InHabit

People, Places and Possessions

Antony Buxton, Linda Hulin and Jane Anderson (eds)

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REBECCA DEVERS

7 Miracle Kitchens and Bachelor Pads: The Competing Narratives of Modern Spaces

ABSTRACT

'Miracle Kitchens and Bachelor Pads' examines the presentation of domestic spaces in early issues of Playboy, particularly the use of narrative techniques in such presentations, arguing that such a practice contributed to a new mythology of masculinity in mid-twentieth-century America. The analysed issues include devoted features on domestic space, specifically the bachelor pad and how one inhabited and furnished it. The essay examines short stories and fables published in these issues (for instance, 'The Amorous Goldsmith', 'Love, Incorporated', 'The Hoodwinked Husband', and 'A Cry from the Penthouse'), contemporary literary texts (John Cheever's 'O Youth and Beauty!' and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*), and social and literary theorists (including Pierre Bourdieu and Bill Osgerby) – as well as an advertisement for a new kitchen from a 1947 issue of *Good Housekeeping* – to argue that the magazine's successful establishment of the bachelor as a cultural icon depended upon narrative elements like plot, character development and setting, as well as upon conventional structures of myths.

In May of 1954, *Playboy* published its first rendering of a bachelor pad in a two-page cartoon titled 'Playboy's Progress'. It was a hand-drawn aerial plan of an apartment, with a step-by-step map to help the playboy make 'progress' with his 'friend'. A dotted line trails its way through the space with locations marked by numbers that correspond to lines of text in the bottom centre of the image. There is only a perfunctory introduction:

> Scene: *Playboy's penthouse*
> Time: *Shortly before midnight*
> Characters: *Playboy and friend* ('Playboy's Progress' 1954: 22)

Resembling both performance and ritual, the twenty-five steps guide the reader through the apartment and explain how to use the items within it to convince a somewhat reluctant 'friend' that she is, in fact, 'that kind of

a girl' ('Playboy's Progress' 1954: 23). For a start, the successful bachelor will have planned ahead to ensure that certain items will be at his disposal. As the night progresses, the playboy 'puts romantic Glenn Miller records on phonograph'; 'mixes cocktails with spiked olives'; 'begins reading aloud from *This Is My Beloved*'; 'reads selected passages aloud from the *Kinsey Report*'; and 'puts on lounging robe' ('Playboy's Progress' 1954: 22). Furthermore, other necessary items, like a large painting of a nude woman and modern furniture appoint the space, and there is no distracting television. *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner intended the magazine to serve 'as a "handbook for the young man-about-town"' (quoted in Fratterigo 2009: 60), and 'Playboy's Progress' serves that purpose; here, in a single, hand-drawn image, is a treasure map of seduction.

Intended to be taken humorously, the conflict depicted in these steps is between an eager bachelor and an intoxicated woman who repeatedly asks for food as he serves her more alcohol. On the balcony, she rejects his first reference to the bedroom by slapping him. His response? He 'considers tossing her off balcony' ('Playboy's Progress' 1954: 23). Eventually, he decides instead to find another number in his little black book. The friend decides to stay when she realises it's raining, and when the bachelor feigns disinterest. She is finally swayed after reconsidering his references to the *Kinsey Report*, which announced that 'Females who have relations make better adjustments after marriage' ('Playboy's Progress' 1954: 22).

The playboy's route of seduction takes the couple through every room of the apartment, including the kitchen, bathroom and balcony, images of which are relegated to the margins so that the reader's focus is primarily on the living room. At points, the 'Friend wanders off towards kitchen' ('Playboy's Progress' 1954: 22); 'staggers into kitchen'; and 'refuses passionate embrace' in the bathroom ('Playboy's Progress' 1954: 23). And, when the friend 'follows playboy' as he 'wanders off in the general direction of bedroom', the narrative ends with '*Curtain*' ('Playboy's Progress' 1954: 23). The rest is left to the reader's imagination, even though every step leading up to it has been presented in specific detail. The playboy appears to have needed this entire space – and everything in it – to accomplish his goal (the convenient rain storm was a nice touch, too). Using elements of both design and narrative, 'Playboy's Progress' establishes a habitus of

mid-century masculinity, helping to define a domestic space that was at once both believable and mythical, a perfect setting for an alternative definition of masculinity after World War II. These narrative elements allow *Playboy* to create a new fable of masculinity; the instructions presented in design articles like this one, alongside the fictional pieces published in the issues, redefine cultural expectations and establish a new set of ideals in opposition to the dominant narrative of suburban life.

