

## Chapter 3

### **Literary Reconfigurations of Masculinity I: Masculine caregivers in Australian children's fictions 1953-2001**

'You're a failure as a parent, Joe Edwards!'

*Mavis Thorpe Clark The Min-Min (1966:185)*

It is easy to understand why men who grew up at a time when their fathers were automatically regarded as the head of the household and the breadwinner should feel rather threatened by the contemporary challenge to those central features of traditional masculine status ...

*Hugh Mackay Generations (1997:90)*

As cultural formations produced for young Australian readers, the children's fictions discussed in this chapter offer a diachronic study of literary processes employed to reconfigure schemas of adult masculinities.<sup>1</sup> The pervasive interest in the transformation of Australian society's public gender order and its domestic gender regimes in the late twentieth century is reflected in children's fictions where reconfigurations of masculine subjectivities are represented with increasing narrative and discursive complexity. The interrogation of masculinity—specifically as fathering/caregiving—shifts in importance from a secondary level story in post-war realist fictions to the focus of the primary level story by the century's end. Thematically its significance changes too, from the reconfigurations of social relations in the domestic sphere that subverts the doxa of patriarchal legitimacy, to narratives that problematise masculinity in the public gender

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this chapter is published in *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*, 9: 1 (April 1999): 31-40.

order. From the mid-1960s, feminist epistemologies provide the impetus for the first reconfiguration in the representations of fathering masculinities that challenges traditional patriarchy. The second reconfiguration, evident in the late 1980s, represents masculine subjects whose democratic intersubjective relationships with women and children disregard the traditional dichotomous patriarchal schemas of oppositional masculinity and femininity. My examination of this literary paradigm shift is framed predominantly by the research of gender researchers. By the *fin de siècle* a third literary reconfiguration of masculine parenting emerges, now aware that masculine domination of the social order must occur in 'public patriarchy', that is, in social structures beyond the domestic sphere.

Bourdieu (2001:81) insists that projects investigating masculinity and femininity must show the relational contexts and the interpersonal dimensions of gender regimes. He argues that when masculinity and femininity are examined separately—whether by feminist or masculinity researchers—the tendency is to 'misrecognise', that is, to erroneously perceive positive patterns of change in the structure of gender relations. Bourdieu (2001) argues that this undermines the credibility of much research because it is the structure of gender relations across the whole social space that requires investigation (116). Bourdieu's (2001:84) challenge to those concerned with the reconfiguration of gender orders and gender regimes is the adoption of two projects: first, 'bringing to light the transhistorical invariants of the relationship between the "genders"' and as a secondary concern, to record the 'substantive transformations seen in the conditions of women, especially in the most advantaged categories' (88). Referring to the mechanisms that perpetuate masculine domination Bourdieu (1998) argues that

... far from asserting that the structures of domination are ahistorical, I shall try to establish that they are the product of an incessant (and therefore historical) labour of reproduction, to which singular agents (including men, with weapons such as physical violence and symbolic violence) and institutions—families, the church, the

educational system, the state—contribute. (34)

In the Australian context religion is excluded as the corpus of children's fiction is overwhelmingly secular, but all other aspects of the social structure Bourdieu lists influence the adult masculinities schematised in Australian children's fictions from the 1950s to the turn of the new millennium. Connell (2000:34) argues that recognition of the historicity of masculinities as 'presupposition, not heresy' is the significant achievement of the *fin de siècle* moment. His research findings, like Bourdieu's, argue the significance of projects that document the historicity of the transformations of masculine domination. Connell this necessity argues thus:

... definitions of masculinity are deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and of economic structures. Masculinity is not just an idea in the head, or a personal identity. It is also extended in the world, merged in organised social relations. To understand masculinity historically we must study changes in social relations. (1995:29)

The discursive practices and narrative conventions of literary texts can reconfigure schemas of social relations and so be proactive in problematising traditional schemas of social relations, not just recommending transformations of masculine subjectivities—individual projects of reform—but revealing the systemic nature of masculine domination in Australian social life. As we saw in Chapter 2, the conventions of realist fiction enable a study of the recomposition of social relations, if writers offer reconfigurations of masculine and feminine participants in degendered storylines where closures rupture traditionally gendered outcomes.

Bourdieu (2001:25-9, 84) and Connell, refer to the 'constant work of *differentiation* to which men and women have never ceased to be subject and which leads them to distinguish themselves by masculinising or feminising themselves and to insist on the right to do so. Feminist scholars have argued this too in various forms in texts as different as

Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Chodorow (1978), Judith Butler (1993) and Toril Moi (2000). Connell's (2000:31) research finds that 'A strong cultural opposition between masculine and feminine is characteristic of patriarchal gender orders, commonly expressed in culture as dichotomies and negations'. Second-wave feminist research maintains that these 'dichotomies and negations' are invariably directed towards women. However, masculinity scholars demonstrate that patriarchal social structures also effect the subordination and marginalisation of specific masculine subjectivities and practices; that is, the gender order is not homogeneous and does not privilege all men equally (Connell 2000:203). Bourdieu (2001) argues

... to bring to light the effects that masculine domination exerts on the habitus of men does not mean, as some would like to think, trying to exculpate men. It means showing that the effort to liberate women from domination, i.e. from the objective and embodied dispositions that impose it on them, must be accompanied by an effort to free men from the same structures which lead them to help impose it. (114 n. 2)

The oppressive effects of the dominant gender order are immanent and yet invisible across the whole social space, from the most elite practices to the most everyday routines, and in cultural formations like literary fictions. Bourdieu (2001:87, italics in original) argues that '*public patriarchy*' is inscribed 'in all the institutions charged with managing and regulating the everyday existence of the domestic unit'. Public masculinities require entrée into investigations where the focus is the lives of children and their caregivers.

Further to these general findings about Western masculinities, Australian cultural commentator, Graeme Turner (1993:149), endorses Australian feminists' findings, when he writes of Australia's 'exorbitantly masculinist literary tradition'. In other words, for child readers to understand the 'transhistorical invariants' (Bourdieu 2001:84) of masculine domination in Australian social structures it is necessary to problematise traditional literary idealisations of masculinity.

Historically the construction of the dominant iconic Australian masculinities devolves from the global enterprise of European imperialism, specifically the British colonial project (During 1990:150; Connell 2000:46-52). Colonial or 'frontier' masculinities exhibit characteristics valued in white settler societies (Ashcroft et al 1989:210-2). Even the nominalisation used in Connell's (2000) academic discourse cannot mask his view of the reprehensible nature of the attributes of such masculinities:

Certainly the process of conquest could produce frontier masculinities which combined the occupational cultures of these groups [soldiers, sailors, traders, administrators] with an unusual level of violence and egocentric individualism. (47)<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately most readers will understand the barbarous practices to which he refers. Connell (2000:47) argues that the colonial enterprise is 'full of evidence of the tenuous control over the frontier exercised by the state'. In the Australian colonial experience 'the frontier of conquest and exploitation was replaced by a frontier of settlement' and before a 'shift back towards the family pattern of the metropole' occurs as women arrive and a second generation begins (2000:47). However, literary fictions continue to privilege the physicality, initiative and toughness of frontier masculinity represented in the pioneering narratives of the 'Bush Legend'.

Richard White (1981) examines the Australian 'obsession with masculinity' in the successive myths of the Australian colonies and nation. Successive metanarratives produce iconic masculinities: rural bushmen who are either land-holders or itinerant workers, explorers, prospectors, particularly the gold-digger, Ned Kelly and other 'bushrangers', the 'digger'<sup>3</sup> and after World War I, the sporting hero (Macintyre 1999:224). These masculine subjectivities evince strength, virility, courage, non-conformism, initiative, audacity, and mateship—that is, 'egalitarian comradeship' (Inglis 1965:26)—and these attributes are

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<sup>2</sup> The 'cultural masculinization of the frontier' is discussed more fully in Connell (1995:193).

<sup>3</sup> Stuart Macintyre (1999:157-8) describes the term 'digger' for the World War I Australian and New

always represented as 'the antithesis of urban pretensions and decadence' (White 1981:136). They exist in opposition to the domestic sphere which was 'depicted as a site of conservatism and a threat to national values' (Lake 1986:127).<sup>4</sup> White argues that these narratives of Australian identity are an urban construction, a 'city-dweller's image of the bush' (1981:33); so the function of the 'Bush Legend' has always been mythic rather than mimetic (1981:85; see also Macintyre 1999:132-3). Needless to say, such texts are also Anglocentric (Gunew 1990:104; Martin 1998:92).

Feminist research, such as Miriam Dixon (1976) and Anne Summers (1975), problematises the masculinist ideology of Australian historiography and literary criticism that legitimates this iconography. Summers (1975) discusses the discursive practices employed to construct an authoritative Australian patriarchal national story, arguing that in the seminal historiography, W. H. Hancock's *Australia* (1930), 'the terms "Australian" and "men" are used synonymously: the Australia he described was a wholly male universe depicted from a man's point of view' (1975:58). Connell (1968), as well as Summers (1975), commented on the particular biases of Hancock's text although Summers notes that Connell stopped short of seeing Australia as synonymous with the masculine. However, by the end of the 1990s Connell was seriously addressing the gendered nature of the state. See, for instance, 'The State, Gender and Sexual Politics' (1994:136-73). In 'Australian literature and its criticism' David Carter demonstrates that literary critics feared the 'feminisation' of literature (2000:267).

Carter (1991:111), White (1981) and Turner (1993) confirm Summers' (1975) views in their examinations of the masculinist ideologies of the successive national myths. Before World War II the masculinities of the pioneer were privileged over the competing bureaucrat or technocrat models in the metropole (Connell 2000:50). After World War II

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Zealand soldier as a colloquial term 'quickly adopted, harking back to the egalitarian fraternity of the goldfields'.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Geoffrey Serle's 'The digger tradition and Australian nationalism' in *Meanjin*, 24 (2), 1965:152-6.

there was a shift to the new masculinity of the 'Australian Way of Life', which was sub/urban-dwelling with pretensions to sophistication (Murphy 2000:66-77). The space of Australian working men moves to the factory, shop and office (Sear 1999:201-3). The frontier masculinity of hard physical labour is bequeathed to migrant workers in the national steel-making and dam building projects such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Here physicality and technology combine to legitimate power (White 1981:136, 157). The narrator of *The Min-Min* (1966:201-2) alludes to this work.

Across all of these hegemonic idealisations of Australian subjectivities there is still no space for the recognition of femininity's traditional characteristics.<sup>5</sup> The literary tradition also continues to represent rural spatiality and pioneer masculinities (White 1981:83). Bourdieu (2001:38) argues that such iconography acts with symbolic force undertaking 'the work of inculcation and embodiment' of masculine subjectivities () and, in the context of this study, perpetuates hegemonic forms of Australian masculinity, that is, the most honoured forms of masculine habitus. Despite trenchant critique of this iconography it continues to circulate as exemplars of Australian manhood and is represented in a conservative tradition evident in Australian children's fictions into the new millennium. Australian sociology and social history accords more importance to women's history because of its focus on the family (Summers 1975:58). The conceptual framing of this chapter is therefore interdisciplinary, as it draws on a range of social research.

In the children's fictions in my corpus, indeed in all fiction of the immediate post-war decade, the legitimacy of the process of hierarchical and oppositional gender differentiation is signaled by the invisibility of masculinity—it is textually unmarked. As Bourdieu (2001:9) argues 'The strength of the masculine order is seen in the fact that it dispenses with justification: the vision imposes itself as neutral ...'. The doxic mythology of this period constructs 'The Australian Way of life' that promulgates the idea of the

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<sup>5</sup> Marilyn Lake (1993:27-35) documents the influence of women's activity in the turn of the century society

nuclear family with its separation of spheres for men and women, narratives of socio-cultural homogeneity and advocacy of conformity and consumerism (Summers 1975:33; White 1981:158-71; Connell 1997:194). Realist fictions of the succeeding decades reveal different stages of Bourdieusienne (1996:57) 'rupture' in the representation of this patriarchal gender order, gender regimes in the nuclear family, and in adult relations of cathexis. Australian cultural researchers agree that the emergence of the women's movement in the 1960s was the rupture from which the patriarchal social structure could not recover and which led to the 'broad delegitimation of patriarchy' (Connell 1995:242).

Second-wave feminism argues that patriarchy interpellates masculine subjects with a relentless impetus to distinction and a concomitant constant insecurity (Cranny-Francis 1992:115). Within this paradigm competitiveness is the essential masculine experience and 'winning' is the means to self-validation (Cranny-Francis 1992:89-116; Faludi 1999:598; Connell 2000:77). Bourdieu (2001:51) argues that the 'androcentric unconscious' assumes that moral and legal authority derives from the masculine, insists on masculine control of economic and political power and imposes hierarchical and oppositional structures of social relations. Within these systems 'difference'—whether of embodiment, sexuality, race, religion, social class or ethnicity—becomes a rationale for domination. (See, for instance, Mitchell 1971, 1975; Summers 1975:35; Walby 1989; MacKinnon 1979:116-7; Cranny-Francis 1992:72, 87; Connell 1995:71-86.) Bourdieusienne (2001:116) symbolic domination allows the masculine subject to legitimate demands for 'recognition, deference, obedience' and 'the service of others' (Swartz 1997:43). Little can change until difference becomes a means of validation rather than the excuse for domination in many aspects of intersubjective relations.

The feminist resignification of masculinity often transfers into children's fictions as narratives and discourse with negative consequences for the representations of men and

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but as Martin (1998:90, 93) argues, it is still necessary to deal with the national mythologies when they are so



boys. Pro-feminist storylines subvert patriarchal emplotments by representing masculine subjects in traditional roles of authority as domineering and emotionally inarticulate or unavailable (Pennell 1999; Coward 1999:136; Hollindale 1988:133). The actions of such characters have horrific effects on their partners and children. Consider, for instance, the spate of fictions in the early 1990s offers narratives that represent fathers in Witness Protection Programs: David McRobbie's *See How They Run* (1996) and Allan Baillie's *Last Shot* (1997). The actions of the fathers in these narratives devastate the lives of their children. As the witness protection example shows, the rupture in patriarchy is often narratively constructed by placing literature's traditionally transgressive men inside the domestic household (Connell 1995:234). It becomes clear to some, but by no means all (Lever 1998:320), feminists and other researchers that such literary texts often just reverse gender prejudice in their representations of men and boys or effect the effacement of masculine subjectivities so that Connell's 'dichotomies and negations' are now directed at men instead of women (Gilbert 1988; Hollindale 1988:19; Cranny-Francis 1992:18; Faludi 1999:604). Little amelioration in gender relations is achieved when misandry replaces misogyny, but the employment of narrative and discursive strategies to achieve reconfigurations of pejorated gendered subjectivities is a complex and multi-faceted process as discussion in Chapter 5 details.

The first reconfiguration of masculinity in Australian children's literature is therefore a response to the women's liberation movement and reflects the rupture in the gender order. From the 1960s onwards, this corpus of fiction discloses a shift away from positive representations of central father characters to representations that range from solipsistic and irresponsible to menacing and reprehensible (Niall 1984:252-3). This shift is significantly marked when the character of Joe Edwards is deemed to be 'a failure as a parent' in *The Min-Min* (1966:185). His inability to form intersubjective relationships is

symptomatic of the limitations placed on schemas of masculinity. Feminists have theorised such limitations as inherent in patriarchal masculinity which legitimates and regulates the behaviours of masculine subjects. The fiction also shows the potential fractures in the concept of the nuclear family and the limitations of the doxa of 'rightful patriarchy' (Fallding 1957, cited in Gilding 1991:120) and of 'the Australian Way of Life' as stable and homogeneous (Greer 1991:35, 368-9; White 1981:158).

