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2003

# Studying Up: The Masculinity of the Hegemonic

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## Publication Details

Donaldson, M, Studying Up: The Masculinity of the Hegemonic, Tomsen, S and Donaldson, M (eds), Male Trouble. Looking at Australian Masculinities, Pluto Press, North Melbourne, 2003, 156-179.

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pp 156-179 in S. Tomsen and M. Donaldson (eds), 2003, Male Trouble. Looking at Australian Masculinities, Pluto Press Australia, North Melbourne, Victoria

### **Studying Up: The Masculinity of the Hegemonic**

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### **From The Downward to The Upward Gaze**

Martin Nicolaus (1975, pp. 52-59) told the American Sociological Association in 1969 that "the one and only general sociological law that has ever been discovered ... [is] that the oppressors research the oppressed .... What scientists are these who peer into everything below?" Alvin Gouldner (1975) had talked about this issue of subject position, too, in 1967. "We find [in sociology] ", he wrote, "a specific standpoint, a kind of underdog identification ... a school of thought that finds itself at home in the world of hip, drug addicts, jazz musicians, cab drivers, prostitutes, night people, drifters, grifters and skidders: the 'cool world'." This *sociology noir* was and is fixed on "deviance" and "social problems", and has had and continues to have a long association with voyeurism, something it shares with women's studies, men's studies, anthropology, studies of sexuality and a lot of fine literature. It involves, as Nicolaus (1975, p. 49) again so neatly put it, "taking notebook and conscience in hand and going slumming". Now, I suppose, after post-structuralism, we could call it "giving voice to difference", or then again, might it be called "victim sociology"?

Either way, personal narratives of "non-dominant social groups" remained popular through the 1980s amongst sociologists, anthropologists and those engaged in the study of language, literature and women's studies. Thus, for those scholars in the Personal Narratives Group connected to the Centre for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota who were "interested in the creation of a world liberated from androcentric hegemony", personal narratives were seen as vital. They are "particularly effective sources of counter-hegemonic insight because they expose the viewpoint embedded in dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal, and because they reveal the reality of a life that defies or contradicts the rules"-and not surprisingly, and importantly, these "counter-narratives are naturally the most inspirational" (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 7).

Thus, personal counter-narratives, "whatever form they take, can be thought of as part of a dialogue of domination ... lived within and in tension with systems of domination" (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 80). They contrast "self-image and experiences with dominant cultural models" (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 11). The corollary of this, of course, is that instead of looking at the vista seen by those who live in tension with the systems of domination, some sociologists at least should relinquish the inspiration of their counter-narratives for the horror of the narratives themselves. That is, maybe those "interested in the creation of a world liberated from androcentric hegemony" should seek to understand the existing world, rather than the view of it held by those it crushes. Those resisting it, after all, have already developed their vision, perspicacity and courage without sociologists looking on. Social class is among other things a relation, and one might reasonably expect that both ends of that relation are attended to by social researchers. Although Pakulski

Waters (1996, p. 2) claim that "class is dead" and that "the most advanced societies are no longer class societies", others not so blind continue to produce useful work in the area (e.g. Crompton 1993; Donaldson 1991; Edgell 1993; Esping-Anderson 1993; Hamilton and Hirszowicz 1993; Kuhn and O'Lincoln 1996; Mcnall et al. 1991; Miliband 1991; Penelope 1994; Poiner 1990; Pusey 1991; Scase 1992). But convincing and fascinating as this work is, it is mainly focused on one end of the class relation, the one "beneath" the researchers, and doesn't generally consider in depth those whose class most benefits from the existing social system, although the work of Gretchen Poiner (1990) and Michael Pusey (1991) are good examples to the contrary. Tom O'Lincoln (1996, p. 5) has made what he calls "a broad brush portrayal of the ruling class", and the Research and Documentation Centre for Contemporary History of Brazil has been undertaking a study of what it calls the contemporary Brazilian "elite", revealing it as part of a cohesive community with its own forms of reproduction and self-perpetuation (de Camargo 1981, pp. 193, 194-95). It is these approaches that I wish to develop by looking at the lives of ruling-class men through their own personal writings and the words of those close to them, which, furthermore, I will take at face value.

Looking at those who make and benefit from the rules, whose self-image and experiences are the dominant cultural models, is the way of problematising the powerful that I intend to attempt. The need to do something with the sociology of power--other than study those who have not much of it, or assert along with the postmodernists-that it is "everywhere" and "every one has it", and curiosity about the men of the ruling class and their lives, are part of this inquiry, as is a keen interest in developing the historical materialist project. And of course, I want to have a go at that weighty conundrum, the extent to which men of great power have some insight into the mechanics of its influence (Hill 1995, p. 9). Do they comprehend what they do? Are they really, what Manning Clark (1991, p. 16) has called "the Ha, Ha men ... not distinguished ... for their sensitivity to another man's pain"?

