

Precisely what that "relation" is is hard – perhaps impossible – for these critics to say, beyond that it appears to be a formal coincidence. The relationship is always left vague; these critics teleologically associate masculine trompe l’oeil with modernism, as if it were still problematic to suggest a more constant, constitutional feedback between high culture and low. John Wilmerding claims of contemporary artists that

Not surprisingly, their methods and themes share much with those of Peto and his generation. [Jim] Dine has collected works by John Haberle, and both [Jasper] Johns and [Roy] Lichtenstein have freely drawn on the trompe l’oeil examples of Peto and William Harnett. In particular, Lichtenstein undertook in the 1970s a series of canvases depicting stretchers with attached studio items, which consciously recall details from Haberle, Harnett, and Peto.\textsuperscript{102}

"Consciously" and "not surprisingly" only if we know these artists’ works and minds well, since Wilmerding does not engage in a sustained formal comparison. We must also assume the American tradition is at work here and not the more widely acknowledged international still-life tradition.

Behind many of these criticisms lay an effort to create a specifically “American” modernism that descends, despite its abstractness, from an “American” tendency to appreciate the pragmatic and the natural.\textsuperscript{103} This is not to argue that there is not a strain of influence between trompe l’oeil and modernisms. But in this case it is as likely that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{101} Novak, \textit{American Painting}, 230 (emphasis added).
\item \textsuperscript{103} A more recent effort to argue these artists as “proto-modern” is Drucker, “Harnett, Haberle, and Peto.” Like Novak’s, this is a teleological attempt to “identify their anticipation of a modern sensibility” (Novak, \textit{American Painting}, 37). Drucker tries to make a more powerful argument for the masculine trompe l’oeil painters as proto-modern – by which she means “engaged in art-about-art games of representation” – comparing these painters to Marcel Duchamp, Yves Klein, J.S.G. Boggs, and the Cubists and Dadaists. But if, as Drucker says, these works so successfully present themselves as “anti-illusionistic,” why did they get classified as illusionistic – and worse, “imitative” – by critics, collectors, and museums
\end{itemize}
painters like Harnett were the enemy as much as the inspiration for the more abstract painters that followed them. Even twentieth-century buyers preferred the looser stroke and higher contrast of Peto to the more eerie rendering of Harnett—though they often bought what they thought were Harnetts. After Frankenstein uncovered the famous Petos-as-Harnetts forgery scandal, in part by attending to the striking formal differences between the two artists, a collector wrote him a note of congratulation that, in Johns’s words, “revealed one of the greatest ironies of the detection project: many of the first buyers of Harnetts preferred the softer style and warm tonality of the works that were ultimately attributed to Peto.”

Drucker concludes that “the paintings of Harnett, Peto, and Haberle... stay a fair distance from investigating the definition of art as social or cultural activity per se.” (46) For contemporary critics, visual evidence of an artist’s self-conscious engagement with the formal tactics and iconologies of his or her time is often the standard for judging the resulting works. But the invention of trompe l’oeil still life as proto-modernist high art in the middle of the last century directed questions about these paintings away from the gender issues that shaped them in the first place. On one hand, trompe l’oeil painters knew that their works entered the historical series of still life paintings; they may have sensed, at some level, that theirs was one of many tools for making changing notions of consumerism, domesticity, and class seem more coherent. On the other hand, as human beings, their sense of the power of these discourses to shape their patronage was uneven, and their manipulation of form and content to that end had correspondingly variable

\[104\] Johns, “Harnett,” 106.
success. But taken in the context of their circulation and construction, these paintings — through their deliberate attempts to appeal to a certain audience in specific, if changing contexts — did in fact push against boundaries their contemporaries were simultaneously trying to construct. Our sense of the hegemony of late nineteenth-century art hierarchies should be refined into a sense of the terms of debate and conflict that emerged between competing circles of artistic consumption. Sets of artists, patrons, and venues — Harnett, private collectors, and the saloon and jewelry store, or La Farge and Homer, Bigelow, and the Boston MFA — coalesced because of a complex set of negotiations. The triumph of modernism was not a foregone conclusion; the dominance of “the playful question of art as art” had to be argued for and purchased at a price.