Joe Edwards' character contrasts with the laudable fathers represented in the fictions of the preceding decade such as Joan Phipson's *Good Luck to the Rider* (1953), Patricia Wrightson's *The Crooked Snake* (1955), and Nan Chauncy's *Tiger in the Bush* (1957) and *Devil's Hill* (1958). The patriarchal ideology of these fictions exemplifies Bourdieu's argument that prior to second-wave feminism masculine domination requires no legitimation or justification as it imposes itself as 'neutral' (2001:9). With the ideological challenges to many facets of Australian society in the context of the 1960s counter culture, it is not surprising that fictions appear problematising masculinity and traditional fathering (Gerster and Bassett 1991:46-7).

Realist fictions like Lilith Norman's *Climb a Lonely Hill* (1970) and Ivan Southall's *Bread and Honey* (1970) are significant in this regard but any list of children's fictions written since then offers examples of fathers who are physically absent, emotionally unavailable or culpable in some way. Powerful literary indictments of male parents continue to be produced in the 1990s in fictions such as Simon French's *Change the Locks* (1991), Gillian Rubinstein's *At Ardilla* (1991), Robin Klein's *The Listmaker* (1997), Ursula Dubosarsky's *The First Book of Samuel* (1995) and Allan Baillie's *The Last Shot* (1997).

The second reconfiguration of masculinity emerges in Mackay's (1993) 'Age of Redefinition' the title of which alludes to the last quarter of the twentieth century because of the rapid and 'radical' transformations in all aspects of Australian social life (17).

Similarly Connell's (1995) ethnographic work seeks to map the material and cognitive effects on the lived experience of Australian men as a result of feminism's reconfiguration of feminine subjectivities. In the field of children's literature positive reconfigurations of adult masculinity and care-giving are available, although in numerical terms success is limited. Identification of engendered literary conventions proves easier than the achievement of convincing reconfigurations. Fictions that problematise the negative impact on the family of a matrix of patriarchal values and practices require comprehensive resignification of the masculine attributes as well genre transformations and new emplotments. Recuperation of male caregivers is a difficult task because the traditional configuration of Australian masculinity is antithetical to all that is deemed 'feminine' and care-giving is integral to that configuration of femininity (White 1981:165-8; Mackay 1993:72; Connell 1995:64).

Simon French's *All We Know* offers a reconfiguration of the male parent where relationships between family members are based on mutuality and reciprocity rather than on the operations of hierarchical power. Indeed, gender no longer confers economic power or absolute authority to regulate the social autonomy of other members of the household. So while it proves difficult to envision satisfactory new family organisations where both women and men work outside the domestic household, in paid employment, it is possible. Joanne Horniman's *Jasmine* (1995) and Nadia Wheatley's *Lucy in the Leap Year* (1993), both for younger readers, and Joanne Horniman's *Sand Monkeys* (1992) and Libby Gleeson's *Refuge* (1998) for older readers, successfully achieve such recomposition of domestic life.

Analysis of this second reconfiguration of masculinity in children's fictions in this corpus cannot be adequately achieved within a second-wave feminist paradigm. Feminism certainly politicised and significantly impacted upon the personal — gendered intersubjective relationships — but structurally masculine domination continues across the

whole public gender order indicating the need for new paradigms and research strategies. Masculinity studies enables conceptualisations of gendered intersubjective relations beyond the impasse of feminism's undifferentiated enemy, 'patriarchy' (de Lauretis 1986; Fraser 1997:173-88), because it avoids essentialising all men as doomed to be explicit and complicit oppressors of women (Cranny-Francis 1992:18; Faludi 1999; Connell 2000:144). Connell (1987, 1995, 2000) offers a theoretical framework for analysing Australian masculinities<sup>6</sup> and the gender order. Masculinity scholars agree with feminism's problematising of 'patriarchy' as a social structure and as legitimating and regulating masculine subjectivities; however masculinity studies enable the interrogation of the processes of masculinity formation as well as the structures of domination in public gender orders and private gender regimes. The identification of these issues as aspects of the social reality under investigation as well as the oppression of women suggests new possibilities for further investigations. Connell's (1995:70) research presents 'life history interviews' with four groups of men whose very different circumstances require them to grapple with changing gender relations. He argues that his 'project tries to link personal life and social structure systematically' arguing that 'it demonstrates both the complexity of change in masculinity and the many possibilities of change' (1995:x). Connell (2000) reviews and extends the findings of masculinity research since 1995. He emphasises the need for further study of global masculinity to support local studies (2000:9, 39-56). Connell (2000) includes discussions of the formation of the masculine subject in childhood that I use here and in Chapter 6.

Like Bourdieu (2001), Connell (1987) argues from a relational materialist position that 'separatism-for-men' is as undesirable as separatism for women (225; 1995:44).<sup>7</sup> This implies that changing the inequities in the gender order requires new understandings of the

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<sup>6</sup> For discussion of the terminology employed and the refusal of 'man' and preference for the plural 'masculinities' see Connell (2000:16-23). Like Connell, I find Hearn's arguments for reinstating the use of 'man' unconvincing and his argument reductive (Hearn 1996:203-17).

<sup>7</sup> Separatism for women was an aspect of late 1970s French feminism espoused by Luce Irigaray (1977).

terms 'masculinity' and 'femininity' so that they are neither rigid nor oppositional concepts. This seems obvious but the traditional feminine 'virtues' are stigmatised when exhibited by men and feminism's demonising of masculine subjects has been noted. Connell (1995) argues that 'the idea is to recompose, rather than to delete, the cultural elements of gender' so that positive human attributes once designated as either 'masculine' or 'feminine' become potentialities for everyone (234). Like Bourdieu (2001) and feminist scholars, Connell (2000) argues that the crux of the degendering project is the alteration of relations of unequal power because '[d]emocratic gender relations are those that move towards equality, non violence, and mutual respect between people of different genders, sexualities, ethnicities and generations' (225). Here Connell recognises that gender is not a single issue of identity but a complex interaction of many facets of social life. Degendering social relations and the recomposition of gender configurations require a complex restructuring of political and social life, and typically attitudinal changes outstrip any transformation of practice or structures (Mackay 1993:36-7; Connell 1995:202-3; Bourdieu 2001:38-9).

This is not a return to an advocacy of androgyny which 'underestimated the complexity of masculinities and femininities, and put too much emphasis on attitudes and not enough on material inequalities and issues of power' but rather an argument for 'making the full range of gender symbolism and practice available to all people' (Connell 2000:205; also Pringle 1992:91). What Connell (2000) proposes is the degendering of culture, of society's institutions and of intersubjective relationships. His argument advocates the recomposition of human possibilities outside the constraints of a dichotomised and hierarchical gender order. This is problematic, as mentioned above, when the traditional feminine characteristics are deemed abject in the masculine subject and the operations of the public sphere are 'misrecognised' as requiring traditional masculine qualities and practices to function successfully.

To overcome feminism's 'overgeneralised' concept of patriarchy as a locus of indissoluble power (Connell 2000:50), Connell (2000:24) offers a four-part model of the gender order in which all parts of the order exhibit potential rupture. The first part of the model is relations of power. Bourdieu's (1998) and Connell's (2000) findings agree unequivocally with feminists that power relations are central to the patriarchal gender order: the idealisations and material practices that constitute any 'hegemonic masculinity'—culturally idealised forms of masculinity (Connell 2000:69)—shift historically but the power relations embedded in the binary gender system do not, and this is why structural changes are necessary to redress masculine domination in Australian society. Connell (2000:224-5) lists six sites in the social space that need change in order to address the issue of masculine domination. These are as disparate as child-rearing, adult-child relations and gender regimes in institutions of tertiary education. Connell argues that the masculine interest in the traditional gender structure is 'formidable' (1995:241); so advantageous in fact, that he refers to the 'patriarchal dividend', a description of the privileges received by being born male (1995:82; 2000:25, 202). The benefits that accrue to men include the attribution of status and authority, control of economic and political power, the means to violence and avoidance of emotional responsibility (Cixous 1980:90; Rubin 1984:267-319; Davies 1993:198; Connell, 1995:82-3; Pease 1997:155; French 1999:145; Bourdieu 2001:38, 93).

The second part of Connell's model is production relations, that is, the gendered structure of the division of labour. Here relevant issues for analysis range from the care of children and the allocation of tasks in the domestic sphere through to equality in wage rates, the limitations on women's placement in the work force and the gendered nature of the accumulation of wealth (Bourdieu 2001:92). The third part of the model is relations of desire and emotional attachment—Freudian 'cathexis'—and here Australian researchers report the most evidence of social change in the gender regimes and intersubjective

relationships within the family and domestic households. These exhibit the greatest destabilisation and transformation, reflecting the politicisation of the personal (Gilding 1991:123-4; Mackay 1993:48-9; Connell 1995:41-2). Requirements for the reconfiguration of masculinity as caregiving include the development of quality relationships with the child that necessitates changes in body-reflexive practices and re-embodiment to allow the masculine subjects to engage in the sensual pleasures of nurturing, including the tactility of baby care and the gentleness required for assisting small, inarticulate and dependent people (Connell 1995:233). Changing patterns of masculinity with regard to parenting are evident in Australian social life as Mackay found (1997:102) but Australian men generally assist with child care rather than accept complete responsibility for it (Connell 1995:211). There needs to be an acceptance of the fact that raising children requires a long term commitment and necessarily involves some ongoing contact with the women who care for one's offspring. Financial support is integral to this long-term commitment. Family structures that allow this to occur amicably need support. Relations of cathexis need to be differentiated so that matters of sexuality and desire between adults are not seen as integral to continued commitment to children's emotional wellbeing.

Connell's (2000) extension of his gender structure model from a three to a four-part model is relevant to children's culture studies. He now adds the dimension of 'the structure of relations in communication and culture' or symbolism is seen as a fourth engendered power domain (2000:24-6). This acknowledges the significant role played by the circulation of representations of engendered subjectivities, practices and social structures in all texts and media. Bourdieu (2001:69-80) examines Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* which, in his view narrativises the 'effort that every man has to make to rise to his own childhood conception of manhood'. This project confirms Connell's (2000:34) finding that 'historical research on masculinity leads via institutions to questions of agency and social struggle'. Of course, historical and academic texts generally have a similar

potential for symbolic power.

The third reconfiguration of masculinity in Australian children's realist fictions emerges in the 1990s and requires attention be given to Bourdieu's (2001:87) arguments about challenging configurations of gender practice in 'public patriarchy'. He questions whether there has so far been any redistribution of power in society's gender order or any mitigation of masculine domination beyond the domestic sphere (2001:90-4). He examines two limitations in degendering arguments such as those of Connell (1995). First there is the decision of masculine researchers not to trespass into the arena of feminine subjectivity fearing arguments about 'authenticity', that is only women can speak of women's experience. Bourdieu's (2001) position is that only the self-reflexivity of the researcher will address the problem because he argues that the confrontations that lead to transformation involve analysis of gender data where the primary focus of the investigation is the relational dimension, reporting across the gender boundary, and mapping the gaps between the life experiences of men and women. His research stresses the primacy of documenting masculine and feminine interaction because he argues that it is imperative to hold together 'the totality of sites and forms in which this kind of domination is exercised—a domination which has the particularity of being able to be exercised on very different scales, in all social spaces' (106; see also Summers 1975:464-5). A pertinent example is Connell's pro-feminist research: his masculinity studies' data is gathered only from men and omits the voices of the women with whom the life histories of the men interact.

Bourdieu sees such research data as side-stepping the central issues of a social structure saturated by gender orders and regimes. Bourdieu's strictures about the conduct of research lead Connell (1983), among others, to regard Bourdieu's work as inherently limiting the possibility of social transformation. Bourdieu (2001:109) rejects such claims stridently but acknowledges that his sociology often involves 'the pleasure of



disillusioning' because he insists on the investigation of all of the forces operating in the field under investigation. Thus feminine experience and subjectivity are not 'off limits' to men any more than masculine experience is 'off limits' to women (Bourdieu 2001:11 n.4). Connell (2000:209-11), on the other hand, sees the way forward as the identification of small symbolic undertakings arguing that 'the strategic problem is to generate pressures that will in the long run transform the structure. Any initiative that sets up pressure in that direction is worth having' (2000:211). Bourdieu's call is for larger strategic investigations that formally confront the public structures rather than for individual strategies and alliances.

The second limitation Bourdieu finds with research like Connell's is the argument that if dichotomies can be dismantled then negations become attributes valued in everyone. The problem here is that this is a program of masculine reform. He argues that calls for the 'supercession of dualisms' are naive since public patriarchy 'resists the spuriously revolutionary re-definitions of subversive voluntarism' (2001:103; also Davies 1989:20 and Pringle 1992:95).<sup>8</sup> This is why gender researchers need to be able to address issues of gender configurations regardless of their own gender while being self-reflexive about the influence this has on the study (Bourdieu 2001:115). Bourdieu argues that the reconfigurations of gender practice require specific actions on the part of feminine subjects as they interact in social spaces with masculine subjects. Feminism's call for changes in feminine subjectivity are not enough (Cranny-Francis 1992:118); social practices and structures must change too. Feminist literature and theory map some of the reconfigurations needed but both feminist and masculinity scholars are forthright in their acknowledgement that initiatives in this regard require courage and warn that an apparent loss of power occurs in the refusal of patriarchal regulation (Cranny-Francis 1992:135). Bourdieu's (2001:93) argument about the 'negative symbolic coefficient' of any

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<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu is referring, in particular, to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), although he acknowledges

stigmatised group comes to mind because such attitudes are not rational but part of an androcentric mythology that must be continually reiterated and policed for symbolic domination to continue. In the male-female binary the feminine bears such a stigma.

The last part of this chapter analyses fictions that show a reconfiguration of masculinities in contexts of a public caring role for children outside the nuclear family. A metafiction like *Bruno and the Crumhorn* foregrounds a diversity of masculinities. It also shifts the discussions of adult masculinity from the private sphere into the public sphere. It problematises both the public gender order and private gender regimes in intersubjective relationships. Further discussion of the masculine in the symbolism of the Australian national social space occurs in Chapter 6. Discussion now turns to the Australian children's literature of the 1950s doxic fictions: Joan Phipson's *Good Luck to the Rider* (1953) and Nan Chauncy's *Tiger in the Bush* (1957). These provide literary exemplars of the patriarchal gender schemas of literary fathers in the post-war era.

## The doxic moment in post-war fictions

Fictions of the doxic moment are *Good Luck to the Rider* and *Tiger in the Bush*. *Good Luck to the Rider* was winner of the Australian Children's Book Council Award in 1953 and Nan Chauncy's *Tiger in the Bush* was the 1958 winner of this award. By 1961 *Tiger in the Bush* was in its third edition. In this chapter my primary focus text, from the corpus of fictions, for the analysis of the doxic moment is *Good Luck to the Rider*. *Tiger in the Bush* is the secondary text used for purposes of comparison with regard to the representation of fathers. *Good Luck to the Rider* features the more seamless representation of patriarchal subjectivity in the participant, Mr. Trevor, in a gender regime where the father's economic power makes any challenge to the structures of masculine domination unlikely. In Chapter 4 the primary focus is on *Tiger in the Bush* where the analysis shows

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that she modifies her position in *Bodies that matter* (1993).

that the father's labouring masculinity possesses more overt potential for ruptures in patriarchal authority.

The literary analysis for both fictions focuses on three discursive practices significant in the construction of the thematic burden of the fictions. The spatial frameworks are the first significant strategy considered and this is closely linked to the Australian literary tradition of the pastoral idyll referred to as the 'Bush Legend'. The second consideration is the significance of emplotments that feature stereotypical patriarchal schemas of childhood and the construction of separate masculine and feminine storylines with participants in hierarchical relationships where a 'climate of belief' legitimates an authoritative father (Hollindale 1988:19). Finally I examine the representation of masculine domination constructed metonymically in the literary discourse and in dialogues that represent power relations between masculine and feminine subjectivities.

