



Bachelors, Bastards, and Nomadic Masculinity: Illegitimacy in Guy de Maupassant and Andre Gide

Robert M. Fagley

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Bachelors, Bastards, and Nomadic Masculinity is, firstly, a thematic exploration of bachelor figures and male bastards in literary works by Guy de Maupassant and Andre Gide. The coupling of Maupassant and Gide is appropriate for such an analysis, not only because of their mutual treatment of illegitimacy, but also because each writer represents varieties of bachelors and bastards from disparate social classes and subcultures, each writing during contiguous moments of socio-legal changes particularly related to divorce law and women's rights, which consequently have great influence on the legal destiny of illegitimate or "natural" children. Napoleon's Civil Code of 1804 provides the legal (patriarchal) framework for the period of this study of illegitimacy, from about 1870 to 1925. The Civil Code saw numerous changes during this period. The Naquet Law of 1884, which reestablished limited legal divorce, represents the central socio-legal event of the turn of the century in matters of legitimacy, whereas the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the First World War furnish chronological bookends for this book. Besides through history, law, and sociology, this book treats illegitimacy through the lens of various branches of gender and sexual theory, particularly the study of masculinities, and a handful of other important critical theories, most importantly those of Michel Foucault, Eve Sedgwick, Todd Reeser, Charles Stivale, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Bachelors and bastards are two principal players in the representation of illegitimacy in Maupassant and Gide, but this study considers the theme of illegitimacy as extended beyond simple questions of legitimate versus illegitimate children. The male bastard is only one of the "Counterfeit" characters examined in these authors' fictional texts. This book is divided into three parts which consider specific thematic elements of their "bastard narratives". Part One frames the representation in fiction of bachelor figures and how they contribute to, or the roles they play in, instances of illegitimacy. Part Two springs from and develops the metaphor of the "counterfeit coin," whether represented by a bastard son, an affected schoolboy, a false priest, or a pretentious litterateur. Part Three explains the concept of "nomadic masculine" practices; such practices include nomadic styles of masculinity development as well as the bastard's nomadism.

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