CONCLUSION

In 1886, William Harnett gave a still life in the mode of his already-famous After the Hunt to an old friend, William Ignatius Blemly. Unlike his other copies of the work, this one was very small — only about 2 ½ by 1 ½ inches. It was painted on the surface of an object that one would normally find depicted within one of his images: a match box (fig. 42). In a further inversion of the usual scale and style of his works, Harnett humbly made a monochromatic image, using only brown paint on white enamel, with noticeably linear mark-making. The matchbox certainly evoked the famous painting, and as a physical, portable emblem of Blemly’s friendship with Harnett, would have been a

105 In this case, perhaps, those boundaries were the walls of the modern museum, being built by buyers like Bigelow.
Figure 42. William M. Harnett, matchbox, 1886. Silver with brown and white enamel, 2 ½ by 1 ½ in. Blemly Family Collection.
valuable memento. But Harnett took it a step farther by personalizing the other side of the matchbox with an engraved dedication to Blemly. Here the still life has become a token of friendly exchange—certainly, as a matchbox, it was a reminder of their leisure-time consumption, evoking, perhaps, moments of “coloring meerschaums” together. As a craft object, the superimposition of painted image on engraved silver evoked the controversy over Harnett’s mode of painting; was it art or craft, work of genius or just work? On a more personal level, though, it is a reminder of the days Blemly and Harnett spent together as benchmates at the silver engraving shop in which they got their starts—a reminder of the shared labor that brought them together, but that also made them “independent.” Thus Harnett’s making of a miniature (at the same time as his trompe l’oeil images were getting larger) showed his friend that he had neither forgotten nor derided their friendship, their craftwork.

The bachelor world was both a source of inspiration for these painters and a body of potential patrons in an unpredictable art world. The masculine still life was thus doing two things at once: trying to raise the lowly still life to a higher status (in the case of Harnett’s oeuvre) and bolstering the new masculine domesticity. Because it focuses on

\footnotesize

106 The Blemlys kept track of their friend Harnett; a scrapbook they kept is in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.


108 Drucker offers an excellent reading of Haberle’s A Bachelor’s Drawer in this context: “In this depiction Haberle makes no claims for a personal domain divorced from its construction in the realms of public activity—the bachelor appears as a creature without a distinct interior life, without reflection, contemplative domesticity, or intellectual activity of a rarified variety.” This as a result of the relentless literalness and detail included in the image, far surpassing that of any Harnett or Peto image. Because he was a resident of New Haven (not, say, Philadelphia, New York, or Boston), employed outside the art world, and for the most part isolated from the image-exchange circuits in which his contemporaries worked, “the sense of self in Haberle’s portraits seems radically different..., distinctly public and defined by its patterns of consumption, by evidence of activity rather than through expression of individual character.” A Bachelor’s Drawer, like many of Haberle’s images, is an extended satire, and thus uses formal tactics and

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the daily and the small, calling attention to its own low status, “still life expresses... the suppression and confinement of those outside the charmed circle of history and greatness.” This element of its appeal is important when thinking about the utility of these images for men, both middle and working class, who patronized the bars, pool halls, drugstores, and department stores where trompe l’oeil paintings were displayed. While evoking the domestic struggle for gendered labor, they also mediate masculine worries about exclusion from the public sphere – the active world, for bachelors. For married men, they romanticized a pre-married, pre-public world of authenticity and shared masculine camaraderie.

The labor and leisure split, though, can only be understood insofar as it is read against a political axis of (individual) competition (democracy, self-sacrifice) and (collective) companionship (fraternity, partnerships). These terms define themselves against each other, but they also become indelibly linked to one another. Bourgeois male competition must by definition be cooperative. Moreover, the terms involved are unified in dyads by related and oppositional activities: one’s business life and one’s chafing dish cookery can be seen as oppositional – as work against home – yet at the same time the condition of one makes the other bearable, even creative.

The usefulness of this is on one hand to make visible how the still life and hunting genres are both opposed and complementary: Homer and Eakins (like Jack London, perhaps even Roosevelt) operate within an artistic practice that is about labor, bounded both by the oppositions of competition and companionship and by the links between mass-produced masculine content to mock the consumerism that could masquerade for a complex interiority – or for “higher aims.” Drucker, “Harnett, Haberle, and Peto,” 49.