Niall (1984:225-6) links Chauncy and Phipson's fictions thematically writing that Phipson's early outback family fictions 're-state a less extreme version of Nan Chauncy's family fortress theme'. Certainly Phipson and Chauncy are involved in the recirculation of the pastoral iconography of literature's Australian landscape (Niall 1988:552-3; Saxby 2002:472). Turner (1993) states

[t]he longevity of the pastoral ideal, surviving as it does Australia's urbanisation and suburbanisation, suggests that its survival is due to its ideological and mythic function rather than its close relation to historical conditions at any point or series of points in Australia's past or present. (32)

Turner's argument is, then, that we are dealing with a significant aspect of the Australian literary tradition and not with reflections of the contemporary post-war 'Australian way of life' (also Carter 2000:265). While Niall's comparative reading identifies 'pastoral ideals' in 'the private, intimate post-war family' (Kociumbas 1997:223) of Phipson's Trevors and

Chauncy's Lorennys, Niall's conflation denies the ideological conflict inherent in the texts' contrasting representations of Australian masculinity. Here issues of economic position in the social space are in operation so that Mr. Trevor's 'gentry masculinity' contrasts markedly with Dave Lorennys's 'Bush Legend' labouring or 'battler' masculinity. Connell's (1995:29) argument that 'definitions of masculinity are deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and of economic structures' is demonstrated in the contrasting constructions offered by these contrasting schemas of masculine subjectivity. These schemas interpellate subjects who are opposite in terms of economic and political power, education, social status, values and attitudes, bodily hexis and disposition. This in turns impacts upon the very different connections that the two fathers have to the land, that is, to the spatial framework of the fiction.

The land for Mr. Trevor is family patrimony while Dave Lorennys rejects the concept of 'ownership' of the land in favour of conceptualisations of the land as a sacred trust. The Lorennys' isolated Tasmanian valley in *Tiger in the Bush* is pristine with only subsistence cultivation and livestock and guarded against 'the taint of man' (3). This 'Hidden Valley' is the antithesis of the Trevors' property, 'Tickera', where access to the metropole is infrequent but valued and promoted by the children attending boarding schools. Yet both fathers, in Bourdieusienne (2001:75) terms, invest seriously in the 'games' that perpetuate masculine domination of the social space. They exhibit the values and attributes of iconic Australian adult literary masculinities accepting as normative the 'collective collusion' in social relations essential to the maintenance of domination (Cranny-Francis 1992:88; Bourdieu 2001:75). Strict division of labour (Bourdieu 2001:84) and especially of childcare is an idealisation even when it is not the actuality of a feminine subject's fictional world, as in the case of Liddle-ma, the mother in *Tiger in the Bush*. The rejection of many traditional aspects of feminine gender differentiation, for instance in her clothing which is 'masculine' and suitable for the farming work that Liddle-ma prefers, is

negated and masculine/feminine distinction is symbolically understood and maintained whenever practicable.

Connell (1995:190) argues that gentry masculinity is 'based on land ownership' and 'involved in capitalist economic relations (production for the market, extraction of rents)' so that patrimony and lineage are integral to its social structure and 'the lineage as much as the individual was the social unit'. Masculine authority over women and the rural workforce is absolute. The transportation of convicts and the penal colony's emancipation systems enabled the establishment of this form of hegemonic masculinity in the Australian social structure (Connell 1995:191). The lifestyle represented in *Good Luck to the Rider* re-circulates the iconic literary gentry masculinity of Mary Grant Bruce's Australian children's family stories set on the fictive outback property of 'Billabong'.<sup>9</sup> Commenting on the period up to 1941 that is 'epitomised by the pastoral Billabong series' of Bruce, Saxby (1998) writes that

[a]n affinity with the bush and the land itself, loved and cared for but now harnessed and put to work through large holdings of sheep and cattle stations, is the motivating force behind much of the literature that was being produced by the end of the period under review. 21

Each individual's roles, hierarchies among adults and siblings and a commitment to the welfare of family members are paramount in the social structure that conceptualised the 'separate spheres' for men and women. Narratives of engendered separate spheres organise the distribution of work, the allocation of space in the domestic and public spheres and determines subjects' dispositions and bodily hexis (Bourdieu 2001:9). The attribution of goodness to Mr. Trevor as the dominant father is as implicit as the disapproval of the weak Mr. Barker represented in Phipson's *The Family Conspiracy* (1962). The Trevors—father,

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Grant Bruce's *Little Bush Maid* (1910) and *Norah of Billabong* (1913) are her hallmark fictions. See Niall's *Seven Little Billabongs* (1979) for a full exegesis of the 'Billabong' fictions.

mother and four siblings—on their New South Wales sheep and horse property, are an affluent pioneer family whose land ownership is extensive and whose wealth comes from flocks of sheep as well as from the horse breeding and breaking activities (6). The white settler pioneer paradigm of landscape constructs the new territories as ‘wilderness’, with pejorative connotations, and so wasteland, as it is unproductive in the European conception whereby ‘productivity’ means the return of profit. Mr. Trevor clears the land and marks the boundaries of property establishing the line between civilisation and wilderness and ensuring productivity (6). Mr. Trevor’s interest in the productivity of the land is the foremost characteristic in the representations of such literary patriarchs and this is figured metonymically here:

Mr. Trevor was a thin weather-beaten man whose alert eyes missed nothing that happened on the property. Even his irrepressible son Clive treated his wishes with respect and refrained from being unnecessarily funny when his father was about. (4)

Mr. Trevor’s weather-beaten appearance is a demonstration of his commitment to the outdoors and his active involvement in the property, another requirement of pioneer masculinity. His habitus constructs a power relation with all he surveys and he determines positions of subalternity. He is a manager; his ‘alert eyes’ are hallmarks of the literary stereotype of a patriarch whose panoptic surveillance regulates his subordinates: women, children and men of lower position in the social space. Titular deference from everyone inscribes Mr. Trevor’s status. The narrator always addresses him with the honorific ‘Mr.’ and the children call him ‘father’ rather than the more familiar ‘Dad’ that the Lorennys children use. Mr. Trevor’s employees defer to him as ‘boss’ (83). Labourers like Mike Daniels, a respected horse-breaker, and Dave Lorennys in *Tiger in the Bush*, receive no title, just the familiar version of the first name. In bodily hexis and disposition then, Mr. Trevor is a schematised literary representation of gentry masculinity where domination is ‘the social game embodied and turned into a second nature’ (Bourdieu 1994:63). Some thirty

years later, Niall (1984:224-5) still refers to Mr. Trevor's '... quiet authority and competence' rather than to his alienating judgmental superiority which might now be described if Mr. Trevor's character were to be historically decontextualised.

Mr. Trevor's serious investment in his assumption of power and the success of his performance is indicated by his children understanding the inappropriateness of 'being funny' in his presence, despite the fact that Barbara's siblings are in their late adolescence—Sheila is old enough have her driver's licence, so they are no longer children by contemporary standards. Nevertheless the separation of the space of the child and the adult is implicit as this extract confirms and there is no concession to the 'evolving capacities' of the child:

Mr. Trevor, leaning with his arms crossed against one of the verandah posts, watched silently as one by one the items were stowed away. His eyes twinkled, but he made no suggestions. Only at the end, as they were all climbing aboard, did he walk slowly up to the Land Rover.

'I hope you didn't overlook the cruet,' he said. And as he turned to walk away they saw the amusement in his face. (6)

The objectifying gaze, the refusal to interact, and sarcasm are features of the father's subjectivity. In the new millennium, such attributes are no longer regarded as the hallmarks of successful parenting any more than a cruet is essential to the family meal. The reader is metonymically informed of his essential kindness, of course, by the narrator's reference to his eyes twinkling but this is nevertheless a refusal to communicate with his children. The discourse approves the failure to be articulate—except to humorously condemn—and the bodily hexis of crossed arms exemplifies an acceptable emotional distance. Niall (1984:224) comments that he is an ideal in Phipson's texts as evidenced by the contrast represented by Mr. Barker, a third level story participant in *Good Luck to the Rider*, whose family is the focus of *The Family Conspiracy* mentioned above. Saxby's realist paradigm

assumes the possibility of naive verisimilitude and prefers idealisations of patriarchal fathers so he disapproves of Phipson's representations of Mr. Barker:

In spite of a patronising tone towards the inept Mr. Barker, who is also tactless and insensitive to his wife (not in the same class at all as Mr. Trevor) and persists in discussing his wife's illness as though she were not there, there are many details that ring true. (1971:111)

The naturalised normative constructions of patriarchy and hierarchical masculinity indicated particularly by the word 'class' inform Saxby's hermeneutics, as they do Niall's (1984), confirming the perpetuation of these masculine values in other areas of the Australian social space.

In *Good Luck to the Rider* the symbolic violence inherent in gender differentiation is demonstrated in uncontested traditional oppositional and hierarchical gendered family relations. Mr. Trevor conceptualises childhood as a time of preparation for adulthood and he sees Barbara's character as fixed: '... She's far too timid and undecided to handle a horse properly. I'm afraid she always will be' (3). From a new millennium perspective these explicit examples of 'male chauvinism' are amusing. For instance, in the primary story's closure, when Barbara wins the blue ribbon riding the tamed brumby she trains, the highest accolade that her older brother Clive can pay her is, 'Nothing would have made me ride a horse like Rosinante into the ring. You're a better man than I am' (148). The idiom is a truncated version of the phrase 'You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din' from Rudyard Kipling's imperialist poem 'Gunga Din' in *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892). Here the masculine/feminine binary is explicit in the idiom 'You're a better man than I am' as is the 'natural' superiority of the traditionally masculine attribute of courage. The extract below, about the choice of name for Barbara's horse, shows the embeddedness of patriarchal privilege with regard to cultural knowledge and reveals the implicit disempowerment and subordination of women that is more demeaning than the example of



Clive's compliment to Barbara. The almost 'irrepressible' Clive suggests that she call her foal Rosinante. When Barbara likes the sound of it he insists that it is the perfect name for the brumby because Rosinante is such a famous horse. George is aware of the ruse and tries to interfere but

That evening at dinner she [Barbara] announced that the name of her foal was now officially Rosinante. To her surprise Mr. Trevor burst out laughing. 'A splendid name,' he said at last. 'An excellent name. I couldn't have thought of a better one myself.'

Mrs. Trevor looked puzzled. 'I seem to have heard of it somewhere,' she said. 'Is it suitable, Charles?'

'Yes,' said Mr. Trevor quickly. 'Very apt indeed, I should think.'

(48)

Dialogue is a discursive strategy enabling the representation of power relationships (Stephens 1992:259-60; Bal 1997:44-5). Here the assumption of power by the father reveals the mother and child to be excluded from cultural knowledge. The legitimacy of Mr. Trevor's opinions requires acceptance without justification. The oppositional nature of gendered relations is demonstrated, as the complicity of father/sons/brothers in their condescension to women in their withholding of knowledge. Their deceitful humour at the expense of the women is condoned in the text and masculine superiority is represented as the natural order. Mr. Trevor's literary knowledge encourages his play with possible connotations of 'suitable' and his selections of 'apt' as 'fitting' presents his negative view of the horse whereas Mrs. Trevor's use of 'suitable' conveys respect for Barbara's orphaned foal. The younger brother George is shown as feeling that the trick being played on Barbara by their brother Clive and sustained by her father is unkind but as he is subordinate to his father he maintains the patriarchal line thereby ensuring the men's dominance through collective collusion. When a teacher at her boarding school informs Barbara about Cervantes' Rosinante, 'a poor old bag of bones', and Don Quixote who

‘*would* think every goose a swan’ (55, original emphasis), Barbara becomes ‘quite fierce’ and announces to her friend Will that she will show them that Rosinante ‘really was a swan all the time’ (56). Her friend replies that she should not be too sure because ‘Your father and your brothers are quite good judges of horses, you know’. Barbara succeeds as Clive’s congratulatory remarks indicate.

Story closure with Barbara as a ‘winner’ at the local agricultural Show depends upon the temporary subversion of the authority of the father. After her win Mr. Trevor expresses his pride in Barbara and the horse: taming a wild horse and the transformation of a girl into a successful horsewoman are equally amazing ‘goose to swan’ stories in his opinion. The amelioration of the father’s failure, loss of honour, is achieved by the device of the alternative authoritative masculine subject, Mike, the horse breaker. He correctly judges the potential of girl and horse and mid-way through the narrative implies that Mr. Trevor may be wrong about both of them. Mr. Trevor reacts with humorous disbelief to Mike’s opinion that ‘... you find what you’re looking for, that’s all’ (89). When Barbara is a prize winner riding Rosinante, Mr. Trevor says ‘We must let Mike know about this’ (147). Mike’s prediction of Barbara and Rosinante’s success is thereby represented as being as important as Barbara’s achievement. While the storyline hinges on Mr. Trevor being wrong about Barbara and the horse, the possible transgression of paternal authority is contained because a man approved of by her father is correct about the horse and rider. Deferring to another masculine ‘expert’ is a satisfactory recuperation of masculine domination, an honorable outcome for the masculine subject and allows the fiction to offer a patriarchal literary closure.

As we have seen with Clive, Mike and Barbara, knowledge of familial hierarchies and the habitus of subordination are integral to patriarchal domestic habitus. As youngest siblings, Barbara, and Badge in *Tiger in the Bush*, are ever conscious of being situated at the bottom of a hierarchically ordered world. In the extract below Mr. Trevor castigates the

older children for bringing home the foal as they have operated independently of the father's law (Bourdieu 2001:56). His view of Barbara essentialises and objectifies her as physically and psychologically incompetent:

'I can't think why you let her bring him,' Mr. Trevor said bluntly. 'He's bound to be useless, and heaven alone knows what makes Barbara think she can look after him, when her own pony terrifies the wits out of her. She's far too timid and undecided to handle a horse properly. I'm afraid she always will be.' (30)

The 'bluntly' delivered denunciation of his children becomes a patriarchal verdict in 'he's bound to be useless' and a 'paternal prophecy' (Bourdieu 2001:70) about Barbara, that 'she's far too timid ... I'm afraid she always will be' which essentialises the attribute and the person. Actually the older children had only brought the foal home with foreboding (21). Nevertheless her brothers and sister who have paternal approval generally intercede on Barbara's behalf urging Mr. Trevor to change his mind about the foal. Only after their intercession does Mrs. Trevor speak:

'Charles.' Mrs. Trevor spoke quietly from the head of the table. 'I'd like you to let her keep it. I believe it's a risk worth taking.'

Mr. Trevor looked at his wife in surprise. 'You too? I seem to be in a very small minority. Well, I'll talk to her about it tomorrow.' (30)

Mrs. Trevor's symbolic importance is metonymically signaled by the use of the phrase 'from the head of the table' but her speaking 'quietly' to her husband indicates deference and her acknowledgement that his judgement is likely to be correct. To question the patriarchal law is indeed a 'risk'. Both Barbara and Mrs. Trevor 'surprise' Mr. Trevor by questioning the father's order. Control and decision-making power are reclaimed by the father when Mr. Trevor, in having the last word and closing the dialogue, says that he will be the one to talk to Barbara. The discourse instantiates the inevitability of submission and

as Bourdieu (2001) states ‘The word of the father is never more terrible in its pitiless solicitude than when it adopts the logic of prophylactic prediction’ (71). In *Tiger in the Bush* there is Badge’s expectation of subordination from his older brother Lance:

Badge also said nothing although he wanted to shout with joy at her words. No Lance every holiday to spoil things? No big brother always telling a person he was ‘hardly hatched’? No more going off with Iggy and leaving him out of things? ... (8-9)

In the Lorennys’ three sibling family Badge misses out on Lance and Iggy’s companionship. He is delighted when he learns that Lance will not be home every holidays now that he is so far away at school. Badge knows that he is marginalised because he is ‘the little boy, the odd man out, the pest and the hanger-on’ (28). Iggy’s attitude to Lance contrasts with her attitude to Badge: with Lance ‘*amor dominandi*’ — love of the dominant—is clear (Bourdieu 2001:80). In Chapter 4 I examine in detail how Badge ascends to iconic status in the post-war rural masculinity. This requires his winning out in story closure over Lance. The latter betrays the fiction’s pastoral and masculine idealisations by his election of finding his destiny in the city, science and technology (7-8). This shift in loyalty is represented by Iggy’s eagerly following Badge to discover a new bush wonder with Badge (171).