In confronting this mystery, I hope to unravel the patterns of socio-structural relations underlying the daily processes of the lives of "filthy rich blokes"; to identify their contradictions (if I can) and to appreciate their dynamics. That is, I want to uncover these regularities by regarding the lives of men "who live them, who are put in motion by them and who, in turn, make them work and maintain them throughout time" (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1981, p. 169).

Individuals' lives are the places in which societal changes are played out, and the actions of individuals make up the history of which they are part. "A political economist might be satisfied with unraveling exploitation and capital accumulation", but a sociologist has to "show what such a relation of production does to men's and women's lives" (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1981, pp. 171-72). In this endeavour. Elder (1981, p. 83) has argued that the interpersonal world of family and household is a set of linkages between class position and individual personality. I think this is wrong. Family and household and their complex gender dynamics are constitutive of class relations, exist within them and are one of the key means to their historical continuity.

Thus, I am attempting to dissolve the dichotomy by which most sociologists place "structure" "outside" people, and I hope that this may be possible by examining the

lives of those to whose benefit the social system seems, sometimes almost exclusively, to operate. It is, after all, not so hard to see the social system as somehow separate from, over and against, those it dispossesses. And so, perhaps, it may be possible to see how this system operates "inside" those it benefits, by exploring the patterns of practice in which they immerse themselves and through which they create the social logic that underlies their own lives.

I want to do some of that now by looking at the childhoods of ruling-class men. As one quite wealthy man, Frederick Engels (1975, p. 684), remarked more than a hundred years ago: "History proceeds in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills and every one of them is in turn made into what it is by a host of particular conditions of life." It is the "particular conditions of life" of the Packer, Murdoch and Fairfax fathers and sons that I am concerned about. I want to see how the world seems to those who benefit from rather than pay "the enormous price tag of history" (Marks 1989, p. 47). Examining the lives of those men in whose beneficence the social system seems, sometimes almost exclusively, to function may reveal how this system is operated by those it benefits-and it may be possible to understand why it is, in Connell's (1983, p. 172) words, "no mean feat to produce the kind of people who can actually operate a capitalist system".

I'm going to start at the beginning by examining the childhoods of these men, as they themselves experience them and talk about them. "One of the frustrating aspects of childhood is not being able to peel off the webs of mystery which cling to certain events and your own haphazard presence in them," writes Patrick White (1981, p. 18). I hope to get around this problem by examining the autobiographies and biographies of several of these men, making clearer the mesh of social life by constructing a collective portrait of their childhoods. The nature of this methodology, I have explained earlier (Donaldson 1997), but I have tried to restrict the size of the canvas to "Australia", even though I now believe that the very rich are their own continent, or perhaps planet. Nonetheless, I could not resist drawing on the pictures of the Queen of Australia and her family and on the insights of the "class traitors" Joanie Bronfman (1987), Ronald Fraser (1984) and Andrew Hochschild (1987) who speak so compellingly of their own class. Nevertheless, the picture is essentially incomplete, for I am not talking about the relationship of these boys with their servants, nor of their time at their exclusive and expensive schools. These two critical areas require attention of their own outside the scope of this chapter.

### **Our Father**

When considering masculinity, it is commonplace to remark, as I did years ago, that children need to be well cared for in long-term loving relationships with adult men and women if they are to become productive, creative and nurturing adults themselves (Donaldson 1991, p. 114). Child-minders and day-care workers have confirmed that the children of active fathers are "more secure" and "less anxious" than the children of non-active fathers. Psychological studies have revealed them to be better developed socially and intellectually, and the results of active fatherhood seem to last (Hochschild with Machung 1989, pp. 218-237; Stein 1984, p. 155). This seldom seems to be the experience of boys who grow up with great wealth, nor is it the experience of their sons.

Kerry Packer said that he saw little of his parents when he was at school-his father not at all between the ages of five and nine, and his mother perhaps half a dozen times, even though the school he attended was a "stone's throw away" from the family home (Barry 1994, pp. 108-109). As Stephen Mulholland explained in his first speech to the "Fairfax troops", "executives just work very hard. We come in early in the morning, we leave late at night and we worry like hell. We don't sleep much and that's the sacrifice we make, in return for which we get paid great deals of money. That's the way life is ... We don't see our families" (Siklos 1995, p. 271). When they embarked on a tour of the Commonwealth, the Queen and Prince Philip did not see their children at all for six months. Although she spoke to them on the telephone, the Queen later revealed that when reunited with their parents, the children "were terribly polite. I don't think they really knew who we were" (James 1992, p. 12).

Hochschild's (1987, 31) father worked long hours, and except for the weekends saw his son for "a few minutes" at breakfast and bedtime. Murdoch explained that he liked "spending time with Ann [his wife] and time with the children" but that he worked "seven days a week" (Tuccille 1989, p. 264), like Sir Frank Packer who worked "twenty hours a day" and was "rarely around" (Barry 1994, pp. 106-114), and Andrew Fairley who "reserved his Sunday afternoons" for his four children (Schmidt 1997, p. 7). Another's mother would get up at eleven, his father some time after he had left for pre-school (Bronfman 1987, p. 18), and it seemed to the servants that Ronald Fraser's parents lived for themselves, seeing their children for half an hour or so before they were sent back to the nursery (Fraser 1984, p. 34).