In this chapter I analyse the stories published in the first six volumes of *Playboy* (1953–9) in which also appeared the following devoted 'Modern Living' articles: 'Playboy's Penthouse Apartment' in September and October of 1956; 'Playboy's Weekend Hideaway' in April 1959; 'The Kitchenless Kitchen' in October 1959; and the 'compendium' on the bed itself, including articles on the psychology and physiology of sleep, in November 1959. When read alongside these architectural designs for bachelor pads, the stories help to define what would have been, for most of *Playboy*'s readers, what was always already (and irrevocably) an imagined space.[1] *Playboy* admitted as much in April 1958 in 'Meet the *Playboy* Reader', which acknowledged that many readers were married and lived in the suburbs. The fantasy space of the bachelor pad became a safe, alternative world in which counter-narratives could be enacted. *Playboy* encouraged this mythical identification of the reader with these fictional spaces by using second person pronouns and describing the inhabitant as 'a man very much, perhaps, like you' ('Meet the *Playboy* Reader' 1956: 54).

In the five issues in question, there appeared twenty-one fictional short stories. Of these, five are included under the 'Ribald Classics' heading, in which other cultures' fables of seduction and deception are presented in translation. Three are military stories, which feature US soldiers abroad; only one of these three did not focus on sex. Of the remaining stories, all but one focus on sexual relationships between men and women. Ten marriages are described, seven of which contain infidelities. There are cheating

1 Bill Osgerby sees the bachelor pad as having only ever been 'a mythological construct' since 'only a wealthy élite were able to turn the fantasy into reality' (Osgerby 2005: 110).

husbands and cheating wives (though some of the women are duped into adultery). Only three stories present successful, monogamous relationships, and they do so unironically. All of the stories were written by men.

A few exemplary stories from *Playboy*'s earliest volumes demonstrate the ways in which the magazine engaged in a mythologising or 'enfabling' of the playboy, situating him as a model of aspirant behaviour. Though the fables varied depending on the gender of their target audience, similar fabling strategies also appeared in print advertisements targeting women and in contemporary literary interrogations of the suburban ideal. Eventually, *Playboy* made the bachelor fable transferrable by situating it in a country home for weekend getaways. Many social historians have examined the magazine's impact on American society; Elizabeth Fratterigo (2009), Bill Osgerby (2001, 2005), Beatriz Preciado (2004) and Pamela Robertson Wojcik (2010) provide important cultural context for the living spaces presented in *Playboy* as well as the shifts in definitions of masculinity in postwar America. With especial attention to the literary elements in the magazine, I build on the work of social historians, examining the ways in which literature and narrative enabled the magazine to achieve mythic proportions.

In the issues analysed here, the only non-military story in which no women appear is Henry Slesar's 'A Cry from the Penthouse'. The story appears in the November 1959 issue, which also contains the 'Compendium' on the bed: articles in a scientific tone on the interpretation of dreams and the physical effects of sleeplessness, as well as photos of 'Beds from Other Times and Places' (which includes female models), a short article on the lounging robe and the introduction of the Playboy Bed. This was the first such compendium in *Playboy*'s history, bringing together scientific expertise, imagined design and photographs of female models. The issue's formal attention to the bed makes the bed's absence from Slesar's story even more apparent. In 'A Cry from the Penthouse', Chet Brander visits his friend Frank Coombs to get repaid for a loan. It is a brutally cold winter evening, and Frank lives in a brand new, nearly empty Manhattan building. The narrator, voicing Chet's thoughts, finds the place 'eerie', noting 'an unearthly quiet that was a combination of overcarpeting and underoccupancy' (Slesar 1959: 34). When Chet rings the doorbell of the penthouse, he derisively calls his friend, under his breath, a 'Big shot!'

Chet does not think Frank could afford this swanky new pad without his friends' loans, so the apartment projects Frank's dissimulating character. When Chet enters the apartment, he feels 'warmth': 'Pleasant steamheat-and-fireplace warmth, whiskey warmth, the warmth of geniality. That was Coombs for you: the perennial host, always ready to smile and clap you on the back and make you welcome, and all so smoothly that you hardly even noticed the hand dipping into your pocket to count the contents of your wallet' (Slesar 1959: 34, 36). *Playboy* elsewhere touted the importance of being a good host: Fratterigo points out that 'Thomas Mario's monthly "Food and Drink" columns highlighted the performance of the bachelor chef and linked cooking with seduction and sexual pleasure' (Fratterigo 2009: 93); however, Slesar's story reveals that hosting is really just a performance, a ritual like the one shown in 'Playboy's Progress'. It is a set of actions one might master in order to manipulate someone and therefore obtain a desired outcome.

