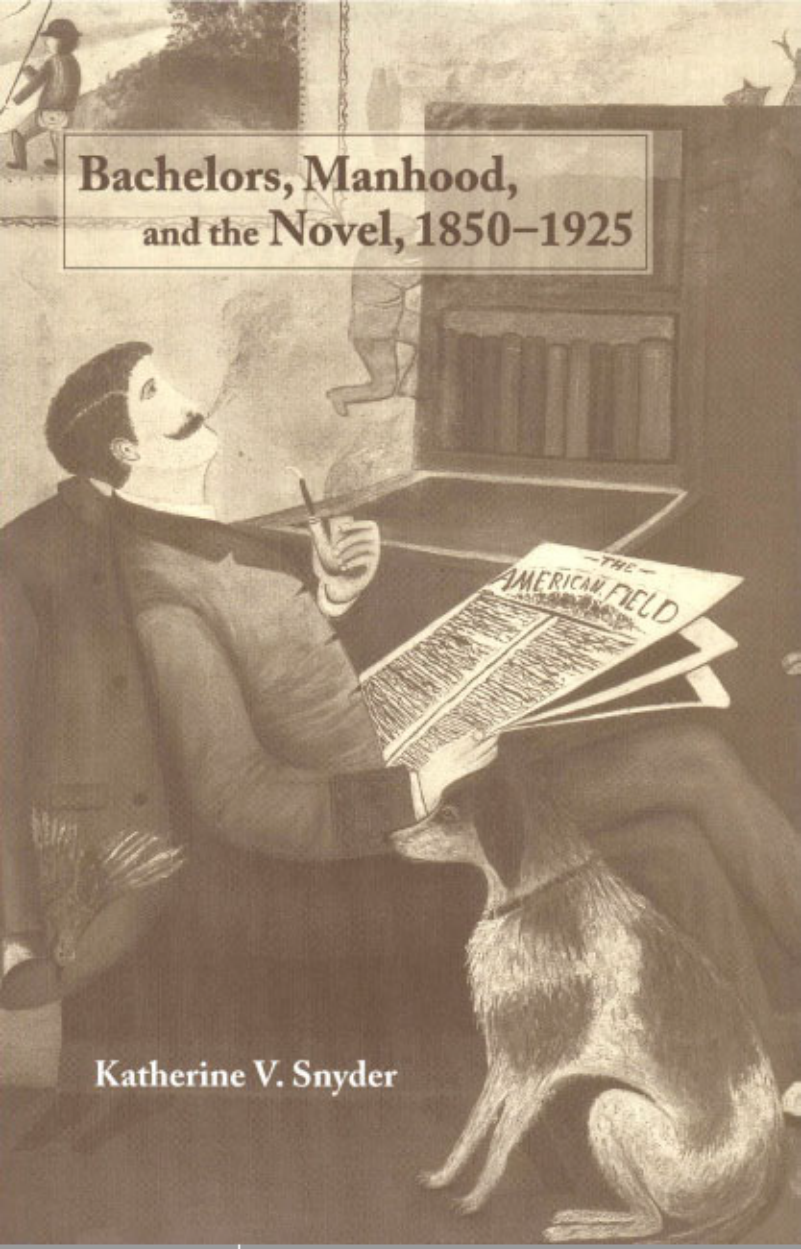
Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850–1925



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BACHELORS, MANHOOD, AND THE NOVEL 1850–1925

Katherine Snyder's study explores the significance of the bachelor narrator, a prevalent but little-recognized figure in pre-modernist and modernist fiction by male authors, including Hawthorne, James, Conrad, Ford, and Fitzgerald. Snyder demonstrates that bachelors functioned in cultural and literary discourse as threshold figures who, by crossing the shifting, permeable boundaries of bourgeois domesticity, highlighted the limits of conventional masculinity. The very marginality of the figure, Snyder argues, effects a critique of gendered norms of manhood, while the symbolic function of marriage as a means of plot resolution is also made more complex by the presence of the single man. Bachelor figures made, moreover, an ideal narrative device for male authors who themselves occupied vexed cultural positions. By attending to the gendered identities and relations at issue in these narratives, Snyder's study discloses the aesthetic and political underpinnings of the traditional canon of English and American male modernism.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

http://www.cambridge.org

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First published in printed format 1999

ISBN 0-511-03684-1 eBook (Adobe Reader)
ISBN 0-521-65046-1 hardback

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Acknowledgments

This book, like so many first books, began life as a doctoral dissertation. As a graduate student at Yale University, I benefited from the support of my director, Richard H. Brodhead, and from the input of other members of the faculty, including Wayne Koestenbaum, Linda Peterson, Patricia Meyer Spacks, Robert Stepto, Candace Waid, Bryan Wolf, Mark Wollaeger, and Ruth Bernard Yeazell. My time in New Haven was enhanced by the friendship and feedback of Alison Hickey, Catherine Nickerson, and Susan S. Williams, all of whom remain sources of encouragement and inspiration. While in graduate school and since leaving there, I have received advice and support from colleagues beyond the Yale English department; I would like to mention here Henry Abelove, Peter Agree, Nancy Armstrong, Carol Bernstein, Howard Chudacoff, Peter Gay, Mary Poovey, Catharine Stimpson, and William Stowe. I have also received invaluable responses to the manuscript of the book from Jonathan Freedman, Christopher Looby, Victor Luftig, Joel Pfister, and Hugh Stevens. This is also the place to offer my thanks to my editor, Ray Ryan, for shepherding this project into publication.