But within this cramped and scarce "free" time, everything in Hochschild's father's life was "by appointment" for which he was always precisely on time (Hochschild 1987, p. 4). Similarly, if Prince Edward wished to have lunch with his mum, an appointment was necessary, and to speak to his father his valet would first speak to the Duke's valet to see if there was a moment free (James 1992, p. 195). Other boys endured set-piece encounters with their parents:

After I got older and [went] off to school, basically the only time I would see my parents would be for an hour before dinner, which was the cocktail hour, the drinking hour. I was expected to be in the library with them, talking to them, coat and tie, that hour six to seven, dinner was at seven. It never varied. I was there an hour before dinner and I was expected to talk to them and to tell them about my day. They were never very interested particularly. They never asked me about any of my friends at school or anything; so eventually it became a very painful sort of duelling session that I found very maddening and awkward. Then there was dinner, which was a release after an hour of agony. [Bronfman 1987, p. 36]

Between parents and children "spontaneity is rare", noted Prince Edward's biographer (James 1992, p. 195).

Before his son went to boarding school, Sir Thomas Hardy (of wine and yachting fame) felt that when he wasn't away on business, "having the time to drive him to school each morning ... was very important. It gave us a chance for a man-to-man chat", especially since work, "committees, Lodge and charities resulted in me getting home quite late a few nights each week" (Mundle 1993, p. 154). But when the boy was rushed with a cerebral haemorrhage to the Children's Hospital in Adelaide

accompanied by a police escort, Sir Thomas "was away on a bloody yachting spree again, like I had [been] for half my life" (Mundle 1993, 132).

The life of the adults, as the servants saw it, "offered them such a lot, didn't it? I mean, they were always in a hurry to go riding or play tennis or to rush off to parties" (Fraser 1984, p. 73). Fraser (1984, p. 92) recalls:

[S]ometimes when I was in bed my mother would come in for a moment to say goodnight. She wore long evening dresses that rustled and she came in so lightly that she seemed to float, and there was a scent she wore which remained in the air after she'd gone. She was there only a moment, I can feel myself still reaching out to her as she floated away ...

### **Distant Voices, Absent Cuddles**

Even with time with their fathers so scarce and so tightly organised, there was something lacking, the boys felt, in their relationships with their fathers. Short, organised, infrequent the time with their fathers might be, but pleasant it seldom was. Hochschild (1987, p. 27) wrote that his father's emotions "showed only through the cracks", and that trying to win his approval by being affectionate toward him simply didn't work (Hochschild 1987, p. 58); perhaps, like another rich father, he "never was affectionate at all" (Bronfman 1987, p. 37). Sir Frank Packer "seemed strict, a disciplinarian, a frightening figure who was tough on his sons". He "used to use a polo whip very well. I got a lot of beltings", said his son Kerry (Barry 1994, pp. 114-115). Another got the hairbrush or the wooden hangar if he "stepped out of line", but more often the brush because the hangers used to break (Bronfman 1987, p. 61). Such thrashings were quickly forgotten by White (1981, p. 9). What he could not forgive was his parents' amusement at his attempts to express his ideas, "their conviction that what I detested was what I would like", and their "relentless determination to do everything for my own good".

Authority, formality, aggression and inexpressiveness were a mark of these men. When Hochschild's father spoke he did so "in a voice which carried in it the full weight of his authority, of his wide reputation for morality, a voice whose very quietness contained the expectation of unquestioning obedience", for his "entire bearing and role in life was that of a man who expected to be listened to". He was "always formal" and forceful such that "when he changed the subject, you did not change it back" (Hochschild 1987, 59, 76, 148).

James Fairfax (1991, 23) felt that his relationship with his father "was normal for a boy of ten, but with possibly more restraints than in many such relationships ... He was certainly a stern parent when I transgressed and, until his departure, made genuine efforts to do things with me". Consequently Fairfax felt he was "more self-reliant at an early age". One of the servants confided that she had never heard Fraser's father say hello to him and "at meal times he didn't talk" (Fraser 1984, 72) for these men were prone to be aloof or even "rough and bullying" like the Duke of Edinburgh whose affection was "tempered with brusqueness" and who "frightened" his son Charles according to a loyal retainer (Dimbleby 1994, 33). Prince Charles' bodyguard, Michael Varney, commented that from what he saw of them both over seven years of constant attendance on the prince, it was clear that Charles had "enormous respect and admiration" for his father but what else he may have felt for Philip was "less evident" (Varney with Marquis 1989, 179). According to a friend of Charles, Prince Philip "didn't quite realise how sensitive his eldest son was", not

noticing that he made Charles "curl up" and "shrink". Their relationship was characterised by "impatience on the one side and trepidation on the other" (Dimbleby 1994, 21-22) and Philip was quick to "rebuke his son, in public no less than in private, for inconsequential errors. Indeed, he often seemed intent not merely on correcting the prince but even mocking him as well, so that he seemed to be foolish and tongue-tied in front of friends as well as family" (Dimbleby 1994, 49).

