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

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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.

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-siecle still life paintings by William Harnett and John Peto that 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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