Feminism of difference, and masculinities research, demonstrate the impact of social class issues upon masculine subjectivities and on domestic gender regimes (Connell 1995:36-7). In Mr. Trevor’s lineage there is no intergenerational conflict with patriarchal values. My discussion in Chapter 5 shows that the situation is different in the Lorennys’ family where issues of inheritance are irrelevant. The Trevors have a large patrimony at stake and so the alignment of the sons with the father’s views exhibits predictable self-interest. Bourdieu details the links between wealthy families and the continuance of strong familial networks instituted by marriage. These are sustained by the emotional labour of women who continue a valued separation of spheres in order to maintain patriarchal social

structures (Bourdieu 2001:96-7). Mr. Trevor's daughters are potentially limited by Mr. Trevor's patriarchal pronouncements about their abilities, his dooming Barbara to timidity and his scepticism about Sheila's succeeding in tertiary education; he does not regard her desire to study veterinary science as a 'suitable career' for a girl (58). Again Bourdieu's phrase 'pitiless solicitude' is appropriate. Significantly demonstrating that he is a kindly father, Mr. Trevor agrees to Sheila's attempting university 'if her examination results were good enough'. However his acquiescence is predicated upon the assumption that Sheila's expertise will return to the family property: '... he had to admit that a little specialized knowledge of that sort could be put to good use at Tickera ...' (58). An educated daughter could thus remain in the family home until she married. The diminutive 'little' diminishes her potential skills and usefulness and maintains her subordination. The perpetuation of a pattern of patriarchal regulation of lineage ensures the continuation of masculine domination.

Nevertheless a challenge to masculinist ideology leaks through the containment strategies of the gender regime: Barbara formerly a timid 'goose' becomes a swan and Sheila the swan becomes educated and threatens to cross into the public sphere via higher education, science and work. I will discuss, below, how in *The Min-Min* the rupture of patriarchal masculinity is discursively achieved in part by ironising such patriarchal 'verdicts' (Bourdieu 2001:70). It is used regularly to undermine Chris Tucker's performances of power:

'As I just said, Mary, he has to waken up to himself, *first*,' Chris disagreed.

And when Chris made a statement in that tone of voice, Mary always smiled, and changed the subject. (170)

Again 'the implacable words of the father' (Bourdieu 2001:74, 56) are uttered but they no longer function as a call to order or achieve the desired subordination of the wife.

Education features widely in the fictions of this era as a transformational tool. Writers

represent many children as desiring education and going to great efforts to achieve it. This is the case, for instance, with the older Lorennny children. Lance wins a scholarship to a city boarding school while Iggy plots for many months to use the feminine craft of knitting to produce items for sale in her aunt's shop (36). In return for this production Aunt Edna agrees to board Iggy in Hobart so that she too can attend a city school (76). Sylvie in *The Min-Min* also plans for the skilled work of dressmaking, learned professionally at the technical college, to secure her economic future rather than relying on marriage as a means of economic support (205). However there is only limited change here and for the socio-economically disadvantaged a 'strongly sexually differentiated division of labour' continues (Bourdieu 2001:57). In *The Racketty Street Gang* (1961) one of the four urban working class/underclass boys dreams that he will be a university student even before he earns a reward that makes the attainment of the dream a possibility (188).

In *Good Luck to the Rider* there is no indication that the patriarchal vision will cease to delegate child-rearing to women. Intersubjectivity with children and women remains largely outside the responsibility of men like Mr. Trevor. While acknowledgement is made that Mr. Trevor's interest in the welfare of his lineage means that he is in communication with family members and that he is swayed by their views, the discursive practices already discussed indicate the operation of the 'androcentric unconscious' as Mr. Trevor plays the role of the indomitable father. Bourdieu (2001:56) refers to the 'relation of circular causality that is set up between the objective structures of the social space and the dispositions that they produce in both men and women ...'. This relation perpetuates engendered practices as children grow up within them (the idiom is a truncated version of the phrase 'You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din', from Rudyard Kipling's imperialist poem 'Gunga Din' in his *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892)) and understand that they must accede to these when they step over the magic line that separates childhood from

adulthood.<sup>10</sup> Incoherences and contradictions allow an individual repositionings within the patriarchal structure, as in the case of George's sympathy for Barbara's being Clive's dupe, and Barbara and Sheila's moving beyond their father's expectations for his daughters, but story closures still carefully preclude challenge to a structure of masculine domination.

As a literary schema of adult masculinity Mr. Trevor remains the hegemonic ideal in the Australian socio-historical context until well beyond the mid-1960s. Rupture of the patriarchal social structure is clearly represented in Australian children's literature as positive representations of fathers diminish significantly. This rupture is extensively constructed in the discursive practices of *The Min-Min* and so my analysis now turns to this disruptive fiction.

## **Progressive fictions of the counter culture**

The counter-culture rupture of patriarchal traditions is represented in my corpus of Australian children's fiction in *The Min-Min*. Positive representations of fathers diminish significantly from this period onwards. *The Min-Min* is the watershed text in terms of problematising the role of the father and the doxa of family life in Australian children's fictions. The fiction's dialogic construction of fathering was progressive at a time when Australian sociologists' reports confirmed that 'the Australian family'—meaning the patriarchal nuclear family—was still 'the basic unit of society' (Gilding 1991:121). Joe Edwards' failure as a parent, quoted in this chapter's second epigraph, is only the foremost indication of the range of social problems represented as arising out of patriarchy's models of masculine subjectivity and its gender regimes.

Contemporary criticism of *The Min-Min* enables some appreciation of its once progressive stance. Saxby (1971) disliked Clark's fictions generally and *The Min-Min* particularly, an indication that the fiction was confronting in its challenge to patriarchy, far

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<sup>10</sup> The age of majority was twenty-one at this time in Australia. After the success of the anti-conscription

more so than Phipson's representation of the inept Mr. Barker as mentioned above. Saxby wrote of *The Min-Min*:

It is perfectly understandable that characters like Sylvie and Joey should sort themselves out with the help of sincere, sensible people—this does happen in life. In life too, such people struggle to verbalize what is happening to them, but inevitably they falter. They can see only so far ahead—perhaps only to the next battle or humiliation—and seldom with the clarity with which Mavis Thorpe Clark endows her misfits and unfortunates. There is an innate Puritanism in this writer that causes her to letter in her texts with scarlet and gold, and that verges on the priggishness. She is never content to show life as it is—she seems compelled to show life as it should be; and this is irritating in the extreme. (1971:109-10)

The interrogation of masculinities offered in *The Min-Min* is unthinkable and the representation of transgressive masculinity in a father in a children's text undesirable. The language of 'misfits and unfortunates' suggests the unacceptability of materially and spiritually abjected children being the main participants in a literature designed to promote childhood innocence and dependence. By 1993 Saxby re-evaluates the significance of *The Min-Min*:

In her best book, *The Min-Min* (1966), she created, in Sylvie, the fettler's mistreated daughter, a vital stalwart heroine who took positive action to rise above her environmental problems, overcoming the tyranny of isolation and oppression. Without being a 'feminist' writer, Mavis Thorpe Clark helped break prevailing sexual stereotypes. (1993:312-3)

With hindsight Saxby appreciates the significance of the disruption to the gender order constructed in *The Min-Min*. The transformation in the critical ideology supports Mackay's (1993) claims about the radical shifts in Australian social values since the 1960s.

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campaign of the Vietnam War era it was lowered to eighteen years in 1973 (Gerster and Bassett 1991:93).



The dialogism of *The Min-Min*'s writerly discourse enables its progressive ideology. The discourse offers readers a range of different subject positions and so requiring the adoption of different implied reader positions. The text then represents the social space as dialogic rather than monologic (Bakhtin 1981:271-2; McCallum 1999:12-4) as happens in Phipson's fictions. The fiction illustrates how literary reading is ideally an interactive cognitive process rather than an 'immersion process' that assumes the effacement of reader subjectivity. To focus only on the development of the main participant, thirteen year old Sylvie, is to miss the subversively nuanced representations of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity offered in the secondary level of the story, where two representations of masculine parenting, Chris Tucker and Joe Edwards, offer a dialectic about the role of the fathers in the contemporary Australian organisation of the nuclear family.

The representation of the two fathers seems at first to offer readers contrasting versions of masculinity. Joe Edwards is a railway fletcher on the Trans Australian Railway line, and Chris Tucker is the manager of the Gulla Tank out-station. Tucker's name implies that he is a proper 'breadwinner' unlike the feckless Joe Edwards. Sylvie chooses Gulla Tank out-station as the destination for herself and her younger brother Reg, when they run away from their isolated home at the railway settlement. In running away they hope that Reg will at least temporarily escape from trouble with the police and that Sylvie will be able to ask Mrs. Tucker for advice about her future (42).

Joe Edwards is represented as failing to fulfil those essential duties of the father in the patriarchal nuclear family: he fails as a breadwinner (6), as a moral guide and as a protector of his children (185-6) as well as in relations of cathexis (that is, in his most significant emotional relationship) with his wife (196). He is physically violent and verbally abusive and it is his striking of Sylvie that is represented as the most alienating aspect of his behaviour for her (198). However from the narrator's viewpoint it is

Edwards' failure to be emotionally available and to communicate with his family that is most problematic. Sylvie focalises:

It was strange to be together in this comfortable room, talking this way, talking of the past and the future. Never before had they discussed either. In fact Sylvie couldn't remember a time when they had discussed anything before. (196)

The Edwards' household has operated on an assumption that the world of the child remains sealed off from the world of adults. The discourse constructs Joe Edwards' reserve and silence as a sign of his emotional inadequacy, not as rationality and strength in the way that patriarchal discursive practices would interpret them in Phipson's Mr. Trevor. He is unable to articulate his feelings about either his wife's departure or the temporary removal of his eldest son to a welfare institution (204).

Social class issues and poverty exacerbate Joe Edwards' poor parenting. However, as a perceptive encoder of the Australian social structure, Clark ensures that her representation of Joe Edwards' failure as a father is not just linked to those factors but is seen as a part of the operation of patriarchy across the whole social space. While Mr. Trevor's 'verdicts' in *Good Luck to the Rider* offer symbolic violence in the domestic sphere. In *The Min-Min*, the magistrate, Edgar Turnbull, delivers a literal 'verdict' that pronounces Joe Edwards a failure and this has a detrimental outcome for his son, Reg. The magistrate metonymically figures those men who have achieved economic and social power—symbolic capital—within public patriarchy. The construction of the magistrate implies inadequacies in the hierarchies across the Western social structure :

‘You're a failure as a parent, Joe Edwards!’ he [the magistrate] thundered from the very bottom of his paunch. ‘For his own good, we have no alternative—no alternative, I say!—but to commit this boy to an institution!’ (185)

In the make-shift outback court room, another patriarchal verdict is delivered in a legal

context, a sphere of legitimate symbolic violence. The narrator subverts Turnbull's economic and institutional power by using the derogatory descriptor 'paunch'. This word metonymically connotes the pleasures/pitfalls of his social privilege. The verbal aggression, of the speech reporting tag 'thundered', marks violence as the basis of power exercised by institutional patriarchy. As Bourdieu (2001:52) argues, violence maintains fear and that enables control. The magistrate's repetition of 'no alternative' and the shift in pronoun from the bureaucratic 'we' to 'I' suggest his doubt about the decision he has reached, and undermine the apparent certainty about the efficacy of the sentence he metes out to Reg. This implicit uncertainty is later confirmed:

Mr. Edgar Turnbull gathered up his papers, straightened the harassed collar and lapels of his coat, and stood up, followed by his colleague. Judgement had been pronounced and there was nothing more to be said. And no one knew that he would return to his sheep station to have an acute attack of indigestion, wondering whether he had damned or promoted a boy's future. (188)

As he steps out of his role in the drama of the law, the transferred epithet 'harassed' and the magistrate's focalised thoughts confirm his disquietude about his public pronouncements. The episode interrogates the assumptions that hierarchical social relations are a guarantee of a just or democratic social structure. The discourse here is open-ended, offering a gap that invites the reader into an active engagement with the issues of social justice raised by the text. Bourdieu's (2001:117) ironic comment about constitutional law flaunting 'theoretical universalism' applies to all legal jurisdictions where research shows that justice is 'not as universal as it seems—especially in as much as it recognises only abstract individuals, devoid of any social qualities ...'. As a focalising character the magistrate expresses frustration with the choices offered to him by 'blind justice' in dealing with Reg's particular needs. The narrator makes the reader aware of these concerns about public patriarchy, but the masculine subjects are not interrogating their positioning in

the social structure. This is the change that is striking in *Bread and Honey*, as discussion later in this chapter shows.

*The Min-Min* works out from the dominant social values of its times in that the concept of the nuclear family remains the 'natural' family organisation: a household of married heterosexual parents with children where father is 'head of the house'. Nevertheless the fiction problematises this concept because while Joe Edwards is clearly a reprobate he is represented as accepting some changes imposed upon him by his family and as instigating others. He accepts his responsibility for his failure as a father; accepts the necessity of his wife's leaving to regain her health; he requests that Sylvie return to assist him in caring for the family:

Suddenly, like a hammer, the thought struck her. He had sought her willingness to help keep the family together; whereas, being her father, he could have just commanded her. She held out her hand then, for just one brief moment. And his touch was warm and grateful and strong. (196)

Sylvie exhibits the traditional understanding of patriarchy when she acknowledges that since she is still a minor under the law, her father could in fact order her to undertake domestic work and child-rearing. Clark shows that patriarchy's assumption of absolute power is not a satisfactory model for successful domestic relations. Sylvie responds to Edwards' request with confidence as she realises that reciprocity is replacing a hierarchy. She negotiates the conditions that allow her genuine commitment to assisting him in keeping the family together (197). The possibility of trust and mutuality is tentatively foreshadowed in their touching.

The fiction's representation of Chris Tucker, unlike that of Joe Edwards, is on one level, as an ideal patriarchal father. Edwards with the delinquent Reg contrasts with Chris Tucker who has obedient sons of whom he can be proud. The Tucker boys defer to their father who teaches them many practical skills (115-27). They have been carefully educated

in their outback home by their mother, 'But Chris made sure that Mary did have the backing of his discipline' (109). Despite these traditionally positive achievements, Clark consistently discursively undermines Chris Tucker's fathering. Tucker's adherence to the letter of the law, moral authority, his superiority in the world of work, and his belief in the importance of hierarchical authority are attributes problematised as deleterious to the best interests of family members. This is markedly different to the representation of adult masculine subjects in Phipson's and Chauncy's fictions. While these characteristics irritate or alienate readers, it is his inability to hear any point of view apart from his own—'the implacable words of the father' (Bourdieu 2001:71)—and his inability to empathise with others that most distances Tucker from the reader. The narrator's discourse shows him unquestioningly committed to the operation of hierarchical social structures. The moment of rejection of Chris's fathering is overtly represented in dialogue between Mary and Sylvie when Mary pronounces him as 'self righteous' in his attempts to return Sylvie and Reg to their home (141).