109 Bryson, Looking, 156.
professionalism and hunting. Harnett brings together his own mix of elements around the same political tension of competition and companionship. Taken together, both flesh out a decidedly bourgeois world of manhood. Bachelor subjectivity was useful both as an object in these paintings and as an imagined, interpellated viewer: as with privacy and intimacy discussed in the earlier chapters, it allowed for the flexible construction of tensions between domesticity and public labor and between competition and comradeship.

Discussing the role of gender in this interpellation of a male viewer, Lubin observes that still lifes “were a highly articulated cultural product that encouraged some viewers more than others to think of themselves as men. [...] These paintings were thus public enumerators of gender difference, treating gender as an essentially static and reified thing rather than as a forever tentative state of mind constantly requiring renegotiation and reinforcement.” But to qualify the end of this statement, if, as I suggest, both the “big” paintings and the “little” ones encouraged the continuing negotiation and appropriation of manual labor by the middle classes, as well as the continuing evolution of male thought about masculine companionship, then in fact they did encourage the notion of the masculine as a contingent construct, reminding men of their absent, male, other half. To take this a little farther, on one hand these paintings participated in the facilitation of masculine companionate leisure – evoking a world of labor even as they depict its product, leisure. The painting as object simultaneously functioned as a class marker, as evidence of consumption, and as an active creator of domestic individuality and appeal – and hence, functioned isomorphically as a bachelor’s

110 Lubin, Picturing, 298.
wife. To return to Bryson’s arguments about the feminized still-life, then, I would argue that in the American fin-de-siècle, trompe l’oeil still life in its social function can be thought of as female, not feminized or effeminate. Crafting the perfect still life involved both mastery of form and of the kind of gendered content that, like marriage, would promote domesticity, but better than it, would more perfectly facilitate masculine extra-familial companionship. It is in these terms that a bachelor writer about the chafing-dish framed that piece of cookware, calling it “Chaffinda” or “my better half. Every bachelor has a wife of some sort. Mine is a chafing-dish.”

Bunce hints at the same thing when one of his bachelors argues for marriage by urging, “But think… of some pretty creature sitting by the side of the urn, serving your coffee, applauding your pictures, listening to you as you read a bit of news from the morning journal” (18). Here the woman is objet d’art – as much urn as sitting beside it, “listening,” “serving,” and harmonizing with the other “pictures.” But Bunce’s narrator adds a level of complexity to this formula by refusing to elide domestic and public consumption of art. He suggests that still life is art for domestic consumption, with a different function from that of the museum-bound image. When describing the paintings that go into their ideal homes, the bachelors agree that “these paintings were not tragedies, nor histories, nor portraits, nor narratives. They had no stories to tell but the story of beauty. There were no groups of men and women busy at nothing, and projecting noisy costumes upon the scene” (55). Again, as our narrator stresses, everything in the