The English Department of the University of California at Berkeley has provided a rich and rewarding environment in which to develop this work. I would like to communicate here my appreciation to those who have read portions of the manuscript as it evolved, advised me on strategies for writing, and/or offered camaraderie and much needed diversion. I am particularly grateful to Elizabeth Abel, Janet Adelman, Anne Banfield, John Bishop, Mitchell Breitwieser, Anne Cheng, Jenny Franchot, Catherine Gallagher, Steven Goldsmith, Andrew Griffen, Dorothy Hale, Priya Joshi, Jeffrey Knapp, Sharon Marcus, Samuel Otter, Carolyn Porter, Susan Schweik, and Alex Zwerdling. I have also gained a good deal from the students at Berkeley, especially the graduate students in my fall 1995 James and Conrad seminar and the

members of the "Nineteenth Century and Beyond" discussion group. Jeffrey Santa Ana and Freya Johnson provided helpful research assistance, and Jeremy Crean carefully proofread the final draft of the manuscript and indexed the book. I offer here a special thank you to Kerri Smith, undergraduate research assistant extraordinaire, whose contributions were vital to the final stages of manuscript preparation.

I am indebted to the responses of audiences and commentators at the many academic and professional fora in which I have presented portions of this project, including the Modern Language Association Conference (1993 and 1996); the American Studies Association Conference (1994 and 1998); the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies Conference (1995 and 1998); the Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians (1996); Narrative, an International Conference (1995); the British Comparative Literature Association Conference (1995); and the Central New York Conference (1992). The 1996–97 Fellows of the Townsend Center in the Humanities offered beneficial feedback at a critical juncture. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to present my work and ideas to students and faculty at Berkeley, at Wesleyan University where I taught in 1992–93, and at Bryn Mawr College where I taught in 1991–92.

The dissertation phase of this project was generously supported by the Mellon Foundation in the Humanities. The University of California at Berkeley has been very generous in material support, and I would like to thank here the English Department chairs who have fostered my work: Frederick Crews, Ralph Rader, and Jeffrey Knapp. This book would never have been completed without release-time from teaching made possible by grants from the Humanities Research Fellowship Program; the Townsend Center in the Humanities; and the Faculty Development Program. A grant from the Hellman Family Faculty Fund and a Regents' Junior Faculty Fellowship also provided welcome material aid. I have benefited greatly as well from research assistance made possible by Research Assistantship in the Humanities Grants; a Junior Faculty Research Grant; a Faculty Mentor Grant; and several grants awarded by the Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program.

Last but never least, I want to acknowledge dear friends, especially Erika Milvy and Pearl Soloff, Jerome and M.D. Buttrick, Rick, Rebecca, and Olivia Lowe, Adam Grant, and Laura Payne, who have kept me grounded in life beyond the walls of the academy. For their warmth, encouragement, and good humor, I offer my love and appreciation to my family: Margaret, Robin, Rebecca, Emily, and Jessica Hamilton,

and Arthur and Marilyn Snyder. A special thank you to my mother, Elise W. Snyder, for alternately holding my hand and kicking me in the pants, and for doing more than I can say here. No words can express my gratitude to Tim Culvahouse, my husband and my best friend, for being there for me through it all, for making the bad moments better and the good ones truly wonderful.

Abbreviations

BR	*The Blithedale Romance*
C	*Chance*
CT	*The Complete Tales of Henry James*, vols. VI, VII, and IX
GG	*The Great Gatsby*
GS	*The Good Soldier*
LC1	*Henry James: Literary Criticism*. Vol. I: *Essays on Literature, American Writers, and English Writers*
LC2	*Henry James: Literary Criticism*. Vol. II: *French Writers, Other European Writers, and the Prefaces to the New York Edition*
LJ	*Lord Jim*
WH	*Wuthering Heights*

Introduction

Percival Pollard's "The Bachelor in Fiction," a review essay that appeared in *The Bookman* in 1900, begins by asserting the relative rarity of English literature which "concerns itself directly with bachelors."[1] Pollard admits that certain well-known examples of the literature of confirmed bachelorhood do spring to mind, counting among these Israel Zangwill's *The Bachelors' Club*, J. M. Barrie's *When A Man's Single*, and the "famous book" of "Ik Marvel," the 1850 bestseller *Reveries of a Bachelor*, which was apparently so famous that, even in 1900, its title could be left unspecified. But Pollard, in keeping with his persona of the bibliophilic connoisseur, abjures discussion of these obvious instances: "My purpose here is to point not so much to the familiar, famous writings on the state of single blessedness, but to dally rather with certain volumes which the general public either forgets or passes by" (p. 146). The ensuing catalogue brings to light an impressive number of lost or lesser-known bachelor fictions of the 1890s, including Richard Harding Davis's *Van Bibber*, George Hibbard's *The Governor*, F. Hopkinson Smith's *A Day at Laguerre's* and *Colonel Carter of Cartersville*, Robert Grant's *A Bachelor's Christmas*, Edward Sandford Martin's *Windfalls of Observation*, Eugene Field's *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*, and K. M. C. Meredith's *Green Gates: An Analysis of Foolishness*.

Most of these bachelor books rate only a passing mention, but the last novel in the series, which Pollard lauds as "the most captivating story of bachelordom ... of recent years" (p. 147), receives fuller treatment. Pollard's plot summary of *Green Gates* details the story of a "vain, fastidious, sentimental" bachelor of forty who is roused from his inveterate "thought habit" by a sudden and unrequited love for a girl many years his junior. This ludicrous old bachelor manages to "become fine for one moment of his life, at any rate, when he meddles with the girl's intention to do a foolish thing": "When it is all over, when his meddling has saved the girl from disrepute, if not from death, he goes home to his

books – his books, that in the days of his perversity had become perverse themselves and were now in the direst confusion" (p. 148). Although the bachelor preserves the girl's virtue, he can neither save her life nor save himself from his own perversity, which is apparent in the promiscuous mixing upon his library shelves of authors of diverse nationalities, historical periods, and genres. The presence amidst this "unruly jumble" of "that madman Nordau, who, along with the help of Lombroso, has succeeded in classifying himself!" (p. 148) makes the bachelor's very attempt to classify his books seem itself doomed to degeneracy, perhaps even to criminality and madness.[2] He can no more "bring order into his life" (p. 148) than he can successfully bring order to bookshelves that support such depravity.