Varney himself was "quite taken aback" when he realised that at boarding school and at university where he and Charles "spoke about many things ... Of all the boys and young men I spoke to at length he was the only one whom I cannot remember ever talking about his father. Not ever. It took some time for this to dawn on me" (Varney with Marquis 1989, 48).

Clyde Packer, too, was dressed down and abused in public by his father. Into his late thirties, Clyde was still treated like a stupid, disobedient little boy until he could take no more, splitting clearly and completely with his father, Sir Frank (Barry 1994, 166, 167). Hochschild (1987, 137, 3, 4, 24, 140) was "always wary" of his father whom he dreaded being alone with. Even into adulthood, there was invariably a "stiffness in the air" between them, a "constant uneasiness" marked by "awkward silences", "unease and apprehension". For Fraser (1984, 104), there was no possibility at all of a "human relationship" with his father. His first memories of him are all intimidating, including the time he threatened to do his son's hair up in his mother's curlers because he "looked like a girl". Fraser knew at that moment that he couldn't "fill the role, could never be a man like him. Moreover, I didn't want to be like him and, increasingly, I came to fear that I was like him".

Patrick White (1981, 60) was to realise later in his life that when he fell in love for the first time as an adult, he was "probably hoping unconsciously to consummate [his] love" for his father with someone who was "everything" his father was not. The breakdown of that relationship depressed him, he said, "as much as my failure to communicate with my actual father". "I might have loved f [him] had I dared, and had we been able to talk to each other" (White 1981, 15).

Not surprisingly, given the strained and emotionally distant nature of these relationships, Bartolome (1974, 102) found during many hours of interviewing business executives and their families, and on many purely social occasions with them, that he saw "little physical contact between couples and their children". Prince Charles discovered early in childhood that only in the nursery could he always find a cuddle, for his own parents not only were often away but were, in any case, "not given to displays of affection even in private" (Dimbleby 1994, 34).

Another man explained:

My mother never touched me except every now and then after I would do all sorts of favors for her and really go all out for some sign from her. [Then] she would give me back rubs in bed, which were extremely regimented. I got five strokes one night, ten strokes one night, that was a big one and sometimes only two strokes. That was the only time that my mother ever touched me except for when I was a baby which I can't really remember. (Bronfman 1987, 29)

Fraser's nanny told him that "sometimes [your mother] and her mother would come in [to the nursery] and the baroness would say. Isn't he sweet? ... but neither of them picked you up and carried you round ... I don't remember your mother kissing you, there was no physical contact".

One man was told by his mother that "both she and my father didn't like small children" (Bronfman, 1987, 26) and Fraser's father, Sir Harold, never visited the nursery nor picked him up nor played with him, according to the nanny. "I'm not interested in my child", he said to her once, "until he can go out shooting with me." She thought that there "wasn't much family feeling in the house" (Fraser 1984, 34, 72, 73).

### **The Hunger for Communion**

With their childhoods characterised by the physical absence of their parents for long periods and brief, distant and unsatisfactory encounters otherwise, it is scarcely remarkable that men like Kerry Packer should recall their boyhoods as marred by loneliness, for these are the very things which cause it. "I have a black hole inside me" he told Phillip Adams (Barry 1994, 116, 197).

Many of her one hundred very wealthy informants told Bronfman (1987, 17) that they felt unhappy with the parenting they had received as children, describing their parents as "cold, distant, frequently absent and ... delegat[ing] much of the childrearing to servants". To them it seemed that their parents were more concerned with imparting appropriate attitudes and behaviours than with nurturing their children. "We were lonely" one of them told her (Bronfman 1987, 20), a fact crystal clear to servants like the cook who told Fraser that his brother Colin was "terribly lonely, he came so often to me in the kitchen. All this rich house and everything, there was nothing Colin didn't have - and yet he was so poor in a way" (Fraser 1984, 137). Fraser himself didn't have anybody to play with either, except when other rich children came to tea or he went to their houses. He spent many hours in the garden or indoors on his own (Fraser 1984, 78). Looking back, Fraser sees himself "dressed in white standing in the garden alone, watching, waiting, not knowing what to do. There is nothing, no one to play with" (Fraser 1984, 117). He was, like White, a "private and solitary child" (Marr 1991, 33).

One night there was a knock at the door of Michael Varney's rooms at Gordonstoun. It was Prince Charles who asked if it would be OK if they watched TV together. After a while he asked Varney, "Do you ever get lonely?" (Varney with Marquis 1989, 41-42). After that time, said Varney, Charles "allowed his defences to drop when we were alone, and I could see how very miserable he often was" (Varney with Marquis 1989, 46). The school chaplain, Philip Crosfield, noticed, too. The prince, he said, was "very lost and very lonely" (Dimbleby 1994, 246-47).