Chet then sees 'the lavish front room. It was a room rich in textures: furry carpets and nubby upholstery, satiny drapes and grainy wood panelling' (Slesar 1959: 36). The association of space and character continues as the narrator segues from describing the front room to describing Frank himself: 'Coombs had many textures himself: waxen smooth hair, silken cheeks, velvety smoking jacket, roughcut briar'; perhaps channelling Hef, Frank Coombs even 'gesture[s] with the pipe' (Slesar 1959: 36). Frank knows he's living 'the life'. Moreover, this description reinforces our tendency to see a character's domestic space as an extension or projection of his personality or priorities.

Frank lures Chet to the balcony, and then locks him out of the apartment, exposed to the deadly winter weather too far from the street for his cries to be heard. It's clear that Frank intends to kill off his creditor to avoid repayment. He leaves, and Chet must fend for himself. Eventually, Chet is able to scale to the roof of the building and pull out the tenants' television cables, bringing concerned residents to the roof to investigate. After a short recovery, Chet lets himself back into Frank's apartment (Frank had slipped the key into his pocket to make it appear as if Chet had been there alone). When Frank comes back drunk, he checks the balcony and Chet deftly locks him out there to die.

Frank uses his apartment not for sexual exploits, but to seduce his friend into a vulnerable position. One can see in the story a warning against aspiring to the playboy life undeservedly. This story establishes an 'honour code' for the playboy: he may be a rogue with the ladies, but fatal consequences loom should he deal unfairly with his male friends. The occasional military stories support this fraternal standard, as did the one fraternity story in October 1956, in which membership in a male social group was more important than a romantic relationship. Fraternal strength was the titular 'right kind of pride'. Such stories help to develop the character of the imagined, mythical bachelor who might inhabit the fictional spaces of the bachelor pads pictured throughout the magazine. They also establish a society of shared ideals, helping to normalise not only the serial sexual exploits but also the very fact of a heterosexual man living alone. Fratterigo writes, 'In the hetero-normative climate of the 1950s the unmarried man prompted suspicion about his sexual orientation. *Playboy*'s pad emphasised the bachelor's heterosexuality by gearing its technologies for seduction' (Fratterigo 2009: 87). This heteronormativity extends beyond the design features, since the stories often provide examples of seduction. But even stories set within homosocial environments model standards of acceptable behaviour for those who would desire to live in this alternative fantasy space.

Because Frank Coombs's bed is never seen, we can only assume it was either inspired by or aspires to be The Playboy Bed. Osgerby explains, 'More than a piece of furniture, the "Playboy Bed" was a magnificent temple to the ethos of masculine consumerism' (2005: 109). The bed acts as the command centre of the apartment, housing everything from 'an automatic on-off (voice-activated) dictating machine' to 'power amplifiers' and 'two-dozen man-sized plate switches in polished woods for control of your entire apartment' (The Playboy Bed 1959: 104). The magazine made no secrets about its celebration of sex, so of course the bed and the bedroom would be a highlight of any bachelor's apartment.

The dominating narrative of the bachelor space, then, becomes one of seduction. Once he has mastered its conveniences and possibilities, he can use it as a weapon to get whatever he wants, whether that be sex, money, or popularity. The Playboy Bed was the locus of this power, and it could be the command centre of the apartment no matter how many women he

shared it with. In terms of spatial design, the shift effectively removes the bachelor pad from the realm of the traditional and the suburban, reinforcing its presumed novelty and dynamism. In fact, the idealised bachelor pad was often so far removed from the realm of the traditional, with all of its push-button technology, that it sounded more like Ray Bradbury's (1950) 'There Will Come Soft Rains' than a design layout. Just as the McClellan home in Bradbury's post-apocalyptic future appears to have made the housewife's role obsolete, performing all the cooking, cleaning and even childcare automatically, 'the bachelor pad itself', to quote Fratterigo (2009: 87), 'took over the wifely duties of greeting and soothing the man returning from the realities of the outside world'. Fratterigo is referring specifically to the 1956 Penthouse Apartment, but certainly the command-centre bed contributes to this house-as-housekeeper image. And while the McClellan Home eventually crumbled without its inhabitants, the bachelor pad thrives on the imagined potential presence of 'a man very much, perhaps, like you'.