My study, too, takes as its topic "The Bachelor in Fiction." My reading list and critical aims, however, are worlds apart from Percival Pollard's and, for that matter, from those of the bachelor of *Green Gates*. My selection of texts does not, as Pollard's does, form a subcanon or even a countercanon of literature about bachelors. Rather, I focus upon an array of bachelor texts which are firmly ensconced in our current canon of pre-modernist, proto-modernist, and modernist fiction, a canon that includes such novels as Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880), Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900), Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915), and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Nor do I aim, like the *Green Gates* bachelor, to taxonomize or otherwise enforce a normalizing order on the "perverse" fictions that I read here. Rather, I mean to demonstrate how the order of normativity, the proper regulation of boundaries both gendered and cultural, is crucially at issue in these canonical bachelor texts themselves. Much as these fictions of bachelorhood are proper to our current modernist canon, the figure of the bachelor was also at the heart of the bourgeois domestic world that was often the norm for, and a normalizing force in, the novel.[3]

I am concerned here not simply with fiction featuring bachelors, the broader category that Pollard identifies in his study, but with bachelor-*narrated* fiction. Bachelor characters do double duty as first-person narrators in a startling number of texts of the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet bachelor narrators seem to have blended into the background of canonical, British and American fiction, perhaps because of the very familiarity of their voices. The bachelor narrator is a "figure" in the double sense conceptualized by Roland Barthes – both an imaginary subject or character and a narrative device or trope[4] – but this peculiar bridging of the thematic and the formal has virtually

escaped critical notice. One aim of this book, then, is to defamiliarize the consummately familiar voice of the bachelor narrator. What does it mean when a bachelor tells the story in a novel? How does narration matter?

This study focuses, moreover, not simply on bachelor-narrated fiction, but mainly on *high-cultural* and *modernist* fictions narrated by bachelor figures. I am concerned here to map the intersections among the historical figure of the bachelor, the use of the bachelor as narrator in pre-modernist and modernist fiction, and a tradition of novelistic authorship which sometimes crossed but more often helped to widen the "great divide" between high and low culture that developed during this era.[5] Not coincidentally, this cultural divide occurred along lines strongly marked by gender differences.[6] The gendered differences – between men and women, and also between men – which were fundamental to the construction of the highbrow/lowbrow split also contributed to the classificatory troubles embodied by the figure of the bachelor.

Bachelors were a necessary resource for the domestic institution of marriage, yet they were often seen by their contemporaries as disruptive to domestic life or sometimes merely extraneous to it. They were thought to be both admirable and contemptible, enviable and execrable, dangerous and defanged. The contradictions evident in and among these pairings evoke the conceptual and practical challenges that bachelorhood presented to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century conceptions of bourgeois marriage, family, and domestic life. A variety of demographic shifts in the United States and Great Britain over the course of the "long nineteenth century," and especially in the latter half of this period, including a rise in average marrying age and a decline in the rate of marriage, contributed to contemporary interest in and worry about bachelors.[7] The fascination with bachelors is evident, for example, in the boom in novels, stories, poems, and essays about bachelorhood published in mass-circulation periodicals during this period.[8] This explosion of popular bachelor discourse attests to the uneven developments that cultural ideologies and institutions of marriage and domesticity were undergoing during this era of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and modernization.[9] Bachelors were a troubling presence within and beyond the already troubled world of the bourgeois family home.

Bachelor trouble was, fundamentally, gender trouble.[10] While they were often seen as violating gendered norms, bachelors were sometimes contradictorily thought to incarnate the desires and identifications of

hegemonic bourgeois manhood. The late nineteenth-century figure of the bachelor was thus conceived as "*at the same time* an aspect of a particular, idiosyncratic personality type *and also* an expression of a great Universal": both a separate species of man and a representative modern man.[11] This contradictory status indicates the instability of and competition between different models of manhood. Such uneven developments in gender identities encompassed, but were not limited to, the late nineteenth-century transition from a middle-class ideal of civilized manliness to one of primitive masculinity.

A concomitant of the emergence of new styles of normative and counternormative bourgeois manhood, and of the attendant shifting of the boundaries of what constituted proper bourgeois manhood, was a change in the definition of bachelorhood itself. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has theorized a late nineteenth-century transition from bachelorhood understood as a lifestage to bachelorhood understood as a character type. The contest between the character type and the lifestage definitions of bachelorhood – both of which also remained simultaneously in play for the male bourgeois subject – contributed to the paradoxical definition of bachelors as both different from *and* also the same as other, "normal" men. Sedgwick clarifies the homophobic potential of each understanding of bachelorhood, as well as the contribution of the conceptual incoherence of these concurrent definitions to the constitution of the intrinsically homophobic system of homo/heterosexual definition. This system, which is itself based on a conceptual incoherence generated by "minoritizing" and "universalizing" models of sexual identity, was reinforced by the incoherent coexistence of minoritizing and universalizing views of bachelorhood.[12] Sedgwick argues that the mid-Victorian emergence and late Victorian development of the bachelor as a character taxonomy based on "sexual anaesthesia" strategically "desexualized the question . . . of male sexual choice," effecting a homophobic erasure of the specificity of male–male sexual desire.[13]