Partly this was because Charles was taught early to be wary of those who would seek to cultivate his friendship, and that decent boys, "worthwhile potential friends", stood back. At Gordonstoun his classmates treated harshly any boy they thought was "crawling" to him. He said that it was difficult to make friends at Cheam School, Gordonstoun and at Cambridge because he couldn't be sure who "genuinely liked him" and who was "trying to suck up" to him because of who he was. "Oilers", Princess Diana called them (Varney with Marquis 1989, 42, 46--47; Dimbleby 1994,

335). With those exhibiting signs of friendship towards him suspect and the worthy boys (by definition) standing back, he made few friends, none of whom were very close (Varney with Marquis 1989, 49). In Varney's view of Prince Charles, the "capacity for commitment" that friendship requires did not "seem to be there" (Varney with Marquis 1989, 178).

Patrick White (1981, 16) remembers that as a boy, "relationships with even cherished friends were inclined to come apart" when he faced sharing personal things with them. Later in life, he complained that some of his old friends were "millstones ... possessive and suffocating". He ended most of his friendships, sometimes over what seemed, even to his closest friends, to be the most trivial matters, breaking with them "brutally. It was the only way he knew and allowed him at some level to share the pain he was inflicting" (Marr 1991, 384). And as an adult, Kerry Packer explained that the "world was out to get him, to rip him off, to take him for a sucker". "I don't make friends easily", he explained. "Basically when I meet people, I don't expect to like them" (Barry 1994, 196). Patrick White shared this view, for to him it was "axiomatic that humans betray". As a man he "still felt shame at the betrayals committed in his childhood" and he always viewed the world as hostile (Marr 1991, 291, 306 ).

Rupert Murdoch was described by his sister Helen as "a bit of a cat who walked alone". He felt "a loner" at school he said, "probably because of my father's position. Bullied a lot. I'm sure my kids have had much the same. We've never talked about it" (Shawcross 1992, 56, 58). Perhaps as a consequence, he told Time magazine in 1977, he was "a bit dull and humourless, not the sort of person who makes social friends easily (Tuccille 1989, 65). His father, Keith, confessed that as a young man he suffered "fits of beastly depression ... which din into my ears, 'you are of no account'" (Shawcross 1992, 29).

In his early sixties Murdoch was "still a man possessed -and lonely ... his ability to enjoy friendship, and the value he places on it, has clearly suffered ... Only a few of those who have helped build his empire are still close to him" for they were "bound to Murdoch by ... ties of gratitude, admiration, fear and a kind of longing that was never quite satisfied", but not by friendship. The reasons for this are very clear to a forty-year-old politician who explained to Phylis Chesler (1978, 234):

Sure I got buddies. Lots of buddies. And we couldn't get too much done without coming through for each other. But they're not my friends. Can't, afford friends when you want to get things done. Power isn't kept by a system of friendships. It's kept by how fast you can move with a change of time or need, how well organised your people are, how easily you can drop another guy when he's wrong or going under ... The people I relax with are in other areas. But even there, even with my wife's relatives. I gotta do favors, and keep my ears open too ... I have allies and I have enemies, and I have my family. I have no friends.

Rupert Murdoch said that his loneliness at school had had a crucial effect on him. "It made me realize that if you're going to do your job as a publisher or a principal in the media, you've got to be your own person and not have close friendships which can compromise you" (Shawcross 1992, 58).

Friendship is an impediment to the free flow of market forces, weakening a man and preventing him from being a conduit to the energies that he must serve. Unable to make close attachments and deprived even of those friendships he does develop to serve the market, the man who believes that the market serves him ends his days in emptiness and desperation. Sir Frank Packer's driver, George Young, remembers celebrating Kerry's mother's sixtieth birthday, just the three of them, Lady Packer, Sir Frank and the driver (Barry 1994, 174). Kerry Packer said later in life that "it would be nice to be loved, but probably I'm not a lovable character" (Davis 1982, 218, 219). Once a lonely boy, Packer is now a lonely man according to Conrad Black (1993, 410) who had noticed in his own father "tendencies to melancholia and loneliness", discovering after George Black died some books in his library about sadness that he had heavily underlined (Black 1993, 159). According to Coleridge, George Black told his son shortly before his death that "life is hell, most people are bastards, and everything is bullshit" (Siklos 1995, 54, 55; Coleridge 1994, 323). Sir Frank Packer's father, too, died "bitter and disillusioned" and Sir Frank himself expired in "much the same frame of mind" (Barry 1994, 174).