Though it was published a little later than the issues examined here, a short story by Bruce Jay Friedman helps to demonstrate how *Playboy* used simple narratives to reinforce the attraction of the mythical bachelor pad. 'The Killer in the TV Set' describes *in extremis* the hegemonic suburban narrative, against which *Playboy* set itself in opposition.[2] The story follows Mr Ordz, an ordinary married man, during the last week of his life. One evening, unable to face another sexual encounter with his wife, he stays up as late as possible watching television. The MC of a variety show addresses him by name, announcing that he has only seven days to kill Mr Ordz. The stalking continues for a week, until Ordz's skepticism turns into frustration. Ordz punches his television screen, the broken glass slices his wrist, and he dies trying futilely to wake his wife. Friedman presents a macabre suburban routine, presumably what one avoided by living in a bachelor pad where one eschewed television (and all ordinary things) altogether, because one could make 'progress' with a different woman every night.

2 For a discussion of *Playboy*'s relationship to the suburban mentality, see Osgerby 2001: 61–86; Osgerby 2005, Fratterigo 2009, especially pp. 15–47; Preciado 2004; Wojcik 2010: pp. 91–9.

Through their use of simple, straightforward plots, sympathetic and relatable characters and successful counter-narratives that subverted a monotonous suburban existence, *Playboy* was able to create a modern fairy tale or fable – a 'sharable tale' meant to exemplify idealised and repeatable social behaviours. In *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Jack Zipes (2012: 25) explains that fairy tales are influential carriers of moral instruction and that they help to establish new or alternative 'standards of behaviour', whereas fables have a 'civilising' effect because of their capacity to 'establish ethical guidelines or principles of fair play' (Zipes 2012: 10). Leslie Kurke, referring to the work of James Scott, develops this idea in relation to hegemonic narratives, seeing fables as vehicles for 'counterideology' because 'they are "off-stage" – that is, free from the public world whose performances are largely scripted by the dominant' (quoted in Zipes 2012: 11). While one would be hard-pressed to characterise the owner of a penthouse apartment or a weekend hideaway as 'oppressed', one can nevertheless see the playboy lifestyle as a subversive one, one kept 'off-stage' in favour of a stable family life. Because the bachelor pad navigates the permeable boundaries between private and public (see Preciado 2004), it permitted men to, 'according to Hefner, enjoy the privileges of public space without being subjected to its laws and dangers' (Preciado 2004: 219). Stories like Ordz's demonstrate this sanctuary effect, as Ordz's death emphasises by contrast the bachelor pad as a fantasy space, beyond the reaches of tedious social convention.[3]

On its surface, Ordz's fate is a warning to the *Playboy* reader to escape the doldrums of suburbia (including both monotony and monogamy) before it was too late. It sets the bored husband in opposition both to his wife and marriage, and to the trappings of suburbia itself in the metonymic television set, both a marker and progenitor of middle class conformity. A narrative like 'Playboy's Progress', by contrast, establishes the 'alternate reality' in which a new set of standards can be promoted. Just as the first fairy tales from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries provided

3 Fratterigo notes that some were afraid of this power of *Playboy*, citing a Reverend who – in 1960 – saw the magazine as 'a sort of bible. Its modern living features carried the weight of the Ten Commandments' (2009: 74).

their authors – primarily French women – with fantasy settings in which safely to oppose both king and church (Zipes 2012: 25), so does *Playboy*'s narrative treatment of space provide a new set of rules for gender relations by couching them in the mythical setting of the bachelor pad. But beyond this, these narratives reinforce the importance of understanding the rules of whatever space one finds oneself in. In 'Playboy's Progress', the modeled seduction is certainly aggressive; in the case of Frank and Chet, the apartment is both a motive for and a tool of homicide; and Ordz's home life is so mundane, he loses touch with reality. In all three stories, domestic space carries a system of expectations – or habitus – that privilege not the woman, the thief, or the suburbanite, but the savvy bachelor.

Pierre Bourdieu defines habitus as the system of expected actions within a particular society which are at once the consequence of repeated actions in the past and the generators of future behaviours. These customs self-sustain, because they create an environment in which they are the valued and desired standards. While the treasure map of seduction presented in 'Playboy's Progress' is more explicit in what Bourdieu might call its 'conscious aiming at ends', it is also the product of *dis*-'obedience to rules' (Bourdieu 1977: 72). Explanations of how these spaces were to be used, coupled with fiction that contributed to the establishment of ideals for the society of bachelors reading *Playboy*, created a set of regular practices that essentially defined the parameters of a new serial, urban, modern masculinity, a counter-habitus to suburban hegemony.