Although the homophobically panicked, sexually anaesthetic bachelor type does appear in some of the texts that I consider, this type is not typical, as my survey of popular writings on bachelorhood in the next chapter shows. Indeed, a rich and polymorphously perverse range of fantasmatic identifications and desires are palpable, though not always explicitly or consciously asserted, in narrative discourse uttered from the gendered subject position of the bachelor. To the extent that such homophobic erasure *is* at work in the bachelor narratives I discuss, I do try to make such panicked occlusions visible by attending to the

eroticized activity evident in these figures' narrative utterances. The excesses and occlusions of these first-person narratives often reveal homoerotic desire and its panicked erasure, but they also disclose a wider range of desires and identifications, both transgressive and normative. One could argue, for example, that the unrequited love of the *Green Gates* bachelor for a woman half his age is a coverup, or a displacement, or an expression, of closeted homoerotic desire and homosexual identity. But one might equally well argue that the old bachelor's feelings are based on his identification with and desire for the woman's youth; the difference in age that apparently comes between him and his female object is a salient axis along which his emotional investments travel.[14] Such an age differential is normative in cross-gender relations of the nineteenth century; after all, the marital union of a forty-year old bachelor and an eighteen-year old woman is standard novelistic fare. Yet this bachelor's desires also seem to verge upon the perversely counternormative; in addition to homosexuality, some other unspeakable names for his unrequited love might include pedophilia, incest, and masochism. The key point here is that, both before and after the eruption of his ultimately unconsummated desire, this bachelor does not suffer from an absence of feeling.

The bachelor narrators whom I consider are, similarly, far from anaesthetic in their erotic identifications and desires. In fact, the wide variety and sheer intensity of their erotic and identificatory energies might lead one to describe these figures as voyeuristic, fetishistic, and/or masochistic, psychoanalytic classifications which carry a negative, pathologized valence. The intrasubjective and intersubjective relations by which these figures define themselves and others can be understood as "deviations" from or "perversions" of normative masculine desires and identifications. As such, these relations can be revalorized as gesturing toward alternative, counternormative, or "queer" masculine sexualities and genderings. But the intrasubjective and intersubjective relations by which these figures define themselves and others also signal, perhaps to an even greater extent, the presence of the perverse *within* what has been conventionally demarcated as masculine heteronormativity.[15] What is alternative often turns out to be proper to the mainstream, if necessarily disavowed by its proponents. My primary concern here, then, will be with the paradoxes of the bachelor's relationship to normative domesticity and normative manhood, and with the ways that these paradoxes make this figure so enigmatic as a speaking and/or writing subject of novelistic narrative discourse.

The ambiguities of the bachelor narrator's relation to domestic and gendered norms also make this figure particularly expressive of the ambivalences of male, high-cultural, pre-modernist and modernist literary authorship. Just as the cultural boundaries that defined bourgeois domesticity and hegemonic manhood were permeable and shifting in this period, so too were the boundaries which separated high culture from culture defined as low, mass, or popular and also, as one century segued into the next, the boundaries which separated modernist writing from nonmodernist writing.[16] All the authors considered in this book shine, more or less vividly, as stars in the firmament of current academic literary canons. Yet all struggled, albeit to different degrees and with varying strategies, with what they experienced as competing desires for popular and critical success. These struggles were simultaneous with the historical rise of the popular woman writer and the vast and rapid expansion of literary markets. Correspondingly, many of these male writers experienced their struggles on and against the literary market as "melodramas of beset manhood," in which they performed the part of the long-suffering victim, and sometimes the scrappy survivor, of a debased mob of female readers and writers.[17] One subtlety which this psychic melodrama tends to elide is the fact that economic success and aesthetic success were marked not only by the gendered difference between female and male authorship, but also by the gendered differences between different styles or models of male authorship. Popular writers were not all women; high-cultural writers, and writers who were merely unpopular, were not all men. The male high-cultural authors discussed in the following chapters were not so consistently beset, nor were they beset always by the same people, nor always for the same reasons, as they typically represented themselves.

Another detail which the melodrama of beset high-cultural male authorship tends to obscure is the fact that the trials to which these writers were subject, or to which they subjected themselves, were nuanced by pleasures and privileges. High-cultural literary authorship, like hegemonic bourgeois manhood, exacted sacrifices but it also conferred rewards. While immaterial rewards – prestige, self-esteem, collegiality, the life of the mind – are obvious perquisites of high-cultural artistry, material rewards were not always or entirely ruled out. And when the sacrifice of material comforts and other attainments of normative bourgeois manhood were unavoidable, such asceticism could be re-envisioned by its male subjects as an alternative mode of attaining an exemplary manhood. The self-sacrifice of the artist thus enables that

artist to experience the ultimate in self-fulfillment. Ironically, in order to transform the anxieties and hardships of true artistry into sources of emotional satisfaction, male high-cultural writers often psychically enlisted the supposedly low-cultural genre of melodrama, a genre whose queer excesses are seemingly beyond the pale but which exist as a disavowed component within many mainstream cultural narratives.[18]

The contested status of bachelors as figures of luxurious self-indulgence and/or of disciplined self-abnegation made them well-suited to articulate the melodramatic vicissitudes of male, high-cultural authorship. Like the male authors who deployed them, bachelor narrators are themselves given to recasting abjected manhood as manhood triumphant, and to disavowing melancholically the sentimentality that stands both as their own defining trait and as that of the significant others with whom they identify. Bachelor narrators are thus particularly fitted for symbolic use by authors who reinforced, sometimes in the very act of crossing, the borders of the cultural milieus in and against which they defined themselves as writers. Indeed, bachelors often served in cultural and literary discourse more generally as threshold figures who marked the permeable boundaries that separate domesticity, normative manhood, and high-cultural status, from what was defined as extrinsic to these realms.[19]

The liminal function of the bachelor becomes even more pointed when considered through the critical lens of the bachelor as narrator. The first-person bachelor narrators whom I consider are for the most part narrators of the sort Gérard Genette designates "homodiegetic," or present as characters in the stories they tell, as opposed to "heterodiegetic," absent from the stories they tell.[20] As tellers who also appear as characters in their stories, homodiegetic narrators are located both within and beyond the fictional worlds of their stories, serving as intermediaries between diegetic levels within the narrative and also between author and reader. Simultaneously present in separate diegetic spaces, these narrators might also be conceived as divided, or multiplied, within themselves; such a split, or doubling, is most evident between the "I" of the narrative past and the "I" of the narrative present. Saying "I" as a homodiegetic narrator can thus verge on speaking in synchronic and diachronic chorus or call-and-response with oneself, occasioning a spatial and temporal multiplication of subjectivity which would seem to challenge the unitary or monolithic self. Yet homodiegesis is far from an essentially or intrinsically radical form, either aesthetically or politically. The effects of homodiegesis as a

narrative technique depend upon the specific uses made of its potential for confirming or confounding the boundaries within, and also between, individuals.