"My life is unbearable". said Patrick White. When the historian Manning Clark first met him the year after *Voss* appeared, he was "struck by the hunger in White's face. 'It is the face of a man who wants something he is never going to get... something possibly no human being can give him.' What, Clark wondered, could this be? Perhaps it was simply a hunger for ordinary communion with the human race" (Marr 1991, 400, 354). White "clung to [his partner] Lascaris as the man who saved him from the worst suffering of all, loneliness" (Marr 1991, 312).

### **Making a Man of Him**

The physical absence and emotional distance and its resulting loneliness and fear are deliberately inflicted on and chosen for the boys by their parents and then by them in turn for their children. There is nothing accidental or haphazard about this process. It does not "just happen" and nor are its consequences unforeseen. "I was left to cry quite often. I think that's extremely destructive. [But] it was what my parents thought was right at the time", one of Bronfman's (1987, 29) informants explained. Those close to Prince Philip concluded that he hectored his son because "it was the only means he knew to achieve his supreme objective - to mould a prince for kingship", to bring up a son who would be able to "take over as King in a tough world" (Dimpleby, 1994, 21-22, 50).

Even while Rupert Murdoch's relationship to his parents "remained at the core of his being" according to Shawcross (1992, 76-77), in 1989, when he was asked on television if his father had thought he was "wonderful or a chump" -he nominated the latter, supporting the "conventional wisdom" that his parents were "remote and tough ... preoccupied with their own lives, quick to find fault, slow to praise and even slower to demonstrate affection". Sir Keith could be "stern and aloof", and was not "quick with praise", and Lady Murdoch said that she "didn't want the children to be spoilt or over-indulged. Keith was much more indulgent than I was, and I think I was counteracting that" (Shawcross 1992, 51, 52).

Another forthright mother explained, "I'm trying to make my children stand on their own feet. I won't express openly my affection for them because I don't want to smother them. I'm quite cold". "Expressions of tenderness" were and should be

limited, especially towards boys, least they be "smothered" and made "too dependent" (Bartoleme 1974, 102). Lady Murdoch was certainly keen to "harden" Rupert for she considered this made him "adaptable". "Like my father, he can suit himself to any kind of company. He has this sort of flair for adapting himself ... [even] though he's had a lot of material benefits", she said (Shawcross 1992, 53-54). As a boy he was not allowed to sleep in his bedroom except during winter, for she insisted that he spend each night in the garden of their country home, Cruden, in a tree house. "I thought it would be good for Rupert to sleep out. It was pretty tough. He was more than halfway up the tree. He had no electric light", she explained. Murdoch said that "it seemed perfectly OK to me. It never occurred to me that it was a hardship to be there" (Shawcross 1992, 51, 52, 53).

### **Exclusivity, Blood and Ancestors**

This "hardening of the shell", as Kerry Packer called it (Barry 1994, 113), is thus a deliberate pedagogic strategy. The boys are toughened, hardened, disciplined, strengthened and stiffened, but within a particular environment, one which effectively blocks them off from pernicious influences which might soften their characters and undo the difficult and laborious construction of their masculinity. They are brutalised and protected at the same time.

Rich parents do not generally question the class exclusiveness within which the upbringing of their boys occurs, for it is "a natural style of living", "just something you do" (Ostrander 1984, 91, 94). "I think it was a very normal childhood", Dame Elizabeth Murdoch told the *New York Times* about her son who had purchased the paper (Tuccille 1989, 9). Part of this "normalcy" involves selecting playmates very carefully so that "doing the right thing" is learned early and thoroughly. Consequently, "the puberty of class awareness comes earlier than the puberty of the body". At about ten or eleven, Hochschild had stopped playing with the children of servants of his own accord, because he realised that they always did what he suggested (Hochschild 1987, 47).

When children from outside the selected circle did intrude, nothing was said about it, but it was "just understood" that they should not come into the house itself for they would "bring illnesses or habits that you might pick up", and they might give you "strange feelings" and "interfere with your upbringing". On a couple of occasions, Fraser was told off for talking like them and he quickly understood that it was "common" to do so, that a boy like him "didn't do that sort of thing" (Fraser 1984, 152-53, 83). Consequently, children of wealthy parents only know people like themselves. They are forbidden to associate with others from beyond their world that they may encounter, and they are likely to receive "many overt and subtle messages about [their] inferiority" if they do (Bronfman 1987, 392).

Breaking the rules of class contact is met with disapproval, however inadvertent the act:

I ran quickly to open the door, exultant at being of use. A man stood there. "Is your mummy in?" "Yes," I said, "please come in and wait." I showed him into the hall and ran to find my mother. A couple of minutes later she returned white in the face. "That was a beggar, Alexander," she said to my father. And then, rounding on me: "How did you dare let a man like that in?" As they both

started to scold I felt a terrible pang and ran across the fields ... convinced of my wrong-doing. (Fraser 1984, 106)

The small world they inhabit is so tight that the young master is not permitted to eat with the children of servants, even though in his infancy he ate with their parents and not with his own. At all times, the servants would address him as "master" even when he was a baby who couldn't understand that or any other word. Even in adulthood and old age, there is still a "dividing line" which the child of a servant explained, was "engrained in me" such that "Madam was Madam and you were Master Ronnie" (Fraser 1984, 163, 75). There were, as White (1981, 33) quickly learned, "the Better Classes and the Lower Classes" or "the rabble and the more respectable classes", as he later called them (Marr 1991, 316).