The hearth, a traditionally masculine symbolic space in the domestic household (Bourdieu 2001:11), is discursively deployed a number of times for Chris's performances of territorial control within the home and is also used by the narrator to undermine his displays of masculine '*illusio*' (Bourdieu 2001:78):

Mary turned then to busy herself with the pots on the stove, and Chris took up his position on the hearth. She had constantly to go round him as she prepared to serve the dinner, but he had stood in that spot for so many years that she didn't notice. (155)

In the following extract the displacement of domestic power plays and problems of intersubjectivity onto the cats is humorously effective in undermining Chris Tucker's assumptions of authority. Mary and Chris have disagreed about the necessity of immediately taking Sylvie and Reg to the authorities:

He shifted a bit sideways so that another marmalade cat complained as he caught the tip of its tail. It, too, sprang from hearth to chair, from chair to dresser and from dresser shelf to the top of the cupboard, so that there were two cats glowering balefully down on Mr. Tucker who had usurped their position on the hearth.

There was a frown above Mr. Tucker's hazel eyes. He felt that Mary was being most unrealistic about the whole situation. But then, perhaps a woman who could tie back her dark curls with a red ribbon when she had a son as big as Jeff was unrealistic about some things.

The fire was warm on his back but he didn't move away from it. The hearth belonged to him, not to the cats. (136)

In the first paragraph the cats are used to describe the operations of power and the word 'usurp' is the most significant marker of this masculinist drama. In the second paragraph, Mary's behaviour, as focalised by Tucker, is constructed as that of the female 'other': within the traditional masculine/feminine oppositions, the feminine is irrational and emotional as the word 'unrealistic' signifies. Consequently she need not be heeded. His misogyny is confirmed, and a complete dismissal of her point of view becomes possible, as he objectifies her and finds that she is no longer quite satisfactory, being middle-aged with her childbearing function completed. The wearing of the ribbon appears inappropriate to someone who believes that there is a 'natural order'. Mary's red ribbon signifies resistance and Chris Tucker is correct to read it as subversive. Indeed Mary's rebellious view is that 'The kitchen belonged to the cats as much as anybody else' (112). The cats as a motif of feminine subversion, skill and contentment are appropriated by Sylvie who decides that 'When I'm married, I'll have five cats, too'. As Joe Edwards does not like cats his children had never owned one (114). Ultimately the fiction shows that the inflexible social relations in the Tucker household are as problematic as those in Joe Edwards' family. However Chris Tucker, unlike Joe Edwards, remains unenlightened about the communication problems in his domestic household. As an exemplar of patriarchal fathering Chris Tucker

continues to enact the patriarchal '*illusio*', 'the investment in the game itself, the conviction that the game is worth playing all the same, right to the end, and according to the rules' (Bourdieu 2001:74), oblivious to the reactions of those around him. The reader remains effectively distanced from his point of view because, just as he did not consider the pain he caused the cats by his imperiousness, neither has he shown compassion for the children's plight, nor considered the adverse consequences of their being returned to the railway settlement. He mistakenly thinks that Mary's concern with the emotional welfare of the children is an appropriate feminine issue while he must concern himself with the more serious matters of the public sphere.

In the extract above the reader sees that the fiction works out of the gendered social space dominant in its historical context: it is Mary, the female, who is represented as the patient listener, who is caring and intuitive; the extract offers a conventionally gendered domestic setting where there is a clear 'separation of spheres'. Yet the discourse demonstrates the tendency in hegemonic masculinity to mark difference as inferiority which then legitimises domination. It is because of this aspect of hegemonic masculinity, where difference legitimates domination, that Connell argues that 'feminism of difference', the successor to 'feminism of equality', finds serious problems in undermining the everyday practices of a gendered society where masculine privilege remains entrenched at all levels of significant power (Connell 1995:231-2 and 2000:202; also Cranny-Francis 1992:258-9; Butler 1993:94; Bourdieu 2001:93, 202-3). Connell (2001:234) argues that the advocacy of difference and the process of degendering must proceed hand in hand: 'the idea is to recompose, rather than to delete, the cultural elements of gender' so that the positive human attributes formerly cast as binary opposites, as either masculine or feminine, become potentialities for everyone. This social revolution is by no means envisioned in *The Min-Min* that advocates heterosexual marriage—a structure that Bourdieu (2001:36-7) argues as imposing the symbolic subordination of the woman—even

if Sylvie becomes an economically independent woman as story closure suggests (205-6). However the fiction offers readers a significant commentary on the issue of fathering under patriarchy and clearly marks points of rupture in gender relations and in the configuration of fathering endorsed by hegemonic masculinity in the patriarchal nuclear family.

It was two to be decades before a literary reconfiguration of masculine caregiving was published that convincingly addressed the points of rupture in masculine parenting highlighted in *The Min Min*. Discussion in the next section of this chapter turns to Simon French's *All We Know* published in 1986. *All We Know* constructs a domestic household with a democratic gender regime quite unthinkable in the immediate post-war period. While traditional patriarchal values and behaviours operate in the broad social context constructed in *All We Know*, the central domestic household subverts these conventions by representing a family organisation which is vastly different from that offered in *The Min-Min*. In production relations in household work and domestic responsibility the concept of 'separation of spheres' disappears, replaced by an equal division of labour. The authoritarian father disappears along with rural spatiality, which is replaced by the bungalow in a beachside suburb (Pennell 1997:107-14).

## **The pro-feminist father and SNAG**

*The Min-Min* problematises masculinity as privileged by Western patriarchy by focusing on the tendency of male partners and parents to insist on 'intimate supremacy' (Connell 1995:231; also Bourdieu 2001:36) and proposes the reconfiguration of gendered social relations in the domestic household. *All We Know* is the first Australian realist domestic fiction to explicitly reject the traditional patriarchal nuclear family—married parents, father as breadwinner, mother as homemaker—as the ideal unit of social organisation—and to valorise an adult masculine subjectivity that actively seeks reciprocity in his adult heterosexual relations and a nurturing role in his *de facto* family



despite not being the ‘natural’ father of either of the children. The dialogism here is greater than that of *The Min-Min* as a larger number of masculine participants is offered so that readers engage in a debate about various kinds of masculine caregiving and domestic gender regimes.

*All We Know* offers a recuperation of the male parent in the four areas of rupture in the domestic household that Connell (1987) identifies and that Michael Gilding uses to frame his study (1991). These areas are child-rearing, the division of labour in the domestic household, economic independence (particularly employment of women outside the home) and relations of cathexis where heterosexual intersubjective relations move beyond pro-feminist essentialising of all men as being doomed to oppress all women (Connell 2000:144). All of these incipient areas of rupture in domestic gender regimes are represented as being lessened in the fiction because the concept of the ‘separation of spheres’ disappears. The interrogation of the processes of masculinity formation envisions new ways of being masculine in the world. Discussions of masculine caregiving move to the primary narrative so that the reconfiguration represented there is privileged when contrasted with the other masculine subjects in the secondary level stories. Equally significant and subversive is the representation of child-rearing as a degendered practice.

Unlike *The Min-Min*, *All We Know* privileges a version of masculinity and male parenting: Michael, the character who is superficially the ‘SNAG’—the Sensitive New Age Guy’—of popular culture. However the fiction is not glib about its reconfiguration and the representation of masculinity operating in the domestic sphere is painstakingly detailed. There is a complementary reconfiguration of the feminine and ‘mother’ overcoming the ‘social demarcation and a cultural opposition’ of traditional gender binarism (Connell 1995:44). In *All We Know* gender attributes are reconfigured so that all positive qualities are available equally to Michael and to his partner, Susan. As the new idealisation of the father Michael is contrasted with the other ‘fathering’ models available

in the households of the fiction's other child participants: Kylie whose father only has monthly access to her and who is an object of contestation between her parents (18); Ian with a typically absent mother and an unknown father (69-70); Sean Taylor's parents between whom sexual jealousy and violence become a public spectacle (98); John and Carol, raising their baby in retreat from city life on a hobby farm (141); the Arcana brothers whose 'alternative life-style' is represented by their home in a converted bus out in a paddock and who are having to adjust to their father's death in a motorcycle accident (161); Arkie and Jo's 'natural' father who lives in another State far removed physically and who is so uncommunicative as to be emotionally harmful to the children (116).

The fiction represents masculine re-embodiment and valorises emotional articulacy. Michael enjoys parenting with his equal participation in the organisation of childcare and his enjoyment of communicating with the children thus modelling areas of change that Connell advocates (1997:85). Michael's enjoyment of the physicality of nurturing is represented in many ways in the fiction: hugging (20-1), tickling (73), reading bedtime stories (71-2). The character shows a commitment to the welfare of women and girls and the mutuality of his relationship with Susan is clearly based on 'reciprocity not hierarchy' (Connell 1995:230). This is very different to the situations represented in *The Min-Min* with Joe Edwards and Mr. and Mrs. Tucker. It is Michael who realises that Arkie is right to want 'a room of her own' and that Susan needs to resume her music interests. In the extract below many of these aspects of a reconfigured masculinity and male parenting are represented. The spatial organisation of this scene contrasts significantly with the vignette of Chris Tucker insisting on his symbolic position in front of the hearth. Arkie's focalised thoughts appear in italics:

Michael was sitting at one end of the couch beside a couple of mum's music students, and Arkie wandered over and sat on the armrest next to him. They glanced at one another, exchanging crooked smiles. Mum was at her piano, listening to the first bars

of a steady blues song and nodding her head slightly to the beat. Her fingers settled on the piano keys ...

Jo climbed into Michael's lap as the music changed beat and became more frenzied ...

*It wouldn't be like this if mum was still with dad and we were in that home unit we used to live in. Dad wouldn't have let it happen ...*

The music continued loudly for several songs more and then concluded amid applause and congratulations. The band members set their instruments down and drifted into conversations around the loungeroom. A tape on the stereo began playing again, and mum jammed herself into a space on the couch next to Michael. They exchanged murmurs, laughed and kissed. (217-8, my ellipsis)

The spatial arrangement indicates the centrality of Susan in this episode. Michael is on the 'end' of the couch and Arkie on the 'armrest' suggesting their being in the background in this scene while Susan is centre stage, the 'star'. Their mutual understanding and acceptance of this is signaled by the ironic look they exchange, an understanding between equals unthinkable between Mr. Trevor and Barbara who are represented in a similar seating arrangement in the episode in *Good Luck to the Rider* (82) discussed in Chapter 3. Jo sits on Michael's lap knowing that Michael will care for him while his mum is busy. When Susan finishes playing she squashes in among them and kisses Michael, suggesting the extent of the democratic emotional bonds between these people and the mutuality of their respect for one another, as well as the pleasure they feel in one another's company. Mutuality and reciprocity of relationships are clearly valorised but so too is the fact that without Michael's acceptance of a caregiver's role Susan would hardly be free to pursue her interests. Arkie's focalised thoughts foreground this aspect of the episode, 'Dad wouldn't have let it happen ...'. This draws the contrasting picture of a traditional family life where the father assumes the authority to limit the autonomy of women and children as happens in *The Min-Min* and the earlier fictions.

The representation of Michael foregrounds a determination to rupture the ‘circular causality’ that Bourdieu (2001) argues underpins and perpetuates masculine domination especially in the family (56). Michael deliberately behaves differently with the children from the practices of his father. In the process of giving Arkie ‘a room of her own’ Michael finally confronts his negative childhood experiences. His pain is metonymically figured by his very gradual sifting through the contents of each of the drawers of the roll top desk that is stuffed with his memorabilia. He shows a willingness to learn to communicate about the emotional issues he has buried for so long. Just as Sylvie in *The Min-Min* most resents the physical violence her father metes out, so too Michael’s ambivalence about his childhood has to do with physical punishment he suffered as a child:

‘Arkie, that was a bit cruel,’ he’d said. ‘I used to wet the bed too, when I was Jo’s age, and it wasn’t much fun. You couldn’t stay with friends. Missed out on school camps, scared the other kids would find out. My dad used to belt me for it. I’m trying to help Jo—how about you helping too?’ ...

*My dad used to belt me for it. When she replayed that statement to herself, a lot of questions she’d never before asked came to mind. I’ve never met Michael’s parents. I don’t even know where he grew up. (20-1)*

Michael is represented as trying to ensure that both Arkie and Jo have better childhood experiences than he had but this does not involve either innocence or dependence. He is actively trying to assist Jo’s bedwetting and is prepared to discuss Arkie’s lack of compassion in a frank manner in terms that are meaningful for her. The extract specifically rejects hegemonic masculinity’s incorporation of physical violence. Arkie’s focalised thoughts, in ‘replaying’ Michael’s comments about physical violence, allow the reader to connect the physical violence to the lack of contact between Michael and his parents. Michael has erased his parents from his life as effectively as the developers erased all traces of the house in which he grew up (123).

*All We Know* offers the reconfiguration of a masculine caregiver and the subversion of patriarchal domestic gender regimes. It thus addresses some of the areas of rupture in patriarchy represented in *The Min-Min*. *All We Know* shows that attitudinal changes occur, as do changes in everyday domestic practices, so that Michael routinely undertakes tasks that would formerly have been regarded as unmanly in traditional masculinity. The affective and communication aspects of the reconfiguration of the masculine caregivers are especially marked. Flexibility and cooperation are now idealised qualities rather than indomitability and rectitude. Given that *All We Know* represents a continuation of patriarchal structures in the broader social context, Connell, like Bourdieu, would see Michael's case as an example of individual masculine reform. This was the agenda of many of the early 'men's groups' which supported the feminist movement. Connell (1995:139) argues that projects of individual reform do not sufficiently address the larger political and economic issues of degendering society and present the risk that 'it will ultimately help modernise patriarchy rather than abolish it'. Nevertheless literary representations which show characters displaying reconfigured masculine practice in everyday settings suggest to child readers that there is the capacity in our social system for difference to exist and for change to occur.

My discussion now turns to the mid-1990s fictions in the corpus that construct a third reconfiguration of gendered relations between literary subjects. These fictions also move outside the private sphere in order to problematise society's gender order, or what Bourdieu (2001:81) terms 'public patriarchy'.

### **Transformative fictions at the *fin de siècle***

*The Min-Min* only briefly interrogates the possibility that masculine subjects in positions of power in the public space are aware of the undemocratic nature of the patriarchal public sphere. Gender researchers agree that the alteration of power relations in society's public

gender order is essential as all else devolves from this (Bourdieu 2001:87; Connell 2000:225). For Bourdieu confrontation that enables real transformation of power relations in gender regimes involves the analysis of the relational dimension of interactions between gendered subjects plus the bringing to light of the operation of gendering across the whole social space. In Australian children's literature *Bruno and the Crumhorn* is the hallmark text in its attention to both these dimensions of the gendered social life. The *Hazel Green* series also offers interesting literary achievements in this regard but the eponymous Hazel operates from within a traditional family so that the representation of *Bruno and the Crumhorn*'s Sybil, outside a patriarchal family, adds significantly to the fiction's potential for defamiliarisation and parody.