Playboy's use of the bachelor pad as alternative reality allows for the projection of idealised systems of behaviour: there, surrounded by the appropriate (i.e. masculine) consumer goods, the playboy can navigate a habitus more suited to his personal desires, rather than the desires of a society that saw the family as its bulwark against communism.[4] 'Playboy's Progress' presents this system obliquely; in Bourdieu's terms, it is a list of 'things to do or not to do, to say or not to say, in relation to a *forthcoming* reality' (Bourdieu 1977: 76). The promoted examples of seduction – for example, of women, rather than the deception of one's male friends – are

4 For more on *Playboy*'s role in creating a male consumer, see Osgerby 2001 and Osgerby 2005.

hereby institutionalised: through repetition, such behaviours begin to assume the air of the commonplace, rather than the 'off-stage', and, while the setting enabled the behaviours to emerge, their enfablement allows them to be both imitated and transferred. Without narrative, then, the spaces could not have achieved this mythological status. The fabled bachelor – a bachelor with a story, or a collection of stories – was necessary in order for readers to understand the space within a defined system of interactions and expectations. One had to understand how to live as a playboy before one could imagine living in such spaces. Character and setting rely on each other here in order for each to be believable; in Pamela Roberson Wojcik's (2010: 89) words, 'the bachelor pad produces the bachelor as playboy; simultaneously, the figure of the playboy produces the space of the bachelor pad'.

Print media promoted and reinforced the dominant habitus of suburbia as well, targeting women in publications like *Good Housekeeping*. Consider the advertisement for a new kitchen from Crosley.[5] In September 1945, Crosley promoted the ease with which the housewife could modernise her kitchen, even without her husband's help. This full-page advertisement boasts a headline in the voice of its excited narrator: 'This string is all I need to plan my NEW kitchen!' (Crosley 1945: 120). Four hand-drawn images show a series of events: Mother is won over by this new-fangled string method, the kitchen is planned and realised, and – finally – husband Jack gazes approvingly at his wife bent over in front of the range in her (*their*) modern kitchen. A great deal of text accompanies these images, making the advertisement resemble a comic strip in its marriage of narrative and art. This text explains Mother's hesitancy to believe in the simplicity of modernisation. When she sees the young wife's own hand-drawn plans, however, 'Mother says it's a marvel of arranging – and she ought to know, with thirty years of housekeeping!' The kitchen allows for the young wife's 'work [to flow] along just like a war-plant assembly line', and it can be bought in stages. The final image is set in the future, when 'one wonderful day', Jack will return to this new modern space.

5 For more on the use of technology in the Cold War kitchen, see Devers 2014.

The theme of Crosley's narrative is simplicity; no math is required, nor is there any 'bother, upset, or troubles generally considered necessary in kitchen modernizing'. She does not even have to measure or use numbers. All she needs is a string, so that she can mark the spaces available for new appliances. The modern efficiency of war-time assembly lines gets translated to the suburban home as just enough modern masculinity (in the form of manufacturing efficiency) is introduced into what was traditionally a feminine space. The result of this process is that the kitchen becomes a jointly owned space: the wife corrects her claim of ownership of the kitchen, calling it 'my new kitchen – *our* kitchen – for Jack and me'.

Everything about the Crosley advertisement is aspirant. First, it encourages buying the new kitchen in stages, based on what the young couple can afford. They are encouraged to plan ahead with this dream kitchen in mind. Furthermore, only Mother and the young wife are currently home to plan this kitchen. Husband Jack is (presumably) away at war, and because of the war, Crosley themselves do not even have access to this modern kitchen yet. The disclaimer beneath the image of the completed kitchen notes: '(Crosley is still 100 per cent in war production. But we're planning new marvels for you in the finest Crosley Home Appliances ever!)' In connecting a modern kitchen with the war effort, the narrative shifts from a family anecdote to a fable of patriotism. The implied message is that one should look forward to incorporating 'war-plant assembly line' methods in one's home, calling up the association at this time of homemaking and civil defense.[6] The series of steps in 'Playboy's Progress' instructs the young bachelor, the way Crosley instructs the young wife, on how to furnish and navigate a specific space – and a shifting modern habitus – in order to realise a dream. Notably, the Crosley advertisement encourages the same modernisation (even militarisation) of the kitchen that *Playboy* did; but here, it's within the dominant narrative of suburban matrimony, sanctioned by the patriotic myth of national pride.