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112 The most extreme case of this refusal is Bachelor Bluff’s stance on nudity, in “Mr. Bluff on Morals in Literature and Nudity in Art,” which stages an argument between Bluff and a Swinburneian interlocutor. Again Bluff has the last word; in this case, saying that nudity is always immoral in art, including Hiram Powers’s The Greek Slave. Bunce, Bachelor Bluff, 219.
house is “for use.” Elsewhere, when discussing “Morals in Literature and Nudity in Art,” he elaborates on this distinction, insisting that there is a difference between the world of art criticism or international standards and something he calls “the popular imagination” (219). Bunce here was trying to give a recognizable shape to the diaphanous art market, to a critical and economic order that had been fractured by mechanical reproduction, penny-stereoscopes, panoramas, and new art venues from Barnum’s American Museum to the department store. When we think about the flow of influence between the domestic world and the new conditions of art purchasing, display, and consumption, we must remember that this gray area was a battleground for the power of art and literature to shape both the careers of artists and society at large. As the audience for art broadened in the United States at the end of the century, gendered notions of domesticity re-emerged in still life painting in ways structurally similar to the ways Bryson, Svetlana Alpers, and Simon Schama have found them in Dutch seventeenth-century still life. That is, painters seeking an audience to buy their work came to see a gendered interior as a new rationale for both a masculine domestic interior as subject matter and for pursuing a “lower” form of painting that would presumably be raised by the new gendering of trompe l’oeil as masculine. The misconception was that gender was the most powerful factor in shaping the reputation of the artist. Bigelow’s simultaneous deployment of masculine outdoor companionship with a stylistic valorization of art suggests that patronage and the valuation of a recognizable, merchandisable style had more sway than gendered subject matter or attempts to hint at the labor involved in painting. If in the past still life had been too effeminate to rise in the art world, American trompe l’oeil was too masculine to rise – or more properly, the ideology of gender itself predominated over the image’s potential meanings, limiting its circulation in other spheres of art and power.
In a recent review of a Winslow Homer retrospective, Sarah Burns points out that for the exhibitors, "[m]ost important... is the fact that this Homer is all man, a real man." Burns places gender at the locus of issues of national identity and international culture, but her sense that being "manly" conveys an unequivocal stamp of genius and heroism is keyed more to our current sense of modernism than to the uses of the category in the past. Even today the dream of solitary genius persists, producing images of "real life" out of an ideal philosophic isolation from that life and its demands of production and reproduction – a dream that is "reassuring" (now across gender and racial boundaries) in what appears to be an increasingly "polymorphous society." Homer, a lifelong bachelor whose personal life he kept deliberately vague in an age of artistic celebrity, began that solitary life at a time when bachelorhood's cultural meanings themselves were being contested. His paintings seem to represent and encourage the shift from sentimental yet rational manhood toward the elemental, transcendent, yet professedly deeply subjective masculinity that Theodore Roosevelt, George Bellows, Jack London, and other men of the time embraced. This was the bachelor figure as modernist icon. But this figure had a popular and literary past that was considerably more complicated; the sympathetic bachelor of Washington Irving was just as influential in this past as the ascetic one problematized by Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman. And as the case of trompe l'oeil still life painting and its audience shows, what was designated by the "bachelor" had, by

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the end of the century, lost any definitive class connotations. This history suggests that just as Homer himself was a more complicated “man” than his hagiographers would have us believe, so “bachelor” survived in public discourse not simply because it evoked transcendent genius, but because it was recognized as a parody of that idea as well; it was controversial, and thus useful, because it had foibles, yet also because men could imaginatively take part in it as a stage of development, a pathway to the creation of independence and character through performances of self-definition and self-support.

Bachelor narrative and still life synchronize as marginal, low modes of (self) representation, but they do so paradoxically. If “all the great men are bachelors,” as we are told in Pierre, they represent themselves in a life they do not lead. That is to say, the bachelor as intellectual great represented an inherent contradiction; his domestic life was small, “low,” and disorganized, while his public life served as an ideal of application to a goal. Washington Irving’s story about Roscoe, from early in The Sketch Book, is another example of this fusion of high and low in a masculine intellectual figure: despite his intellectual prowess and reputation in the world of letters, Roscoe’s disorganized domesticity leads to the sale of his library – a tragedy because of the sense of his public worth built up by Irving’s descriptions. Or, to return to Walt Whitman’s struggles with “bachelor,” one thinks of Horace Traubel’s descriptions of Whitman’s home in Camden: buried in strata of epistolary matter, proofs, photographs, and drafts.

American men made much drama out of the moments in which they attempted to control the influence of the domestic upon the public character. More than a mere fear of sexuality, there seems to have been a profound and sustained sense that there was a causal relationship between one’s domestic order and one’s success in public life. John Adams admonished himself early in his career, to “let no Girl, no Gun, no Cards, no flutes, no Violins, no Dress, no Tobacco, no Laziness, decoy you from your books,” virtually

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describing the contents of Haberle’s Bachelor’s Drawer.¹ (This same Adams would propose that the United States’ national seal depict the Choice of Hercules – that theme so central to Longfellow’s “Excelsior!”) Herman Melville staged some of the most memorable of these rejections of masculine paraphernalia. In one of Pierre’s many futile efforts at self-liberation, he proclaims: “Hitherto I have hoarded up mementoes and monuments of the past; been a worshiper of all heirlooms; a fond filer away of letters, locks of hair, bits of ribbon, flowers, and the thousand-and-one minutenesses which love and memory think they sanctify:— but it is forever over now!”² And in Moby Dick, Ahab famously eliminates a male ritual to make room for an unsatisfied subjectivity, throwing his pipe overboard; “I’ll smoke no more—.”³ Perhaps Bartleby the scrivener, who lacks even the zone of consumption, a home, is the most extreme example. At key moments, and in ways whose symbolic powers weighed heavily, the stuff of manhood had to be rejected.