Bourdieu's contention is that masculine domination must be confronted in 'public patriarchy'—that is, in social structures beyond the domestic sphere (Bourdieu 2001:81)—because the public sphere is implicated in the perpetuation or transformation of social structures that determine the gender order of society including the private sphere. Attempting to encompass the extent of necessary changes Bourdieu (2001) states that

[o]nly political action that takes account of all the effects of domination that are exerted through the objective complicity between the structures embodied in both men and women and the structures of the major institutions through which not only the masculine order but the whole social order is enacted and reproduced ... will be able, no doubt in the long term and with the aid of the contradictions inherent in various mechanisms or institutions concerned, to contribute to the progressive withering away of masculine domination. (117)

*Bruno and the Crumhorn* explores the 'objective complicity between the structures embodied in both men and women' explicitly as a literary strategy of 'double articulation', as discussed by Cranny-Francis (1992:175-6). That is, *Bruno and the Crumhorn* subverts the Australian family story genre by 'the simultaneous articulation of the feminist

discourse and the patriarchal discourse characteristic of the genre. By foregrounding patriarchal discourse, Cranny-Francis (1992:176) argues, the reader sees ‘it in action when it might previously have been invisible’. Further discussion of *Bruno and the Crumhorn*, in Chapter 4, demonstrates that this fiction is more complicated than the feminist double articulation because it offers a third articulation of gender regulation. This occurs in the representation of Bruno’s subjectivity, and his refusal to be interpellated into the models of masculinity preferred by his family. The fiction’s significance in drawing together these three articulations subverts family story genre.

Here I examine the literary strategies that enable the double articulation of gendered participants, focusing particularly on the feminine child participant, Sybil, and her interactions with men and boys. The fatherless Sybil desires an ideal father and she attempts to construct the new neighbour, Jeremy Fisher in that role. This aspect of storyline allows the articulation of an idealised patriarchal discourse. The articulation of a feminist discourse occurs in Sybil’s eventual rejection of Jeremy Fisher as she chooses to be emotionally autonomous rather than submit to the kind of ‘intimate supremacy’ (Connell 1995:231) expected by Jeremy Fisher and schematised in traditional patriarchal familial regimes.

The irony of Bourdieu’s phallic trope in his closure—his reference to the ‘withering away’ of masculine domination—leads directly to discussion of the most public aspect of any fiction, its title. *Bruno and the Crumhorn*’s concern with public patriarchy is saucily signaled by its punning title, a joke that immediately undermines all patriarchal erections and the phallic instrument and foreshadows the attack on logocentrism. The predominant thematic concern with masculinity in a gender-relations framework is also evident from the narrator’s intrusive introduction of the main protagonists: ‘This book is called *Bruno and the Crumhorn*, but it’s not just about Bruno. It’s about Sybil. Sybil? And a thing, of course, the crumhorn’ (1996:5). This ‘synthetic personalisation’, as Fairclough

calls it (1989:62), draws the reader's attention to the phallic joke in the title and the narrator's discussion of the participants, immediately interrogates literary conventions such as titles and the selection and ordering of story constituents, and 'naturalised' hierarchies. The narrator deems that both the masculine and the feminine voice are sites of enunciation and that they should be valued equally. To undermine the hierarchy implied by the title where Bruno is mentioned 'quite unfairly, really' (5), the narrator decides to tell Sybil's story first. This signals the literary deconstruction of masculine domination that ensues.

As a metafictional construction *Bruno and the Crumhorn* problematises the authority of literary metanarratives, genre conventions and coherent closures as a denial of the hybridity of the social space and the heterogeneity of the subjectivities that constitute it. Such interrogative realism offers a wide range of characters so that the significance of what the fiction says about masculinity and femininity is dialogically constructed in the representation of two family habituses. *Bruno and the Crumhorn* has an episodic structure, is multi-voiced and the dialogism sustains the coexistence of competing ideologies. The significance of what the fiction says about childhood subjectivities is articulated dialogically: first, because Bruno and Sybil have very different familial experiences in contrasting parts of the social space and very different interactions in gender regimes; second because of the intertextual links with Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno*. It also explicitly problematises the hierarchical and exclusionary 'structures of the major institutions through which not only the masculine order but the whole social order is enacted and reproduced' (Bourdieu 2001:117). Both the birthright and burden of patriarchal men are defamiliarised by Sybil's focalisation. Stephens (1992) states that

a crucial textual distinction, broadly put, is between narratives which encourage readers to adopt a stance which is identical with that either of the narrator or principal focalizer, and narratives which incorporate strategies which distance the reader ... .  
(1992:68)



*Bruno and the Crumhorn* exemplifies the sort of text Stephens values. The fiction employs three main narrative strategies. An obtrusive narrator allows the fiction to offer broad social commentary as it avoids the limitation of having to present a conventional ‘reality’ as focalised by a person in the middle years of schooling. This third person limited narrator constructs a humorous and interrogative commentary on Bruno and Sybil. The narratorial point of view is tempered by the viewpoints presented mimetically and diegetically through the characters who both focalise in their separate episodes. They meet very late in the storyline at an Early Music Society concert where both expect to play an item on the crumhorn. Bruno in fact has not seen Aunt Ilma’s crumhorn for three weeks because he lost it on the bus but he thinks nobody knows this. His sense of being drowned by the ‘flood’ reaches its climax as the repercussions of his irresponsibility threaten to overtake him on the evening of the concert (63). A textual dialogue establishes a range of implied reading positions that require readers to continually reassess the points of view and ideologies juxtaposed in the episodes. Narrative strategies, then, serve to ‘distance the reader’ and create what Stephens (1992:68) and many educators like myself would see as a preferred model of a dialogic text.

Symptomatic of postmodern texts with their ‘increasing surplus of signs’ (Kraidy 1998:57), the ideological implications of *Bruno and the Crumhorn* are dependent upon the pretext it reverts to, Lewis Carroll’s late Victorian experimental fiction *Sylvie and Bruno* (1984/1890). Stephens and McCallum (1998:5) define a reversion as a ‘narrative that has taken apart its pre-texts and reassembled them as a new version which is a new textual and ideological configuration’. This makes *Bruno and the Crumhorn* an interrogative text and so very different from realist fiction in *Good Luck to the Rider*. In the latter, for instance, literary allusion is a minor discursive strategy. Carroll’s canonical children’s fictions *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) engage with the secular literary tradition that devolves from romanticism’s advocacy of childhood

innocence. *Sylvie and Bruno* exemplifies the Evangelical religious tradition of the Victorian period, which was concerned with original sin, the need for personal salvation and trust in God's providence (Peterson 1987:83). *Sylvie and Bruno* combines realist and fantasy modes with traditional Christian fables to promote the patriarchal social order in the family story genre. The narrator, a Professor (a Charles Dodgson/White Knight character), is besotted with the lively, imaginative children and cannot spend enough time with them. It is a '*dream*' (italics in original) for the Professor to find 'Sylvie and Bruno walking on either side of me, and clinging to my hands with the ready confidence of childhood' (283). Sylvie exemplifies the interpellation of gentry masculinity's feminine subject. (Mrs. Trevor and Barbara in *Good Luck to the Rider* are of course the colonial derivatives of this schema.)

The 'natural' oppositional purpose of masculine and feminine subjectivities is explicit and implicitly classist and a seamless Christian ideology informs the behaviours and the destinies of the story's participants so that the emergence of the coherent adult gendered subject is never in doubt. Sylvie—the creature of the forest—is the legitimate property of a natural series of men who protect and sustain her. She is valued for her compassion, understanding, deference and her nurturing. The care of her little brother Bruno is especially significant as it foreshadows the attributes of the ideal woman. The king (symbolising God), her father (also the king), and the Professor (the narrator) are all committed to her spiritual and physical welfare. Sylvie is both fairy and girl-child, 'beautiful, ornamental, passive' (Cranny-Francis 1992:128-9) and the perfect nurturing girl/woman. The fiction is a testament to the late Victorian sanctification of childhood generally and the reconfiguration of the Christ-child as a feminine subject (Cunningham 1995:75). Sylvie's destiny is to transform from cosseted sentimentalised child into the Lady Muriel, genteel, submissive and solicitous wife to her predestined landed gentry husband. The historical context of the fiction is the period when the notion of the separate

spheres for men and women becomes a hallmark of women's autonomy since women are powerful within the domestic household, managing economies and children, although still ultimately subordinate to the men on whom their economic fate depends. First-wave feminists of this era were active in the construction of this mode of domestic arrangement (Connell 1995:191, 195).

*Bruno and the Crumhorn* subverts these dominant gendered romantic childhood stereotypes. The interaction of the text with its pre-text asserts the dramatic shift from the 1890s to the 1990s in the ideologies underpinning conceptualisations of the family, childhood and gendered subjectivities. Stephens (1992) in his explication of intertextuality writes that

‘... the mutual interactions of texts are comparable with the intersubjectivity which shapes individual subjectivity in day-to-day existence. This becomes apparent when one discourse space overtly embraces both a pre-text and focused text in such a way that the significance of the narrative is situated not only in the focused text but in the process of interaction between the texts. Intertextuality thus has the effect of drawing readers' attention to the reading process itself, and thence to such issues of representations, narration, and art-life relationships as the impact of language and convention on subjectivity, and the impact that society and its changing circumstances have on significance. (1992:116)

In late twentieth century Australia the *Bruno and the Crumhorn*'s intertextual links serve not only to enable these ideal conditions of reading but also to draw attention to changes in social structures and social relations. Sybil—the wise woman—offers the inversion of Sylvie's story in *Sylvie and Bruno*. Sybil is marginalised by the masculinist gender structure: she is fatherless, a 'posthumous child' who lives with her mother far from forest or the bush, in an inner city tenement lane, far even from the suburban bungalow settings of the Australian nuclear family from the 1970s onwards. Interaction with nuclear

families—‘normal’ families like Bruno’s—is not a regular part of Sybil’s experience. Her removal from domestic patriarchy, because her father is dead, means that Sybil is not inculcated into the schemas of ‘perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus’ which allow masculine domination of feminine subjects to appear as the natural order of gender relations (Bourdieu 2001:37).

Sybil’s focalisation then allows masculine domination to be defamiliarised. Defamiliarisation—the literary strategy of making strange (Shlovsky 1917)—enabled by the child’s focalisation of the patriarchal hierarchical construction of the social world is as central to the satire of this fiction as it was to Carroll’s early children’s fictions. In the extract below twelve-year-old Sybil muses on some of the dominant masculine stereotypes with which she is familiar from the media, films and her everyday experience of the homeless men in her lane. Sybil parodically inverts the patriarchal hierarchy and satirises normative behaviors, challenging what may formerly have seemed a ‘natural’ patriarchal order in the public sphere:

It was only men who lived on the street like this. Where were the women whose brains didn’t work any more? Sybil wondered. Perhaps, if she’d been born a boy, she would have grown up into a man, and have had to join the army or go into parliament, or lie on the street with lots of other men.

Although it may not have to be that way. There were three men who lived next door to them, who, when they went out to parties, put on make-up and shiny red dresses, and wore flowers in their hair, so they looked like air hostesses on advertisements for Philippine Airlines. Perhaps you didn’t have to be a man all the time, just because you were born one.

That would be particularly handy if you got stuck on the *Titanic*, for example. When she thought of things like that, Sybil was especially glad that she wasn’t a man. In movies, when the ship was going down, the captain strode up the deck shouting: ‘Women and children first!’ and all the women and children rushed to the lifeboats,

leaving the men behind to drown. (1996:9)

The humour here derives in part from Sybil's ability to rupture the 'circular causality' of the masculine domination that reproduces the 'androcentric unconscious' in children, like Bruno, raised in families where traditional gender regimes operate. The pejoration of the normally privileged gender increases the humorous effect. Being 'especially glad' that she is not a boy in some circumstances foregrounds a feminine subjectivity confident about the position from which she negotiates her social space and effectively subverts the potential for masculine domination. Sybil's inversion of the patriarchal social structure leads her to pity the captain of the *Titanic*, parliamentarians and military leaders who are represented as unfortunate in the regulation that their lives entail, rather than privileged and deserving of honour and deference. On the other hand, Sybil represents transvestites as fortunate because they can escape being men for at least part of the time. This representation empowers traditionally abject masculine subjects who violate normative heterosexual regulation. She distances feminine subjectivity from the public spheres of war, government and even heteronormativity. The satire in fact reveals the incoherences and contradictions in the 'patriarchal dividend', demonstrating Bourdieu's argument that 'Male privilege is also a trap, and it has its negative side in the permanent tension and contention, sometimes verging on the absurd, imposed on every man by the duty to assert his manliness in all circumstances' (2001:50).

Not only is Sybil 'especially glad that she is not a man', she knows that even some men are keen to escape that sex/gender. Hierarchical social relations among men are also made visible and while this enables the elevation of some men it means the abjection of others like the homeless men who sit in her lane. Masculine codes of status and courage have no meaning and absolutely no prestige when removed from a patriarchal framework of nobility and honour (Bourdieu 2001:12-3). The question of 'leaving the men behind to drown' is central to the subversion of the articulation of masculinity. Many men, including

Sybil's beloved Jeremy Fisher and Bruno's father and brother, will certainly be left behind to drown if, as Cranny-Francis argues, they cannot engage with others, men and women, on more than a superficial level (1992:87). The parodic inversion of masculine hierarchies of distinction is transgressive, and yet the implication that such privileged subjects need redemption is most certainly not a joke.

Sybil lives happily with her single mother but far from being cosseted like Carroll's Sylvie, her Victorian counterpart, she is used to 'being buffeted around' (54). The masculine figures in her life are problematic absences. She is a 'posthumous child' (6), her father having pre-deceased her in a suitably Australian manner: 'he was only twenty-two when he drowned surfing' (9). The theme of the masculine subject's sporting imperative recurs in Bruno's father and his 'streamlined, powerful older brother' Max (48). Further discussion of this is taken up in Chapter 6. Sybil's mother, Hilda the Lucky, says that Sybil's father '... didn't get to Be anything' (9, original capitalisation), a sentiment later echoed by Bruno's mother in her expectations of him that burden Bruno severely (28). Idealisations of fathers and a belief in their centrality to a 'family' burden Sybil's imagination and she longs to have a 'real' family—which must include a father. Jeremy Fisher is the adult who lives across the lane and involves himself with Sybil because he is her mother's lover. To Sybil he acts as a playful sentimental 'kindred spirit'. Sybil is very happy when the three of them are out together and she feels that 'People seeing us must think we are a family' (12). She wants to adopt him as a Dad: 'Sometimes Jeremy Fisher acted just as a father would, and then she hardly had to pretend' (9). Jeremy Fisher lives in an old butcher's shop where meat hooks still swing from the ceiling:

There was only one place to sleep, and that was the fridge. Well, what used to be the butcher's fridge. It was a small room that you walked into, big enough to fit a bedside table, and Jeremy Fisher had hung a lampshade, with rabbits chewing lettuce painted on it, from the ceiling. But the fridge had no windows, and it had a huge door which

slammed shut on its rubber edges, with a handle that made sounds of air squeezing in and out. (7)

The metonymic implications of the frozen subjectivity in this setting will immediately persuade some readers to view this participant negatively, despite Sybil's attachment to him. For others the 'Sex is Destiny' wall poster that he gives Hilda as a birthday present confirms the schema of a masculine subject who constructs women and children oppositionally—as 'other'—and not surprisingly considers commitment to them as a 'nightmare' (7). Sybil is sentimentalised as cute and dependent, and 'Syb, my darling' (129) is utterly besotted by his charm and propensity for entertaining:

Jeremy Fisher was handsome, his hair was fair, wore red braces which he twanged conversationally. Jeremy talked in a loud voice and took huge steps—he could stride down their lane in a minute, like the cat with seven league boots. (7)

This *bricolage* of desirable fairy tale and joke attributes signifies Jeremy as Sybil's idealisation of a charming, attentive and entertaining father. Like Carroll's Professor, Jeremy Fisher is very attractive, creative, well educated and lots of fun, but completely solipsistic. He offers Sybil access to a cultural life to which her mother has no access. This schema is not the misandric pro-feminist representations of male caregivers who are absences or failures. Jeremy has much to offer the evolving capacities of a child. It is Jeremy who encourages her to believe the befuddled and fatigued doctor's story about the lump on her neck being her 'gill', 'a relic of evolution' (11) and the sure sign, says Jeremy Fisher, that she will never drown (13). Unlike the men on the *Titanic*, Sybil ironically focalises. It is Jeremy Fisher who offers her the literature that assures her she is before 'Genesis', a reference to the poem by Mark O'Connor, and thus before patriarchal time. She will survive intellectually and physically but it requires that she resists a subordinate positioning in a masculinist gender regime. Sybil's idealisation of Jeremy, and the person

he is, do not match as he is 'voracious, hungry, restless' (134). In fact he is a figure of pitiable fun in his inability to enter into serious emotional relationships. The pretext here is *The Tale of Jeremy Fisher* (1908) and Jeremy's childishness is alluded to not only by his dress and deportment but also by the children's decoration on his lampshade. The story makes it clear that Sybil has love, attention and open honest intersubjective relationships with other adults in her life but it is a father she desires. Potter's Jeremy Fisher, the eponymous frog, goes fishing to get minnows for himself and his friends for tea. He battles in the rain and wet against various predators and only his rain-coat saves him from being eaten by a trout because the coat tastes so awful that the frog spits him out (1908:45). The fate of Sybil's Jeremy Fisher's is, like his namesake's, rejection; to be spat out at least temporarily. After all, he does not want to be known as Sybil's dad, indeed does not want to be committed to anyone.