Authors are not the only ones upon whom the containing and/or subverting effects of homodiegetic narrative depend. Readers also make vital contributions to the aesthetic and political meanings of homodiegetic narrative. As a reader who is a narratological critic, Genette assumes the impermeability and hierarchical grounding of individual subjectivity, an assumption evident in his further narratological distinction between two varieties of homodiegesis:

> one where the narrator is the hero of his narrative (*Gil Blas*) and one where he plays only a secondary role, which almost always turns out to be a role as observer and witness: Lockwood [in *Wuthering Heights*], the anonymous narrator of Louis Lambert, Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, Marlow in *Lord Jim*, Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*, Zeitblom in *Doctor Faustus* – not to mention the most illustrious and most representative one of all, the transparent (but inquisitive) Dr. Watson of Conan Doyle. It is as if the narrator cannot be an ordinary walk-on in his narrative: he can be only the star, or else a mere bystander. For the first variety (which to some extent represents the strong degree of the homodiegetic) we will reserve the unavoidable term *autodiegetic*.[21]

One glance at my Table of Contents will reveal that my bachelor narratives are mostly of Genette's second variety: non-autodiegetic homodiegetic narrative in which the bachelor narrator tells someone else's, often another man's, story. But the distinction Genette asserts between the autodiegetic narrator who is "the hero of his narrative" and the homodiegetic narrator who "plays only a secondary role ... as observer and witness" is not so clear. Indeed, the ideological stakes, and particularly the gendered stakes, of this so-called "secondary role" are already suggested by Genette's labelling of the first variety as the "strong degree." We might surmise that not only the narratives told by non-hero narrators are of the "weak degree," but also the non-hero narrators themselves who are weak, unheroic, not fully manly. Genette's evaluative descriptor betrays the ideological bias that is intrinsic to but disguised by the formalism of traditional narratology.

The bachelor narrators I consider in this book are for the most part well described as observers and witnesses, yet I do not accept Genette's assumption that he who is not the hero of his own narrative is automatically and uncomplicatedly a "mere bystander," diminished by the full measure of inconsequentiality that phrase implies. (I am puzzled, I admit, by Genette's distinction between an "ordinary walk-on" and a

"mere bystander," although in his hierarchy the former does seem preferable to the latter.) In the chapters which follow, I call attention to the heavily freighted relations between the bachelor narrators and the significant others whose stories they tell. Enacted in the space and time of narration, these relations repeat but also revise the gendered relations that construct the main plots of these fictions. The bachelor and his narrative thus effect discursive supplements which destabilize the texts' dominant fictions of manhood and domesticity.[22] The activity of the bachelor narrators in both the novels' story and their discourse constitute alternatives to hegemonic masterplots and hegemonic manhood.

While these narratives can be construed as offering a rhetorical challenge to the predominance of protagonists, whether individual or paired, and their plots, the very rhetoric of the "challenge" predisposes the critic to read the bachelor narrative as a story of contest in which the bachelor ultimately reveals himself as a better man than the nominal hero. Such a reading practice would merely invert the ideology of Genette's narratological model, recasting the "mere bystander" as the hero of his own narrative. Were a critic to proclaim Dr. Watson the true mastermind of Baker Street, for example, this inversion would merely transform weak homodiegesis into strong autodiegesis, and the implicitly weak homodiegetic narrator into an implicitly strong autodiegetic narrator, without questioning the ideological valences of those categories. While competition between the homodiegetic narrator and his narrative's significant others, or even between narrative and plot, is far from irrelevant to the bachelor narratives I consider, I believe it is crucial to attend to the other modes of relation, real and especially imaginary, that animate these narratives.

Therefore, in attending to the figure of Oedipal plotting which emerges from the domestic and familial carpet of many of the novels considered here, I look beyond the classical account which identifies the son as a murderous competitor with the father for possession of the mother. In so doing, I take my cue from Eve Sedgwick's influential account, following Gayle Rubin, of the traffic in women effected by erotic triangles consisting of two men and one woman, a configuration that holds a place of privilege in Freud's psychoanalytical theory, Lévi-Strauss's anthropological theory, and René Girard's literary theory in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*.[23] Because it heeds the differentials of power and gender at issue in mediated desire, Sedgwick's theorization of a homosocial continuum of male desire disrupted by homophobic panic allows us to see disavowed homoerotic energies at work in hetero-

sexual rivalries between men. As other critics have pointed out, however, Sedgwick's emphasis on homosocial desire between men obscures the potential for female trafficking (where women occupy one or more of the points of erotic triangulation) and for male trafficking which does not involve women (where men occupy all three points of erotic triangulation). To redress the latter elision, I attend in some of my readings to a story which we might call the "other Oedipus": the Oedipus of loving brothers rather than, or as well as, patricidal sons. Desirous and identificatory collaboration, rather than sibling rivalry, crucially defines such fraternal relations. This "other Oedipal" plot and the classic homosocial Oedipal plot together make up a multilayered story of masculine subject formation based on mutuality as well as hostility; reciprocity as well as manipulation; equality as well as hierarchy.[24]