The message about the bachelor's kitchen was inconsistent. He was, without question, given permission to cook, entertain and host parties in ways that the magazine safely contained within narratives of heterosexual

6 See, for example, McEnaney 2000 and Lichtman 2006.

exploits, and the kitchen he used was definitely modern (see Preciado 2004, especially 229). But when the playboy lifestyle was removed from the city, more traditional gender divisions reemerged. In April 1959, as part of the feature on 'Playboy's Weekend Hideaway' (discussed in greater detail below), the kitchen is marginalised, separated from the central spaces of the house, if only visually. Moreover, in the narrative tour of that hideaway, the kitchen is used only by women. However, in October of the same year, in a feature called 'The Kitchenless Kitchen', the playboy learned of a structure that could disguise his cooking appliances when they werenot in use. The feature shows photos of a 'handsome hunk of furniture' that 'dispenses with a kitchen as such entirely' (53). Meant to allow the playboy to prepare food without interrupting his duties as host (i.e. without missing the party), the peninsula could be more central in the apartment. This version of a kitchen seems to eliminate or disguise those icons of traditional kitchens – 'it has no use for the usual collection of pots, pans, skillets, oven and other customary kitchen gear' (53) – in the same way that Crosley's kitchen eliminates the hassle of math. In both cases, readers learn how to adapt their kitchen to a gender-specific modern habitus: women make the kitchen modern to please their husbands; playboys avoid marriage by disguising the kitchen as much as possible, even if it *is* appropriately modern.

Literature published during these years demonstrates a need for this new playboy habitus. Notably, the 1949 production of *Death of a Salesman* relied on a stage design in which the dimensions of home were defined by characters' actions and mental states. Miller's stage direction tells us: 'Whenever the action is in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall-lines, entering the house only through its door at the left. But in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by stepping "through" a wall on to the forestage' (Miller 1998: 1). This groundbreaking decision by designer Jo Mielziner allowed the play to make manifest the ways in which the dimensions of the Loman home are subject to the psychological instabilities of the homeowner.[7] But Willy

7 See Mielziner's account of designing this play in Mielziner 1965; the significance of transitioning between the house of the past and that of the present is discussed on p. 35. For more on Miller's use of 'subjective realism' to present to the theatre audience Willy's experience of time, see Murphy 1995: 4–7.

Loman cannot modernise. He has an outdated kitchen with appliances that are falling apart before they're paid for. His stasis is a combination of his refusal to let go of tradition and his inability to sustain a career that would allow him to afford it, and as a result he is left behind. The world moves on without him, with 'a solid vault' of 'angry' apartment buildings towering over his 'fragile-seeming', 'partially transparent' house (Miller 1998: 1). *Playboy* would later take advantage of our tendency to equate space and character, introducing the second part of its Penthouse Apartment feature with the assertion: 'A man's home is not only his castle, it is or should be, the outward reflection of his inner self – a comfortable, livable and yet exciting expression of the person he is and the life he leads' ('Playboy's Penthouse Apartment' 1956: 65; also quoted in Fratterigo 2009: 84). But which version of home should a suburban husband present as his 'outward reflection'? The one with the assembly line kitchen he cannot afford? The extra, just-in-case concrete house in the basement, in which he would ride out the apocalypse? Or the one that was trying to kill him via the television set?

Some fictional men tried to adapt their suburban spaces to suit their needs, a technique *Playboy*'s bachelors would master. It did not work out so well for Cash Bentley in John Cheever's 1953 story 'O Youth and Beauty'. The story was published the same year as *Playboy*'s first issue, signaling the need for the safe space offered by *Playboy*'s bachelor pads. Cash – an erstwhile high school track star – notoriously punctuates suburban dinner parties with a sort of domestic steeplechase, in which he rearranges the living room furniture and – at the sound of the starting gun – runs through the space leaping magnificently over the repurposed furnishings. He becomes depressed when he breaks his leg and can no longer perform this ritual of youth. One night, frustrated and drunk, he decides to run the race in his own living room, with just his wife as audience. She fires the starting gun ineptly, and the bullet kills him in mid-air as he leaps over the couch. Cash may have been more successful than Mr Ordz at adapting his suburban space to suit his needs, but this success is short-lived. Like Ordz, Cash dies in an absurd accident caused by his own desperation and his wife's carelessness. The space portrayed in 'Playboy's Progress', therefore, appears even more mythical. It is already repurposed; there is nothing there superfluous to seduction. Nothing needs be moved or repositioned in order for the Playboy to celebrate his youth.