This "engraining" of class occurs from birth and some events draw it to consciousness more than others. Fraser, attending a tea party for over a hundred children, most accompanied by their chauffeurs and nannies, was struck by the thought that "a hundred poor children could have tea just from what's left over", but, he said, that was the first and last time he made such a comparison, for he was "much too carried away by events, got too much of a thrill from all the new things that were happening ... to think deeply about these things" (Fraser 1984, 35).

For those children not from the ruling class such as the children of servants who did manage to view the inner sanctum, it seemed that rich boys had an "endless opportunity" to have whatever they wanted. "You had only to say to your mother her and she went to Reading and brought it back, whatever it was ..." The playroom, separate and spacious, "was always loaded with stuff", "an Aladdin's cave full of books and toys and games" (Fraser 1984, 159, 162). There was "an infinite amount of money if you did what they wanted" (Bronfman 1987, 252) to buy special material possessions: a variety of musical instruments, a swimming pool and exceptional toys and games:

We had a huge basement and my father bought pieces of steel and we had lots of blocks. This was really a function of wealth because ordinary children do not have these resources. Blocks are expensive. Most kids have a bunch of blocks. But we had blocks that we could build structures all over this room, things that were taller than us, big things, cities. (Bronfman 1987, 58)

Cities in the playroom is one thing, but one man told Bronfman (1987, 35) that when the time came for him to ride a bike, his father hired someone to show him how.

Ruling-class boys, then, are taught early that they are different from other children. Their contact with children from other classes is limited and controlled, and, when it occurs by accident, it is discouraged. The effect, of course, as one whom Bronfman spoke with realised, is that it gave him "an unrealistic view of the world because I thought everybody's father was an executive in a great big corporation. I couldn't comprehend a life with a father who didn't do that ... I felt everybody always had enough money and that wasn't an issue" (Bronfman 1987, 79).

Intrusions of the wrong sort of people, when they occurred at all, sometimes induced fear. "I never felt safe from nuns and priests, drunks, larries, or the Mad Woman, till well up the gravel drive, beyond the bunya tree", safe well within his own backyard,

said White (1981, 2); and sometimes the occasional ritual invasion occasioned both fear and a sense of power and superiority:

a line of village children, powerfully awkward in their best suits, some of them twice my size, [bore] down on me when the front gate opened for their annual treat at the Manor. A few I knew by sight but not to talk to; the rest were just faces, anxious and rough. Waiting alone at the bend in the drive for the phalanx to begin its descent was a moment I very much feared. And then, as they began to scatter through the garden on the treasure hunt, I would feel a certain superiority, the superiority of belonging. They were only here - in the garden, not the house, of course - because we were giving them a treat. "This is their treasure hunt, darling, not yours," my mother said. "You must help them." (Fraser 1984, 111)

Rupert Murdoch's mother instilled in him a sense of noblesse oblige, too, along with a consciousness of privilege (Shawcross 1992, 61). The wealthy often have a sense of "superiority", the experience and expectation that "their kind of people" is better than others. Noblesse oblige is the notion that there are responsibilities and obligations associated with this privilege (Bronfman 1987, 2), but it has definite limits, as young Patrick White found out:

The road took them past the Aboriginals' shanties clustered on the outskirts of town. "There's nothing you can do for these people," his uncle said. Because he was fond of his uncle, he dismissed the blacks from his mind. (Marr 1991, 57)

### **Ontological Superiority and Inevitability**

In addition to learning that they have particular social responsibilities, ruling-class children are taught that they have special talents and abilities which are safeguarded and nurtured. The boys are both "protected and prodded" so they can become the very best they can be, within the acceptable boundaries of class expectations (Ostrander 1984, 70-71). Their mothers, as they themselves see it, take very seriously the task of enforcing high standards of behaviour. Dame Elizabeth Murdoch made it clear to Rupert that if he failed her, he would lose her "last shred of respect" and her warning "shook Rupert to the bones", especially since she "clearly doubted that he was as good as his father" (Shawcross 1992, 61, 67, 69).

The result of this process, if it is successful, is the sense that one is "a being of innate superiority" simply "as a fact from the world", a creature who requires "no doing to confirm its being" (Fraser 1984, 75). These boys are marked by a form of masculinity shaped by a thorough and early appreciation of class difference and a sense of their own ontological superiority. We "wallowed" in it, said White (1981, 19).