My readings of the triangulated dynamics of desire and identification are complemented by attention to other multilayered mythic paradigms, including the myriad myths of Orpheus which figure in James's "The Aspern Papers" and the manifold figure of the Medusa's Head in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*. The utility of these mythic paradigms resides in their explicit emphasis on the visual, on seeing and not-seeing as ways of knowing, having, or being. They make newly and differently visible the basis of mediated desire in systems of exchange, especially those that involve the trading of gazes, looks, and glances. For example, the performance of bachelor narrators as onlookers at the triangulated love plots which are the stock-in-trade of novelistic fiction reveals mediated desire as not merely triangulated, but as fundamentally *quadrangulated*. In *Wuthering Heights*, for example, Lockwood assumes, among other subject positions, that of a "third man" who observes the male-male-female triangles consisting of Heathcliff, Edgar, and Catherine in the first generation, and Hareton, Linton, and Cathy in the second generation. In this text and others, the bachelor onlooker is a figure of surplus value, one who is apparently in excess of the requirements of a homosocial market in Oedipalized desire. The specular relations of the bachelor creates a speculative market, one whose value depends upon the interest invested in it by a figure who is not a primary producer, consumer, or even an object of consumption, within this economy. The bachelor narrator as witness is invested in what he sees and tells, yet his identity within the narrative *mise en scène* is not solely constituted in terms of his competition on the marriage market of the novel's plot. Bachelor narration thus might be said to represent an alternative economy of manhood, even while it also participates vicariously and, one might

argue, decisively in the exchanges that constitute the narrative transactions of novelistic discourse.

In departing from a conventional psychoanalytic vocabulary here, I mean to signal my awareness of the limits of psychoanalysis as a methodology, as well as the value of non-Oedipal, or even anti-Oedipal, theories of desire.[25] One could legitimately object to the use of psychoanalytical paradigms for reading bachelor narratives on the grounds that the product of any given set of social conditions has limited ability to critique other products of those same conditions; in this context, those "products" include psychoanalysis, the bourgeois family, and also the bachelor as a cultural figure constructed in relation, however vexed that relation may be, to the historical and discursive framework of the family. One could even argue that the bourgeois family itself *is* the social condition that produced psychoanalysis, and hence psychoanalytical paradigms can hardly be expected to do other than reproduce the conditions of their making when used to consider novelistic representations of bachelorhood.

There is, however, another way of looking at this relation. I would contend that the historical adjacency, or even direct mutual causality, of the family and psychoanalysis makes the latter particularly amenable for understanding the former. Psychoanalytically informed critical approaches seem to me especially well calibrated for taking the measure of the family as a machine for the production of gendered subjectivities, including those of bachelors. It is, of course, necessary to correct for the inevitable biases in traditional psychoanalytic precepts and practices. For example, recent correctives to the reductive assumption that desire and identification must necessarily have differently gendered objects have had a revitalizing effect, one which is crucial to the viability of this methodology for reading bachelor narratives.[26] Recent reconceptualizations of identification as having the potential to trouble, rather than simply reinforce, the boundaries of individual subjectivity, have also contributed to the utility of psychoanalytical methodologies. Judith Butler argues that "identifications belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal cohabitation; they unsettle the 'I'; they are the sedimentation of the 'we' in the constitution of any 'I,' the structuring presence of alterity in the very formulation of the 'I'."[27] Such a rethinking of identification as the dynamic basis of identity-formation allows us to read the incorporations and introjections of bachelor narrators as alternative or supplementary models of masculine subjectivity. When intrasubjective rela-

tions are understood to depend upon, even to be coextensive with, intersubjective ones, bachelor narratives can be understood as having the potential not only to buttress conservative identities and interactions, but also to generate alternative models of masculine subjectivity and gendered relations. Just as considering the identifications and desires of bachelors psychoanalytically can open up new understandings of the formation of gendered intersubjectivity, considering bachelors in relation to the dominant fiction of the domestic family can open up new understandings of families themselves, revising the traditional psychoanalytic abstraction of the family as a closed, nuclear unit.

As the preceding comments on economic markets and intersubjective relations have doubtless already made apparent, this book is more than a strictly narratological study. In this regard, I follow the practice of recent critics who bring to bear on the narratives they consider such contextual issues as the emotional and material effects of historically constructed gender norms and subjectivity.[28] But this study is also more than strictly narratological because I refuse to maintain – frankly, quite often, I simply cannot see – the division between story and discourse, or between *histoire* and *récit*, which is fundamental to narratological approaches. Although narratologists acknowledge that such divisions are only approximations, theoretical constructs meant to describe the complexities of real texts, this approximation seems particularly untenable in homodiegetic narratives, narratives in which the story/discourse dualism is embodied within a single character. It is not only a matter of the practical difficulty of distinguishing with certainty between the narrative past and the narrative present, but one of the theoretical impossibility of separating the story from its telling. This study is predicated on my critical conviction that story and discourse, the "what" and the "way," of bachelor narration are so deeply and mutually constitutive that they cannot be surgically separated without doing irreparable damage. The critical portmanteau of "bachelor narrative" does not so much yoke together a cultural type and a narrative form as it reveals the abiding, indivisible connection between ideology and form.

By affirming the ideology of form, my aim is not to equate male author with male narrator. Rather, I mean to investigate the narrative and authorial effects that their differences as well as their similarities may have had. Such representations may occur within the boundaries of gender but not apart from the bounds of difference. For this reason, I have included only one full-scale reading of a novel by a female author,

even though many well-known women novelists of the period – including all three Brontë sisters, George Eliot, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Edith Wharton, and Willa Cather – deployed single or married male narrators, used male pseudonyms, or otherwise assumed masculine identifications in their pursuit of authorship.[29] Much compelling work has been done and remains to be done on such cross-gendered representations, as well as on representations that transpire across the boundaries of class and race. Without minimizing the importance of such projects, I believe that it is of vital importance to attend to issues of same-gender representations within our current canon of modernist male authorship. What it means for a male author to speak in the voice of a male narrator does not go without saying.