In Bourdieu's words, what these men needed was a new, more appropriate environment for their desired actions. Bourdieu argues that 'practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted' (Bourdieu 1977: 78). Simply put, the pages of *Playboy* presented a new definition of 'the impossible, the possible, and the probable' (ibid.); the bachelor pad presented a setting in which such definitions could be realised. What was idealised in the mythical bachelor pad would have been 'unthinkable or scandalous' (ibid.) in the suburbs. The 'negative sanctions' incurred by Bentley and Ordz suggest that attempts to subvert the dominant narrative from within the suburban setting itself would be ruinous.

The magazine's inclusion of actual fables prepares the reader to consider the playboy's behaviour within the boundaries of such systems. Notably, the fables included in the studied issues do not support the suburban ideal. Instead, these fables reinforce the commodification of women and duplicity within romantic relationships, normalising and contextualising the fable of seduction presented in design articles. For example, in September 1956, *Playboy* printed 'The Amorous Goldsmith'. In this tale, a man falls in love with a woman he sees in a painting. He seeks out the woman who inspired the image, travels to another country to find her, and invents the evidence to have her arrested as a witch. Then he bribes the jailer and takes her home as his own. In this Arabic tale, as in 'Playboy's Progress', an eager bachelor gets what he wants because he has means; the desires of the young woman are of no interest to him. The following month, in the October 1956 issue that included the second part of the Penthouse Apartment feature, 'The Hoodwinked Husband' presents the story of a Venetian man who is so blinded by love for his new wife that he is tricked into paying for sex with her after helping her cuckold him with his own boss.[8] The boss's lesson for the young husband is particularly relevant to a

8 The original author is identified as Masuccio Salernitano; no translator is identified.

discussion of domestic spaces: 'wives, however fair they may be, must be reckoned as part of the regular furniture of the house, something to serve our pleasant uses whenever we may stand in need. But married or unmarried, we lusty men must always be on the look out for some fresh morsel. Nature demands it' (1956: 87). If a man respects his wife enough to think of her as more than 'furniture', then, according to this fable, he is setting himself up to be 'hoodwinked'. This young husband has not yet learned to navigate the appropriate habitus.

That the playboy habitus could be transferred beyond the bachelor pad suggests its ascension to the level of myth or fable. Wojcik, who examines *Playboy*'s bachelor pads as part of her larger study on apartments in popular culture, suggests that 'the bachelor pad raises the possibility that one's identity is not stable or essential but determined by location' (Wojcik 2010: 109); however, the presence of narrative within the design features and the buttressing of such features with fiction and fables, encourages the reader to imbue these spaces with more symbolic significance. The bachelor pad transforms the familiar 'once upon a time, in a land far away' to a setting more immediate and accessible while still providing a safe space in which alternate modes of expression and interaction can be imagined. Once these standards are established, they can be enacted anywhere, as long as all participating parties are conversant in them.

The fabled playboy was so well established as early as 1959 that he could safely take his narrative out of his city apartment. In April 1959, *Playboy* published 'Playboy's Weekend Hideaway', another installment in the Modern Living series. Designed by James E. Tucker and rendered by Robert Branham, the home is presented in seven pages of colourful hand-drawn images, presented as 'plans for a bachelor's haven far from the madding crowd' (Tucker and Branham 1959: 49). The text provides specifics on the bachelor's ideal country home, including how it is furnished and how it might be used to help the bachelor entertain and seduce. The drawings are landscape-oriented, asking the reader to rotate the magazine, flipping pages from bottom to top rather than from right to left. The title page shows a modern house from an aerial view; situated in a bucolic setting by a lake and boasting its own pool and garage, the house is a marvel of modern architecture with a porch and an abundance of floor-to-ceiling

windows. The natural setting, 'far from the madding crowd' of the city, enhances the home itself.