Jeremy Fisher returns from overseas in time to attend the Early Music concert even though Sybil does not invite him and tries to make sure that he does not know where or when it is on (142). She is avoiding facing the fact that Jeremy Fisher, far from being her ideal father, has proved to be as attractive but as ephemeral as any children's book character. In the following dialogue after the Early Music concert, the crumhorn is rejected by both Bruno and Sybil. Jeremy Fisher, Sybil and Bruno are together for the first time. For Sybil the distraction of the crumhorn lessons means she avoids admitting that Jeremy Fisher as the good father was only a fantasy:

... She hadn't played it with all her heart, she had simply tried to fill it, but her heart was filled with something else.

'Oh,' said Jeremy.

'Well is that all you can say after all these months!'

Jeremy Fisher looked down at his shoes, sheepishly. He wiggled his toes inside them.



‘I guess I stayed away too long,’ he said at last.

Sybil shrugged. She searched for something to say, then her eye caught sight of Bruno, perched high on the stack of chairs, like a boy in a crow’s-nest of a pirate ship. ‘This is Bruno, by the way,’ she introduced pointing at him. ‘It’s his crumhorn, actually.’

‘No it’s not!’ Bruno’s response was immediate. ‘It’s got nothing to do with me!’

‘Unwanted, unloved, unneeded!’ Jeremy Fisher intoned—a quote Sybil supposed, with a sigh. But perhaps it wasn’t. (170)

Sybil’s heart is now filled with anger and bitter scepticism. The lack of mutuality and reciprocity is revealed by Sybil’s angry denunciation of Jeremy and his embarrassment acknowledges that she is right to be angry. His sentimental play, a ploy to gain her sympathy, ‘Unwanted, unloved, unneeded!’ is a corruption of the Walter Scott’s lament ‘Unwept, unhonoured and unsung’. This tactic Sybil exposes for the emotional blackmail that it is. His sincerity is rightly suspect for, like Carroll’s White Knight, Jeremy Fisher is singing ‘but the tune isn’t his own invention’ and Sybil, like Alice, has ‘... listened very attentively, but no tears came into her eyes’ (1996/1865:257).<sup>11</sup> Refusing to be Jeremy’s emotional toy, Sybil initiates a move beyond patriarchy to emotional autonomy. Sybil acknowledges her disenchantment with Jeremy’s games and frees herself from his emotional domination. The loss of a traditional power source is inevitable if she loses Jeremy as a potential father but the loss is necessary if she is not to always bear the burden of his irresponsibility in intersubjective relations. As Cranny-Francis (1992) states: ‘It is an important but uncomfortable fact that women are not simply innocent victims of

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<sup>11</sup> The White Knight sings ‘I give thee all, I can no more’, a sentimental song of lack designed to arouse pity. Ironically Sybil starts singing a foolish song from Walt Disney that ‘shouldn’t be able to produce such contentment’ (175). The last stanza of Sir Walter Scott’s ‘The Lay of the Last Minstrel’ is:  
The wretch, concentred all in self,  
Living shall forfeit all renown,  
And, doubly dying, shall go down  
To the vile dust from whence he sprung.

patriarchy; they are victims because they choose the power which it offers them’ (1992:259).

Hilda lacks the courage to engage honestly with Jeremy Fisher but objectifies him as a ‘nice experience’ (15). Courage is required in refusing the masculinist order and Cranny-Frances (1992) argues that for a feminine subject ‘to demand emotional engagement and responsibility’ from Jeremy would be ‘irrational, unrealistic, uncaring, unfeminine’(135). Sybil takes the other alternative: ‘From a different perspective, one which created the man as an individual subject negotiating patriarchy rather than being entirely constructed by it, a demand for engagement would be a responsible, caring and ultimately rational act—even if it is also transgressive and therefore extremely brave’ (Cranny-Francis 1992:140). This is the brave choice that Sybil makes and so rejects intersubjectivity based on ‘*libido dominandis*’, that is, desire for the one who is dominant (Bourdieu 2001:80). Again the important extension beyond liberal feminism’s misandry is that Jeremy is not rejected out of hand. Having refused Jeremy Fisher’s emotional domination of her life, Sybil nevertheless saves the two postcards he sent them while he was away (176). Intertextually this is an episode that recalls Alice’s parting from the White Knight in Carroll’s *Alice Through the Looking Glass* where she acknowledges her gratitude for what he meant to her in the past. So while Jeremy Fisher is unable to be an ideal father, his contribution to her life is valued. It is inferred that Jeremy’s ability to commit to Hilda and Sybil may improve and the socio-cultural and literary significances of this in the narrative’s closure are examined further in Chapter 4.

*Bruno and the Crumhorn*’s dialogism about masculine parenting across a broad social space is enabled by the representation of Bruno’s father who provides the schema of a ‘normal’ father in the traditional nuclear family. Here he shares bread-winning with his wife Agnes but is a victim of second-wave feminism because there is equality in that both

parents are economically independent but the man is disempowered in the domestic sphere. Being positioned this way by the gender regime he is relieved of any emotional responsibility for his sons. He needs verbal or visual clues to tell him when and how to interact with Bruno: 'Oh Bruno, we wouldn't miss it!' Bruno's mother stroked his head, pityingly. "Would we, darling?" she added, giving Bruno's father a meaningful jab in the arm' (49). Bruno dreads the thought of crumhorn lessons from Aunt Ilma immediately but his father takes his lead from Bruno's mother's enthusiasm, and so Bruno focalises in free indirect thought: 'surely a person's father should be there to protect his children, not connive in their misery' (33). His father's emotional inadequacy is overtly represented as harmful to Bruno. When Bruno is depressed by the loss of the crumhorn he decides that he might raise some money to buy a replacement by selling something valuable of his own. He asks his father because he is 'that useful combination of smart and vague—if you asked him something he was likely to know the answer, but you could count on him forgetting completely what you had asked him in five minutes' (89). His father glibly tells him that the crumhorn would undoubtedly be his most valuable possession (90) and makes no further enquiries about the purpose of the question. The significance of the dialogic representation of the two masculine caregivers is that the traditional family story genre is subverted and leaves the society's concept of 'father' emptied of value. The father's effectiveness in Bruno's life is limited because of the complicity of both parents in the maintenance of a household gender regime where Bruno's welfare is not supposed to trouble his father. Sybil's attempt to complete the ideal family is doomed to failure because of the economic and emotional commitment that is required by her chosen 'father'.

## **Conclusion**

This study of the socio-cultural changes in the representation of masculine caregivers in Australian children's literary fictions confirms the historicity of hegemonic masculinities

and indicates that change occurs in its conceptualisation if not in its practices (Connell 1995:44). The discursive practices of children's fictions make a distinctive contribution to the process of envisioning historical change. *The Min-Min* offers dialogic representations of early rupture in patriarchal models of fathering while *All We Know* represents reconfigurations of masculinity which reject the gendered concept of the 'separation of spheres' for men and women in domestic life, accepting that caregiving is a valid masculine undertaking in a democratic and degendered parenting relationship. *Bruno and the Crumhorn* targets the public gender structure and so moves discussion outside the private world of the family to a rejection of masculinist modes of intersubjectivity (Connell 1995:231). Connell (2000) argues that in gender relations we should strive for 'complex equality that might advance society towards social justice' and envisions the possibility that

In certain situations men's relationships with particular women or children, or groups including women and children, define interests that are stronger than their shared interests as men. In all these ways men's interest in patriarchy becomes incoherent or contestable. (32)

The potential for this is evident in Mr. Trevor's interactions with his daughters in *Good Luck to the Rider* and is represented overtly in the other fictions discussed in this chapter. Within the constraints of their historical contexts, *The Min-Min*, *All We Know* and *Bruno and the Crumhorn* allow us to trace that desired shift in focus of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity from insisting upon dichotomy and domination in gender relations through to foregrounding a concern for the interests and aspirations of girls and women. I have argued that some amelioration of oppositional gender regimes lies in the changes of values and practices in the four areas of gender relations offered in Connell's model of the gender order in Australian society. These insights support and extend many aspects of feminist research. Symbolic literary discursive practices constructed in the children's fictions

discussed here are progressive in seeking social justice in Australian gender regimes and in society's gender order. I argue like Connell (1995:64) that 'any pressure that generates change is worth having'. He argues further that '[p]ractice constitutes and reconstitutes structures' (1995:65) bringing 'new social arrangements into being (however partially)' (1995:229). Children's fictions understood as symbolic cultural formations can offer representations of reconfigured gender relations if writers choose to employ literary strategies to this end.

In Chapter 4 I examine post-war narratives of boyhood and demonstrate how they engage in interrogations of hegemonic models of masculinity. The immediate post-war fictions represent masculine child subjects who assume their 'birthright to power' and who expect to inherit a 'patriarchal dividend'. By the late 1980s some writers articulate masculine domination as embedded in relational practices, that is, in intersubjective relationships between masculine and feminine subjects. By the *fin de siècle* literary subjectivities of masculine children are represented as increasingly self-reflexive gender issues and are aware of the burdens of hegemonic masculinity as well as its privileges: the traditional 'patriarchal dividend' has a high price in terms of the regulation of masculine bodies and minds.



## Chapter 4

### **Reconfigurations of Masculinity II: redeeming masculinity at the end of the second millennium**

‘Redeem—a suitably moral-sounding word, he thought sadly, pulling the cord and getting off the bus, although it was he who needed the redemption.’

*Ursula Dubosarsky, Bruno and the Crumhorn (1996:88-9)*

... masculinity exists impersonally in culture as a subject position in the process of representation, in the structure of language and other symbol systems. Individual practice may accept and reproduce this positioning, but may also confront and contest it.

*R. W. Connell, The Men and the Boys (2000:30)*

Discussions in the preceding chapter examined the extent to which the corpus of children’s fictions in this study contributes to an acculturation process that perpetuates masculinist control of the Australian social space and implicitly represents this gender order as immutable. Connell (2000; 1995:214-15) supports the arguments of the large body of Australian feminist research and cultural commentaries and history that cultural formations, such as the metanarratives of a society, play a role in either sustaining or challenging the existing oppositional sex/gender hierarchies. Connell (2000: 22, 34) argues that the identification of sites of rupture in engendered cultural formations is a significant research strategy. The fictions examined in this chapter engage increasingly in the confrontation and subversion of hegemonic models of masculinity. The 1950s and early 1960s narratives of boyhood represent masculine subjects aware of their birthright to power. The traditional subjected position of the dependent child frustrates masculine

participants who understand that the 'patriarchal dividend' will eventually instantiate them as privileged social subjects. By the late 1980s some writers with an interest in gender issues recognised the necessity for narratives that articulated masculine domination as embedded in relational practices, that is, in intersubjective relationships between masculine and feminine subjects. Over the latter part of the twentieth century masculine child subjects are represented as increasingly self-reflexive about their gender privilege and its burden of expectations. Writers have masculine subjects perceive the powerful unitary masculine subject as mythic and that boys and men struggle for subjectivity as does everyone else regardless of age or gender. They also understand that the traditional 'patriarchal dividend' has a high price in terms of the regulation and limitation of body and mind.

This chapter examines texts in which the interrogation of masculinity occurs in the primary level of story as in the increasingly self-reflexive representation of masculine subjectivities in search of redemptive intersubjective relationships. As in the reconfiguration of fathering/masculine caregiving, so here there is a shift thematically from a matter of configurations of social relations in the private sphere to discussions of public patriarchy (Bourdieu 2001:87). After the doxic era, masculine child participants are invested with a subjectivity that is of interest in its own right and a degree of personal agency that Turner (1993) argues is generally lacking in adult masculine participants in Australian fiction (97). This chapter, then, traverses the ruptures and reconfigurations from *Tiger in the Bush* (1957), where Badge Lorennny's doxic Australian boyhood prepares him to inherit the earth, to the context of the 1960s counter culture, where Michael in *Bread and Honey* (1970) demonstrates the masculine subject's implicit need for redemption as the inculcation of the child into normative masculinity becomes an untenable subject position. In *Bruno and the Crumhorn* (1996), Bruno's need for redemption is explicit as he struggles for subjectivity requiring, as this chapter's first epigraph identifies, release from



the burden of traditional literary hegemonic masculinities. This change signals a shift in the family story genre so that boys are the main participants in the primary story and a genre-mixing occurs with the family story combining with elements of boys' adventure stories. There is also a concomitant shift away from idealisations of the literary families to the possibility of the child subject rejecting aspects of the values of the family, understood as 'the basic unit of society'. Boy and girl participants join the narrator by becoming key focalising subjects in family stories, by the end of the twentieth century self-reflexively examining their positioning as gendered child subjects.

Bourdieu's research finds that boys' acculturation into masculinities is 'the outcome of intricate and intense manoeuvring in peer groups, classes and adult-child relationships' (2000:12; also Bourdieu 2001:22-5). New narratives of masculine subjectivities are needed as part of the cultural debate for a reconfiguration of possibilities. I argued in the preceding chapter that the degendering of literary texts is a multi-faceted discursive problem to which writers have needed a continuing commitment. I intend to argue that a key concept for representing a new degendered pattern of intersubjective experience in literary texts must take account of the findings of relational feminism and masculinity studies such as Connell's (1995) that

Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition. This holds regardless of the changing content of the demarcation in different societies and periods of history. (44)

This implies that degendering social relations requires the resignification of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' so that they are not bounded and oppositional concepts, 'recomposing the elements of gender; making the full range of gender symbolism and practice available to all people' (Connell 2000:205). The achievement of this project in literary fictions requires the reconfiguration of many constituents of metanarratives in order to represent Connell's

(2000:225) 'democratic gender relations'; that is, social relations that are empathetic and degendered rather than oppositional and hierarchical. Connell's argument explains why pro-feminist fictions, which make the feminine subject visible and reformulate feminine gender schemata, founder in their attempts to represent ameliorative engendered intersubjective experiences. Such fictions often remain tied to patriarchal coherences and closures that privilege the character who 'wins' or is triumphant and who, thereby, accrues symbolic and actual power. This chapter traces some of the important steps already achieved towards the degendering of Australian children's fiction. It draws on Peter Hollindale's 'Ideology and the Children's Book' (1988) and John Stephens' 'Gender, Genre and Children's Literature' (1996b). The latter expands Hollindale's discussion of engendered themes and story constituents by focusing on the traditional gendering of literary genres and literary discursive practices.