While attending to certain differences among bachelor-narrated texts written on different continents and sometimes separated by more than half a century, this study is predicated on their similarities. The premise here is that we can productively read texts so disparate as these – sketches and short stories together with novels; narratives that feature heterodiegesis with focalizing bachelor reflectors along with homodiegetic bachelor narratives; a female-authored novel among male-authored ones; books by American and British authors and by an expatriate Pole writing in English; even a novel that features a married but virginal male narrator – as bachelor narratives. If the diversity of material gathered here under the rubric of bachelor narrative seems willfully broad, this study makes certain exclusions that may seem equally willful. Poetry enters only obliquely, even though the personae – both dramatic monologists and less fully dramatized speaking voices – assumed by many poets in the period sing in harmony with the chorus of novelistic bachelor narrators. I have focused upon prose fiction because of the centrality of marriage plotting to the novelistic tradition treated here, even while recognizing that comparable conventions crucially inflect poems both narrative and lyric. This study is meant to open up a field larger than what it encompasses. I hope that the inevitable exclusion of texts that might be considered under the rubric of bachelor narrative will stimulate other critics to examine these texts along lines comparable to the ones sketched here.

The structure of this book is roughly chronological, following the arc of modernism from the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The book does not, however, argue for a unified historical trajectory of bachelor narrative; rather, it takes the case study as its method. While close readings of individual texts are the general *modus operandi*, hetero-

geneity in the structure and focus of the chapters allows for attention to broader historical contexts, to authorial careers, and to the intricate workings of literary narrative. Thus chapters 2 and 5 each cluster together several novels which share an historical moment and a thematic focus, while chapters 3 and 4 each focus on individual authors. Whereas chapter 3 takes a comparatively wide-angle view of the author's career, chapter 4 takes a close-up look at a single moment and a single text. Chapter 1 might be said to zoom in from a consideration of external perspectives on bachelors as represented in popular texts, especially nineteenth-century mass-circulation periodicals, to the inside perspective on the bachelor imaginary presented by the immensely popular mid-century *Reveries of a Bachelor*. Chapter 1 thus provides both an historical framework for and an historical point of entry into the remaining chapters; it also makes a methodological movement inward which sets the sights of the following chapters on the intrapsychic and intersubjective relations of bachelors as effected by their narratives.

Chapter 1, "Trouble in paradise: bachelors and bourgeois domesticity," begins with an overview of the demographic, economic, and cultural changes in England and America that contributed to the popular and literary fascination with bachelors and bachelor representations over the long nineteenth century. This overview prepares the way for a discussion of the paradoxical expectations of domestic ideology for middle-class men, and the ways that bachelors were viewed by their contemporaries as diverging from normative bourgeois masculinity. The vexed relation of bachelors to bourgeois domesticity and manhood is particularly visible in the history and representation of urban housing, as I show in the next section of the chapter. This section traces the contemporary association of bachelors with multiple-occupancy urban housing in England and America; the perceived incompatibility of such residential forms with family life; and the contribution of such institutions as the men's club and the bachelor apartment building to contemporary critiques of married domesticity. The last section of the chapter considers the narrative negotiations of domestic ideology and practice in the 1850 bestseller, *Reveries of a Bachelor* by Donald Grant Mitchell (a.k.a. "Ik Marvel"). In its negotiations of intimacy and distance, fantasy and reality, normativity and perversity, Mitchell's text is an important precedent for the bachelor narrations that I consider in the later chapters of the book. The liminality of reverie – hovering between waking and sleeping, the bachelor in his reveries is paradoxically represented as both active and passive, working and

playing, producing and consuming – exemplifies the function of the bachelor as a threshold figure, one who both demarcates and subtly alters the placement and permeability of the boundaries of domesticity and domestic selfhood. The bachelor's reveries mark this figure as both within and beyond the worlds of bourgeois family life and manhood.

Chapter 2, "Susceptibility and the single man: the constitution of the bachelor invalid," extends chapter 1's ultimate focus on the bachelor's gendered subjectivity as represented by and in first-person narration. Here I consider three nineteenth-century novels that imagine bachelors as invalids and narrative intermediaries: *Wuthering Heights* (1847), *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880). In all three novels, the visual perspectives of these bachelor invalids and the different voices in which they speak are inflected by the fragility of their health and the spectacle of death, a spectacle which each bachelor either vicariously witnesses or himself performs. The ex-centric masculinity of these bachelor invalid narrators reenacts, both repeats and revises, the permeability of identity and the proper regulation of boundaries between individuals at issue in these novels' plotting of the gendered relations of marriage and alternatives to marriage. I consider the differences between the homodiegetic first-person bachelor narration of *Wuthering Heights* and *Blithedale* (whose narrative situations also differ significantly from each other) and *Portrait*'s heterodiegetic third-person narration which employs a supplementary yet crucial bachelor "center of consciousness," which I call an "off-center of consciousness" in recognition of Ralph Touchett's eccentric masculinity. The perspectives of all these bachelor narrators and reflectors reveal their constant negotiations between sympathy and detachment, between proximity and distance, and also between specular vicariousness and spectacular self-display, negotiations that inform our understanding of these novels' gendered authorship.