Turning the page, the reader sees a new aerial view of the home, this time with the roof removed so the floor plan is visible. The narrative begins with exposition and the establishment of relatability; the reader discovers that what makes this house special is that it is designed for the city-dweller who appreciates nature 'in measured amounts [...] which immediately sets him apart from farmers and commuters' (Tucker and Branham 1959: 50). This man, 'perhaps like you' (Tucker and Branham 1959: 53), desires an escape from the city without escaping from its modern conveniences. Different sections of the house receive this attention: the living room, which is sandwiched between pool and lake; the rec room or 'cave' downstairs, with windows offering an under-water view of the pool – 'luminous living murals' – and an array of games (1959: 53); the master bath and master bedroom. Notably, while the house has a kitchen, that space has no dedicated text here. Instead, the 'food bar and cooking corner' is seen from another view of the living room. While the authors do use the word 'kitchen' in this caption, they focus on the ways in which the space 'is visually separated from the rest of the room' and the fact that there are indoor and outdoor barbecues (Tucker and Branham 1959: 54).

After the setting is established and the pictorial tour is complete, the narrative continues, taking up a full page on the reverse of the final images of the house. The reader would have those images in mind as he followed the plot provided here, imagining himself in the dream house he'd just seen. The narrative is written in second person point of view, demanding the reader's participation: 'As your sports car winds up the last quarter mile of road, you see the hideaway very much as it is pictured on Page 49 [*sic*]' (Tucker and Branham 1959: 53). After the details of the home are reviewed, a specific series of events unfolds. 'Let's say that you, as proud possessor of this bachelorly domain, have driven up from the city with your dinner companion on a Friday night; Saturday morning finds you stretching luxuriously in the master bedroom's huge double bed' (56). This fantasy continues, with guests arriving and enjoying the hideaway with the owner. The fantasy culminates in the reader's realisation: 'within these walls you are, literally, an irresistible host' (56).

What distinguishes this from a suburban home is the sophistication of its gadgets, its prioritisation of leisure activities,[9] and the seriality of the guests; otherwise, the gender divisions of the suburbs remain. 'Soon other guests arrive and while the girls all go do a spot of cooking, you take the men down to the rec room to show them the underwater windows facing the pool, the bar, the juke box and the large circular card table where, from time to time, there are stag poker sessions that last almost the entire weekend. And then you go back upstairs to join the girls' (Tucker and Branham 1959: 56). Moreover, the bachelor is comfortable in this space: he is not fighting it the way Ordz, Loman and Bentley did; and he did not attain it nefariously the way Frank Coombs did. This 'hideaway', then, becomes the ultimate success of the fabled playboy: his myth is transferrable and no longer merely another possibility afforded by city life. More than being, as in Fratterigo's construction, 'a state of mind' (2009: 102–3), the bachelor's home was defined by a system of acceptable and expected behaviours, a mode of communication among like-minded men (and willing women) that allowed for expressions of identity and desire that the language of the suburbs could not approximate.

To conclude, the establishment of the bachelor pad as a mythic space was propelled by narrative tours of fictional spaces, as well as fictional short stories, which reinforced through repetition the characteristics, settings, actions and concerns of the man who might live there. *Playboy* could present this imagined space alongside possible characters and plots that helped bring a believable, relatable dimension to otherwise static design drawings. The fable of seduction associated with the playboy contributed to a new habitus of mid-century masculinity, opposing a stifling, monotonous

9 See Preciado 2004 for a discussion of ways that *Playboy* helped men reclaim domestic space through sex; she writes, '*Playboy* magazine's most urgent mission was to take back the house, because only the interior space, as a gender performative machine, could effectuate the transformation of the man into the Playboy' (p. 226). Furthermore, Fratterigo's phrasing when describing the magazine's view of family life recalls the militarisation seen in modernising narratives: '*Playboy* jettisoned the family and instead forged a combination of domesticity and masculinity in the figure of the consumption- and pleasure-oriented bachelor' (2009: 103).

narrative that celebrated the family and the suburbs. Recognising this mythologising of the bachelor allows us to recognise the ways in which domestic space becomes an agent of oppression and power. In many of these stories, women's choices are marginalised and (in one fable) seduction is tossed aside in favour of false arrest and kidnapping. The list of dead men in the narratives discussed here – Coombs, Ordz, Bentley, Loman – also suggests that failure to adapt to a changing habitus, or trying to live within the wrong one, is dangerous and destructive, regardless of gender or locale. This undercurrent of warning lends urgency to the magazine's message, helping *Playboy*, in a sense, to write itself into importance. It also reveals to us our essential need for narrative – for plots that exemplify standards, for themes that convey memorable lessons and for relatable characters in familiar (or enviable) situations – in our formation of our understanding of ourselves.

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