Yet at almost the same moment that Whitman must have embarked on his rejection of “bachelor,” Emily Dickinson was taking it up. Referring to herself as “by birth a Bachelor,” she used the term both to describe herself and in her discussion with her sister Susan of Donald Grant Mitchell’s Reveries of a Bachelor.⁴ Dickinson, like Whitman, seems to have had her doubts about her culture’s politics of gender and sexuality. But for Dickinson it was the figure’s ability to dramatize the construction of literary authority across the boundaries of the public and the private that was useful. As a

¹ Adams quoted in Herbert, 190.
² Melville, Pierre, 230.
³ Melville, Moby Dick, 127.
woman writer with a tense and limited engagement with public authorship, wearing the mantle of the bachelor served transgressive purposes – forcing her circle to think beyond their imaginary boundaries of gender and authorship. Yet perhaps more compelling for Dickinson was the dream of authority through asceticism that the bachelor offered. In praising Mitchell’s *Reveries*, Dickinson claims to her sister, “[w]e will be willing to die Susie – when such as he have gone, for there will be none to interpret these lives of our’s.” But she also claims that the two women's intellectual musings “would be far more profitable as ‘Marvel’ only marvelled, and you and I would try to make a little destiny to have for our own.”

Dickinson, of course, did not go on to leverage the bachelor pose in public, to argue through it or against it that authorship should hold a particular kind of social power. But both her use of the bachelor and Whitman’s show that subjectivity becomes attainable through a performance of gender – a performance that sometimes benefits by not fitting that normative, hegemonic mold of gendered expectations. I would also argue that a performative self-consciousness is necessarily an inter-subjective one; this dissertation traces a binary of the mythos of the individual – the bachelor – whose figure is used to promote inter-subjectivity – a way of being that, in turn, appears to have re-shaped bachelorhood as companionate (between men, of course, but in Dickinson’s case, between sisters). As expressed in the literary world, this ideal of sympathetic identification, which becomes one of the paradigms of popular fiction, works via the breakdown of barriers between the private and the public, making the bachelor central to the dramatization of public authority.

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seen from one perspective, this dissertation has been part of a history of the way men negotiated affective display. Irving’s “sweetness,” the domestic tensions of Hawthorne and Melville, and the friendships between urban males at the end of the century have been my themes. Emotional display, as recent scholars of the history of emotion have shown, was not prohibited to men, even in public, in the nineteenth century. And with the rise in popularity of sentimentalism in literature and art, American writers had to position themselves in relationship to affect – to partake in its power to organize culture and to gain admission to the minds of readers. The bachelor, whose mobility, whiteness, and middle-classness allowed him to roam the city, the country, the world, could choose in narrative to make the reader his emotional companion, to revel in sentiment (properly expressed) in a shared private space of reading into which the reader was hailed.

But from another angle, in the symbolic realm, my interest is in the way in which the bachelor offered writers and artists an opportunity to raise the difficult inward and outward negotiations of self at a time when marriage and reproduction were increasingly being claimed explicitly as the foundation of public well-being. The bachelor’s potential sexual transgressions could be channeled into a restorative authorial pose, one that made sentiment manly in Irving’s writing. The bachelor ideal transgressed marital bonds; as I suggested in chapter two, Hawthorne and Melville were married bachelors writing themselves into an imaginary homosocial realm devoid of, yet literally and imaginatively dependent upon, female emotional responses. And in the case of still life painting, bachelors were imagined as part of a fraternity of men, sharing private places and often,

56, to Susan Gilbert Dickinson, 9 October 1851.
as in the case of the not-bachelor Whitman, private parts. The bachelor, as he became viable in much American writing, was in a sense always queer, operating outside of a normative reproductive register. At its strongest, queer critique fractures the centrality of biological reproduction to our social and symbolic orders and imaginations. The bachelor was queer in the most powerful sense given to us by queer theory; that is, in his appropriation, his re-signifying of “manhood” and the home, a constructive or at least instructive subversion through “inversion” of hegemonic performances of reproduction, race, gender, sexuality, class.