Thus Ostrander (1984, 94) points out, that while ruling-class mothers want their children to have "the chance to become the best they can be, to contribute to the community in some way, to develop life-long, enjoyable leisure pursuits, to stay out of trouble, to get a good education, and to have happy marriages", all these anticipations and expectations have strong class-specific meanings which appear and are experienced as solid and inflexible to those living in and through them. Parents demand "the best" of their children who must be "the best", because they are "the best" and, in the process, they wish them to have a sense of

"accomplishment, self-satisfaction, and self-confidence" and to achieve whatever they want - as long as it's what is expected of them (Ostrander 1984, 76, 77). Childhood was "not much more than an anxious wait for manhood" and the "ascent to adulthood" was a "series of steps" that lay "like granite before you" such that life "was like a factory ... in which cogs pulled me along, conveyor belts pushed me out" (Fraser 1984, 73, 92, 103, 110). In Patrick White's world there are no "accidents of birth. We are what we are born to be, free only to shape the lives fate has given us ... Escape is impossible". White believed in "blood and ancestors" said Marr (1991, 4), and he felt "caught, irresolute and uncomfortable" in that journey encompassed by the circle of his parents' friends - "business, the law and the land" - who met not only "at the races, ate at the Golf Club, played bridge and sat on the margin of the dances held to mark each stage their children took into the world" (Marr 1991, 101) but shared other rituals too, such as that of "blooding":

Under the trees hounds were milling about, snarling and yapping. Riders on horses and others on foot, amongst them a man in a red coat, watched as the hounds pulled bits of meat about between them. The man in the red coat took a bit from one of them, stuck his fingers in it and rubbed the blood on your cheeks and forehead. The smell was repulsive, but worse was not knowing which part of the fox the bloody meat came from. No one explained, it was just another of those mysteries of childhood. But when people began to offer their congratulations, a twinge of fearful pleasure filled the inner void, if only momentarily, bloodily, with the satisfaction of becoming one of the elect. Another of those steps that lay frighteningly immutable on the path through childhood had been overcome ... That evening there was a knock on the bedroom door and the huntsman ... approached the bed with a brown paper bag. You sat up in surprise and he opened the bag to show you the grinning fox's head and the tail which he had brought as an additional sign of election ... you accepted them as of right ... and gravely thanked [him], who was offered five shillings for his trouble by your father downstairs. (Fraser 1984, 80)

Life's and history's courses seem inevitable and of deep significance one for the other, especially when celebrated by public ritual which visibly excludes lesser men who at best may discreetly serve. Those who serve do so because they are, for one reason or another, simply not "the best", and the children of the ruling class, whatever their ability, "are simply not allowed to fail academically or personally", for they are, after all, superior. While this gives them "striking advantages over children of other classes", it also provokes its own forms of apprehension and uncertainty (Ostrander 1984, 84).

## **Conclusion**

The study thus far has indicated that it is possible to learn of the private lives of those made remote and precious by their massive wealth. "Studying up" need not remain beyond the scope of even the most penurious scholar, and the auto/biographical method not only reveals interesting details about discrete individuals, but exposes patterns and continuities in the gendering of the young.

As we have seen, the childhoods of the wealthy involve disconnection from others. Lack of intimacy and nurturance, frequent parental absences, repression of loving feelings, relationships governed by the parents' needs and desires, and an

atmosphere of formality all characterise their family and home life. The boyhoods of those with great wealth are marked, more than for most other boys, by the physical absence of their fathers and mothers, and when time is found for them, it is so scarce and so tightly organised that it lacks spontaneity and the involvement of fathers in life course events. Affection is seldom expressed, especially physically. Authority, formality, aggression and inexpressiveness are more common. Wariness, stiffness, awkwardness and apprehension characterise the relationship between fathers and sons.

This physical absence and emotional distance are deliberately fostered by the parents and its resulting loneliness and fear are not unforeseen. By these means parents quite deliberately attempt to mould their boys, to toughen, harden, discipline, strengthen and stiffen them, within a particular social environment which isolates them from everyone who is not like them. They are brutalised and protected at the same time.

Ruling-class boys, then, are taught early that they are inherently different from and essentially superior to other children. Their contact with children from other classes is limited and controlled, and when it occurs by accident, it is discouraged. Toughening and distancing is one part of the inevitable and relentless maturation process, which also concerns exclusion of those outside the class who are inherently inferior, and collusion and coherence within it. In addition to learning that they have particular social responsibilities, ruling-class children are taught that they have precious talents and abilities which are shielded and developed so that they may become the best that they know they will become. The boys are prodded as well as toughened and protected, learning also that friendship, even within their circle, is unreliable and dangerous because it threatens the distance established with such effort and maintained with such difficulty, between themselves and others.

Such an upbringing produces men who are "aloof; insecure; insensitive to their own and others' feelings, desires and mistreatment; capable of surface sociability rather than ... meaningful relationships" (Bronfman 1987, 387-88). In this way the masculinity of the hegemonic is strongly affected by the maintenance and continuation of the class which shapes its character. Above all it teaches those who bear it, that it alone is the masculinity that they most need to survive in the world they create in their own image.

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