Chapter 3, "An artist and a bachelor: Henry James, mastery and the life of art," proceeds from chapter 2's reading of the bachelor reflector in *The Portrait of a Lady*, to argue that the figure of the bachelor vitally informs the persona of the high-cultural male artist that James himself assumed in his life and writing. This chapter examines a wide range of James's writings, with a particular emphasis on his mid-career "tales of literary life," "The Lesson of the Master" (1888), "The Aspern Papers" (1888) and "The Figure in the Carpet" (1896), and on his literary criticism, especially his 1907 essay on Shakespeare and his 1914 essay, "The New Novel." I begin by analyzing James's critical objections to

first-person narration in longer works of fiction, demonstrating James's association of this narrative technique with a self-contradictory range of sexual and gender identities, cultural ranks, and genres: femininity and masculinity, lowbrow and highbrow, autobiography and romance. James's multiple and inconsistent readings of this narrative technique in his own and others' writings provide insight into his attempts to reclaim literary fiction as an arena of properly regulated masculine endeavor. The aesthetic "life of art" appears in James's fiction and criticism as a source of both gendered normativity and counternormativity, a tension evident both in the conflict and collusion of the man with the artist. The man and the artist are figures which stand in James's work sometimes for internal self-division, sometimes for interpersonal male-male relations, and sometimes for both simultaneously. I focus throughout on the gendered interplays of specular vicariousness and spectacular self-display, self-discipline and self-indulgence, and hierarchy and equality, all of which sustain the intrapsychic and intersubjective formation of masculine desire and identification in James's writings.

Chapter 4, "A way of looking on: bachelor narration in Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*," argues that national and racial differences are not the only differences at issue in the "translation" which is offered by this novel's bachelor narrator. This narrator speaks across explicitly gendered divides, border lines which separate masculine from feminine and also mark the difference between as well as the proximity among a range of masculine subject positions. The double binds of male specularity and male feminism in both the novel's plot and its narration reflect a related gendered double bind which Conrad experienced in writing this novel. I demonstrate how "The Secret Sharer," which Conrad dashed off in December of 1909 while struggling to finish *Under Western Eyes*, crystallizes the competing and internally conflicted models of manhood at issue both in this novel and in the Marlow-narrated novels that preceded and followed its publication. These conflicts play themselves out in the bachelor narrator's use of the figure of the Medusa's Head, an uncanny figure whose long-standing association with artistic representation, with unruly women, and with revolution, were not lost on Conrad. The aesthetic, the erotic, and the nationalistic implications of this figure for the narrator's representation of the novel's heroine, reveal Conrad's own authorial anxiety that something would be lost in translation.

Chapter 5, "The necessary melancholy of bachelors: melancholy, manhood, and modernist narrative," widens the view of Conrad's

corpus of work by taking up two novels narrated by Conrad's most famous bachelor narrator and by grouping these two Marlow-narrated texts with two highly canonical, early twentieth-century bachelor-narrated novels which are equally marked by a melancholic sense of lack. "The Necessary Melancholy of Bachelors," the title of a 1908 essay that appeared in *Putnam's Magazine*, reveals a vital historical context for the more familiar melancholy which pervades much of modernism, particularly male modernism, and even more specifically the two-protagonist form that gives shape to an influential strand of modernist narrative. The melancholy of these modernist narratives which bear the name of "another man" – *Lord Jim* (1900), *The Good Soldier* (1915), and *The Great Gatsby* (1925) – can be traced to the narrators' disavowal of the sentimentality of their abjected male objects and of themselves, a melancholic investment reinforced by their reliance upon familial and especially fraternal metaphors to describe their attachments and resentments. The compensatory efforts which disrupt their narratives reveal an irresolvable tension between desires for affiliation and autonomy, and for merger and separateness, a tension that also reveals a contest between homoerotic desire and its homophobic disavowal. Similar tensions animate *Chance* (1913), in which Conrad revived Marlow for his swan song more than a decade after his penultimate appearance as the narrator of *Lord Jim*, and which, ironically enough, garnered Conrad his first popular success. The figure of the "good uncle" in *Chance* provides a point of entry to the quasi-familial and quasi-domestic status of bachelor narrators in this period and thus returns us to the liminal status of the bachelor in relation to domestic life and hegemonic manhood.

In their ways of telling, bachelor narrators delineate the thresholds of bourgeois domesticity and manhood, thereby enabling themselves and their authorial creators to mark the boundaries of normativity while simultaneously going out of bounds. I like to think of the bachelor as a figure who stands in the doorway, looking in from the outside and also looking out from within. This double perspective provides readers a privileged vantage upon the world of the novel, a fictional world that both reflected and crucially shaped the real world beyond. The "I" of the bachelor, a masculine subject position that is at once both within and beyond the pale, reveals the novels to be considered in the chapters which follow as both representative modernist texts and truly singular fictions.

CHAPTER I

Trouble in paradise: bachelors and bourgeois domesticity

"The Bachelor in Fiction" was hardly news when Percival Pollard published his review essay of that title in 1900. An 1859 Wilkie Collins sketch entitled "The Bachelor Bedroom," published anonymously in the English periodical *All the Year Round*, indicates that as early as mid-century the bachelor in fiction had long been a conventional topic: "The bachelor has been profusely served up on all sorts of literary tables; but, the presentation of him has been hitherto remarkable for a singularly monotonous flavour of matrimonial sauce. We have heard of his loneliness, and its remedy, or his solitary position in illness, and its remedy; of the miserable neglect of his linen, and its remedy."[1] Deploring the monotonous insistence on marriage as the sole remedy for the ills of bachelor life, Collins asserts that there is "a new aspect of the bachelor left to be presented . . . a new subject for worn-out readers of the nineteenth century whose fountain of literary novelty has become exhausted at the source":

> But what have we heard of him in connexion with his remarkable bedroom, at those periods of his existence when he, like the rest of the world, is a visitor at his friend's country house? Who has presented him, in his relation to married society, under those peculiar circumstances of his life, when he is away from his solitary chambers, and is thrown straight into the sacred centre of that home circle from which his ordinary habits are so universally supposed to exclude him? (p. 355)

The topic proposed as an antidote to the hackneyed representation of bachelorhood is not so innovative as he would have it. This "new subject for worn-out readers" falls short of newness, for one thing, because Collins shares with his literary predecessors the assumption that married life is a crucial frame of reference for bachelorhood, if not simply its remedy. This sketch, like the profusion of written representations of bachelorhood before it, concerns itself primarily with the bach-