But I would like to conclude with a caution about the residual power of the bachelor, to use Raymond Williams’s terms, and to return to the theme with which I began this coda. We are not safe from the tangles of the private and public selves staged through the bachelor ideal as it played out in the nineteenth century. The residuum of the bachelor trope has moved beyond the gender, class, and racial parameters that originally structured it. In his “Presidential Address 1999: Humanism and Heroism,” to the Modern Language Association (MLA), Edward Said argues for a restoration of what he calls the “critical model for humanism with a heroic ideal at its core.”7 Said’s talk suppresses two productive tensions I have explored: the dynamics of domesticity and intellect, and of labor and companionship. He claims that we must restore to the center of our expectations of humanistic knowledge-work a sense of personal self-sacrifice and an appreciation for the isolation this often requires. His examples – Freud’s having written all his notes by hand, Johann Sebastian Bach’s hand-copying of the music he used to

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learn with—are classic emblems of what I have explored as the bachelor ideal in bourgeois culture. The very basic notion here is that there is a causal connection between the daily life of a scholar and the quality of his intellectual production. At one extreme we find, perhaps, the monastery and the monk (private, reliable and worthy), perhaps on the other extreme would be the politician in a democracy (utterly public, utterly unreliable). Said, perhaps reminded of the physical struggle of word production by his own severe illness in the mid-1990s, resurrects this individualistic ideal without acknowledging that the production of humanistic knowledge has always been, and is increasingly, communally performed. In the natural sciences it has been rare for some time to find a single-authored conference paper or publication. In the humanities, despite two decades of work valorizing local communities of knowledge production as part of postmodernist critical discourse, it is rare to find anything other than a textbook that is co-authored. Said is correct to point out that word processing has changed the individual’s relationship to the text one is producing, but he does not point out the amazing possibilities for sharing and iterating texts that electronic publication has brought.

He is, in all probability, aware of these things. But that they can go undiscussed in an MLA presidential address—after both beginning his speech with a long list of acknowledgements, some of which are to those doing the technological work of the MLA—shows the power of the trope of the lone, “private”-less intellectual. Similarly, it seems to me, the question of tenure postponement and reproductive leave (as “opposed to,” perhaps, the usual, “productive” leave?) for academics, so hotly debated in the Chronicle of Higher Education, shows that to this moment the question of the relationship between the domestic and the public intellectual is premised on notions about the causal connections thought to hold sway between them.
The dilemma was a conscious one for Whitman: in the marginalia to his copy of a review of Sir Henry Taylor's *Eve of the Conquest*, discussing the tone of "self possession" in Dante's writing, Whitman wrote, "Every first rate poet is felt to be the regent of a separate sphere, and the master of a complete poetic world of his own." The carefully phrased passive attribution "is felt to be" registers the uncertain relationship that Whitman, the all-inclusive, all-dissolving poet to be, had with this "feeling"; yet his other marginalia suggest that he is on a quest to discover how to be a first rate poet himself. Here, then, is the dream of asceticism, phrased in a way that sounds startlingly modern if we allow the phrase "separate sphere" to resonate ahistorically for a moment. A writer who listed the humble things in his house (and the house that supported them) and whose appeal to female readers was legendary here evokes the spatial metaphor we have come to associate with drawing distinctions between the male and the female. In the course of this dissertation, a number of metaphors crucial to past critical conceptualizations of female space have emerged as central to the production of the bachelor-intellectual: gendered spheres, the writer in the garret, and the room of one's own, to name the most notorious. The formulation of the material requirements for creating writerly female subjectivity were taken directly from the fulcrum of the male modernist imaginary -- and that imaginary itself drew on a long foreground of debate over the male self and its requirements. On the one hand, I would like this to suggest that the commandeering of subjectivity by women writers and critics in the late nineteenth century astutely identified

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the economic and ideological roots of the creation of public authority by appropriating domestic space for public (re)production. Ungendering by co-occupation the writer's space, the workplace, and even the political subject, this move has forced a rethinking of the superstructure of gendered social being. But on the other hand, at the broadest level, I want to suggest that the commandeering of these tropes resulted in the un-gendering of a concept that is far more dangerous: the notion that an emotionally rewarding family life and the production of works of profound intellectual significance are fundamentally at odds.


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