Pro-feminist texts often reinscribe oppositional gender relations, with masculine subjects represented as beyond redemption. To redress this pejoration of masculine subjects in pro-feminist fictions, redemption of masculinity must occur in two ways. First, both storylines and discourse must articulate the traditional schemas of masculinity as a construction rather than as 'natural' (Connell 1995:77). Just as feminist texts articulated the 'othering' of the female subject in patriarchal metanarratives as inferior to 'Man', so too the operations of traditional normative masculinity must be made visible. An examination of Ivan Southall's *Bread and Honey* (1971) demonstrates the strategies that enable children's fictions to make masculinity visible. This fiction problematises issues such as the presumption of patriarchal authority, masculinity and violence, and the normative regulation of masculine and feminine intersubjectivity. The second requirement for the redemption of masculinity in fictions is the rejection of the concept of a unitary masculine subject and the concomitant homogeneous conceptualisation of masculinity. Connell's argument is that 'Masculinities are configurations of practice within gender

relations, a structure that includes large scale institutions and economic relations as well as face-to-face relationships and sexuality' (2000:29). A monolithic concept of masculinity needs to be replaced by a diversity of self-reflexive masculine subjectivities where intersubjective experiences with women and girls and with other men are not premised either implicitly or explicitly upon unequal power relations. Such a reconfiguration is difficult to effect because the masculine has been the traditional site of enunciation in literary discourse and superiority is ascribed to the character attributes that comprise the traditional schema of masculinity.<sup>1</sup> To this is added the unlikelihood of masculine subjects relinquishing their birthright to power (Connell 1995:241; Bourdieu 2001:102-8). In the metanarratives of Western society such a renunciation means abjection and possibly vilification (Cranny-Francis 1992:88). The final part of this chapter examines the use of metafiction in the resignification of masculinity and the reconfiguration of patriarchal and pro-feminist metanarratives. The focus text, as in Chapter 4, is Ursula Dubosarsky's *Bruno and the Crumhorn* (1996), which interrogates gender binarism and satirises its production in texts of all kinds.

Critiques of those pro-feminist fictions that address the elision of the feminine only by reversing gender prejudice indicate that attention must be paid to the engendered nature of literary genres and discursal conventions. In the field of children's literature Hollindale (1988) alerts writers and scholars to the 'sexist' ideology—now 'anti-male'—inscribed in many pro-feminist children's fictions. His paper examines the multi-layered functioning of ideology in fictions for children and highlights the need for a reading pedagogy that enables students to locate the levels of ideology operating in all kinds of texts. Hollindale stresses the narrative and linguistic complexity of successfully constructing a socially progressive ideology in a fiction and argues that often 'the more gifted writer' produces a

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<sup>1</sup> Stephens' 'Gender, Genre and Children's Literature' (1996:18-9) offers a table showing a traditional schema for contemporary oppositional masculinity and femininity. The ideal masculine schema includes such characteristics as being strong, tough, independent, active, aggressive, violent, unemotional, competitive, powerful, commanding and rational. The feminine schema includes such characteristics as being beautiful,

text which may 'carry its ideological burden more covertly'. Hollindale (1988:12) highlights the risk inherent in a writer adopting this approach: a reliance on readers knowing 'how to read a fiction' so that its ideological burden is unambiguous. He argues the need for pedagogical practices that ensure young readers develop the skills to recognise the discursive practices and socio-cultural codes and conventions that construct the dialogism of fiction. He is also concerned to teach children to identify the operation of ideology in texts, progressive or otherwise, so he concludes his paper with some key questions that will assist readers to determine a fiction's ideology. Regarding gendering he suggests that readers ask: 'What happens when the components of a text are transposed or reversed ... ? ... Is this "anti-sexist fiction" in fact sexist itself, and merely anti-male?' (19). Hollindale (1988) foregrounds the problem of identifying oppositional sexism/gendering in a text where the surface and passive ideologies conflict. Furthermore, there exists the pervasive and unquestioned values that form 'the climate of belief' in any text. These unmarked cultural assumptions reveal what is considered 'natural' at any particular historical moment. Hollindale characterises this 'climate of belief' as 'vague, and holistic, and pliant, and stable, and can only evolve' (19). Clearly this definition offers space to resist norms and to pursue change. Arguably then, fictions as social practice can offer transformed representations of gender relations if narrative strategies are deployed with sufficient skill.

Hollindale (1988) nearly identifies the necessity of making masculinity visible in literary texts. He briefly mentions Gene Kemp's *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler* (1977) and comments on the fiction's 'astonishing effect' as 'an anti-sexist story' because of its 'ingenious self-disguise' (11). Another way to account for its success is to note what it discloses rather than what it hides: that the masculine is the 'natural' site of enunciation in literary discourse. Rather than a disguise, the fiction is a revelation of the literary schemata

for adventurous boyhood instantiated in the British school story genre. The Tyke/Theodora participant does nothing that is physically impossible for a feminine subject nor are her leadership skills surprising. Nevertheless the reader invokes a default schema of masculinity because Tyke is not specified as a feminine subject. The conventional implied reading position assumes that Tyke's unmarked character attributes are those of a masculine subject (Stephens 1996b:18). This is why a girl/woman when reading patriarchal literature is so regularly 'required to identify against herself' (Stephens 1996b:20).

While Hollindale's paper problematises the pro-feminist reformulation of gender schemata it does not identify ways that narrative strategies and literary discourse could change. Stephens' (1996b) paper focuses specifically on the engendered discursive practices of children's literary genres. For instance, Stephens examines Russell Hoban's *The Mouse and His Child* (1969) showing how the traditionally engendered interactions of characters and the conventions of some literary genres 'overlap almost inextricably' to reinforce gender binarism as 'natural' (1996b:17). Stephens states that 'There is a tendency for traditional stories and genres to devolve always back into patriarchal discourse' (1996b:20). This is also what happens to the storylines of Barbara and Sheila in *Good Luck to the Rider* and Sylvie in *The Min-Min*. He argues that the reconfiguration of gendered narratives is not just about the redistribution of gender attributes. The construction of fictions that represent a degendered social space requires the reformulation of a matrix of narratological processes because genre conventions such as storyline and closure reinstate traditional social relations.

Stephens (1996b) demonstrates that 'ideological drift' (Pennell 1996:5-12) occurs in Terry Pratchett's *Truckers* (1989) from a pro-feminist surface ideology to a conservative passive ideology. He identifies a two-fold problem.<sup>2</sup> First, there is the engendered nature of the mock-heroic genre where the conventional focaliser is a masculine subject. The main

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<sup>2</sup> While Terry Pratchett is an English writer, his texts are global commodities. They are widely read—and

character, Masklin, despite a somewhat reformulated sensitive, SNAG masculinity, is still valorised as the leader, the thinker and the link with supernatural power. Stephens writes that 'it seems much easier for the children's book to strip away some masculine attributes and to enhance the remainder with some attributes from the feminine' (1996b:22). Several comments are pertinent here. Many pro-feminist texts enhance feminine subjects by adding attributes from the masculine set. This no longer surprises readers as long as masculine and feminine subjects are not shown in relational situations. When not being viewed relationally, most of the gender attributes in traditional gender schema have positive significations, so it is certainly not difficult to enhance a participant's profile by adding some attributes from the opposing gender set. It is the arbitrariness of the traditional gender schemas that is exposed by decades of sex role research (Connell 1995:21-7) and foregrounded in fictions like *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler*.

For these reasons scholars like Bourdieu, and Connell (1995:234), argue that the degendering process is benign unless the underlying hierarchical power relations of gender binarism are also reconfigured. In *Truckers* it is this failure that presents the second significant problem. The dialogue Stephens (1996b) quotes from the fiction represents the main feminine participant, Grimmer, as a reconfigured feminine participant who is intelligent, brave and adventurous. This representation is undermined by the passive ideology of the gendered comic mode with its pejorative feminine stereotypes (23). Stephens (1996b) argues that the humor of the dialogue succeeds because the traditional comedy of the nagging woman is enhanced by the subversion of feminist aspirations. Of course, what Stephens has not addressed here is the implicit traditional masculine gendering of implied readers; the fact that the sexist humour is sure to be successful assumes not only masculine addressees but also that feminine readers learn to read against themselves. A pro-active feminist discourse constructs dialogue for the feminine

participant that is self-enhancing and self-promoting rather than ironically self-deprecating. The discourse would assume implied readers were both masculine and feminine subjects as happens in Ursula Dubosarsky's *Bruno and the Crumhorn*, as I discuss further below. Examples of successfully sustained pro-feminist dialogue are plentiful in the *Hazel Green* trilogy (1999-2003). These shifts in literary discursive practices in the representations of new millennial feminine subject are closely examined in Chapter 5.

The episode from *Truckers* presents nothing 'surprising' in terms of its 'climate of belief' because the patriarchal gender order is maintained, although contested, and power relations remain unchanged, '... We'll make the decisions, all right?' says Gurder, having the last word. There are other narrative choices that Pratchett could make so that the dialogue represents empathetic gendered relations. Masklin could enunciate his disagreement with Gurder's misogynistic views or Gurder could affirm Grimma's capabilities. However, these options would undermine the traditional representation of women as having only supporting roles in action/adventure genres and as being the prizes for masculine heroism (Cranny-Francis 1992:135;117-8). Masculine readers could even be required 'to identify against' themselves, but they continue to resist (Kenworthy 1994:74-95). Changes would also be needed for story coherence: closure may require representation of power being shared by masculine and feminine characters. Such an outcome would, of course, be remarkable rather than 'natural' because, as Stephens argues, it is 'natural' to fall back into traditional narrative patterning. Pratchett's humour depends upon patriarchal discursive practices that represent feminine subjects as garrulous, overbearing and practically ineffectual. This leaves them dependent upon masculine leadership, expertise and ingenuity and perpetuates the mythology of masculinity as the legitimate site of action and power.

Stephens (1996:21) clearly demonstrates that 'attempts to introduce affirmative representations of women can stumble into a tension between one kind of gendering at

story level and another in the discourse'. When writing of 'affirmative representations of women' Stephens addresses only one aspect of the problem: affirmative representations of non-patriarchal masculine subjects are equally necessary, as well as representations of empathetic intersubjective relations regardless of gender. These then are relational issues that are addressed in the transformative fictions discussed in this chapter with regard to *Bruno and the Crumhorn* and with feminine subjects in the *Hazel Green* series (1999-2003) in Chapter 5.

Hollindale (1988) argues that 'Our priority in the world of children's books should not be to promote ideology but to understand it, and to find ways to help others to understand it, including the children themselves' (10). While Stephens (1992) agrees with Hollindale that children should not be at the mercy of what they read (4), he would regard Hollindale's (1988) claim that 'ideology is an inevitable, untamable and largely uncontrollable factor in the transaction between children and their books' (1988:10) as too open. Stephens (1992) demonstrates the availability of 'methods which enable both finer linguistic evaluations and more sophisticated narratological insights' which can empower readers in their decoding of literature and assist writers to anchor the ideological burdens of their fictions (11). He shows that an alignment of story constituents with discursal processes ensures that the surface and passive ideological intentions of a writer are coherent and consistent throughout the narrative.

Reformulation of character attributes alone is not a sufficient change as these do not result in shifts in power relations among characters nor alter story coherences or closures. Most of the texts that Stephens (1996) critiques do not offer degendered social practices nor do they represent empathetic intersubjective relationships between masculine and feminine subjects even as an ideal, let alone as 'predictable everyday behavior' (Hollindale 1988:11). In attempts to regender fictions, women/girls may be represented as agential protagonists while men/boys may have a tendency to be 'self-effacing, caring, and



vulnerable', yet gender binarism persists (Stephens 1996b:22). Narrative strategies—dialogues, for instance—that reproduce these conventional gendered power relations need to be rewritten so that story coherences and closures can change too. The material practices that constitute 'hegemonic masculinity' shift historically but Connell (2000:24) and Bourdieu (2001:38) among others, argue the power relations embedded in the binary gender system do not. The benefits that accrue to men from the 'patriarchal dividend' range from the attribution of status and authority, to wielding economic and political power and controlling the means to violence (Cixous 1980:90; Rubin 1984:267-319; Connell 1995:82-3). This leads Connell (1995) to argue that the advocacy of social difference and the process of degendering must proceed together so that eventually the positive human attributes formerly cast as binary opposites, as either masculine or feminine, become potentialities for everyone. Ultimately, then, 'men's relational interests in the welfare of women and girls can displace the same men's gender-specific interests in supremacy' (242). Here then is a possible impetus for change even if the realisation of such a possibility seems utopian in the contemporary socio-historic context. Connell's apparently straightforward statement entails overturning the current power regimes in most aspects of social relations. Bourdieu (2001:86-7) regards the possibilities of such transformations much more pessimistically than Connell (2000:35-6), arguing that this cannot be effected if larger social structures do not change. Perhaps it is not surprising that the appearance of literary reconfigurations of masculine subjects proceeds slowly.

### **Boyhood in the doxic moment**

Discussion now turns first to doxic representations of engendered masculine child subjects in Australian fictions and to the subsequent points of rupture—in storylines, story constituents and discourse—that problematise the engendered structure of the literary social space. In Chapter 3 I examined *Tiger in the Bush* and *Good Luck to the Rider* as

literary exemplars of the Bourdieusienne doxic moment for masculine gender schemas of fatherhood in the children's literature of the post-war era. The fact that at least two distinct models of adult masculinity exist demonstrates Connell's argument that masculinities are plural and that homogeneous, monolithic representations are reductive. In this chapter the focus text, *Tiger in the Bush*, offers a reconfiguration of the iconic pioneer masculinity in the main child protagonist, Badge Lorennny. The process of Badge's subject formation in the family allows his accession to the patriarchal ideology of the spiritually enlightened bushman. In Chauncy's *They Found a Cave* (1947) a 'time out' adventure story, the girl participant, Cherry, has a serious aesthetic appreciation of the Tasmanian landscape but it is not connected to a wider ideological framework as are Badge's experiences in *Tiger in the Bush* (153-4). Dave, Badge's father, represents the pioneering masculine subject which derived from the Australian literary tradition of the 'Bush Legend'. The Australian use of the word 'bush' was, and is, 'indiscriminately applied to all descriptions of uncleared land, or to any spot away from settlement' (Wilkes 1978:65-6). Ferrier (1998) writes that

the tradition invoked here can be read as a complicated interplay between originally European ideologies and practices, and local inflexions and developments. Rural life offered perhaps, in its frontier conditions ... more local specificity than urban culture, in relation to which many parallels persist with the urban capitalism of Europe. (204).

The 'Legend' is a masculinist critical tradition that instigates and perpetuates the 'obsession with masculinity' in the successive literary myths of the Australian nation and the search for a national type or national subjectivity (White 1981:158-61; Carter 1992:110, 2000:277; Turner 1993:92-3; Ferrier 1998:204; Martin 1998:94-8).<sup>3</sup>

White (1981) argues that these iconic Australian masculine subjectivities typically evince strength, virility, courage, non-conformism, initiative, audacity, and mateship, that

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<sup>3</sup> Important texts in the construction of this ideology are Vance Palmer's *The Legend of the Nineties* (1954), A. A. Phillips' *The Australian Tradition* (1958) and Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958). A brief discussion of the impact of these texts is available in Carter's 'Australian literature and its criticism' (in

is, an 'egalitarian comradeship' (Inglis 1965:26). Dave's labouring or 'battler' masculinity is the authentic pioneer forebear for his younger son. However the defection of the two older children to the city indicates the potential disruption of the masculine schema. This contrasts with the family solidarity of the schema of gentry masculinity in the Trevor family. The latter is an exemplar of the gender regime imposed explicitly and implicitly on the intersubjective relations between the family members by this model of masculinity. Masculine domination is represented as 'natural' but not altogether implacable as Mr. Trevor's concern for the welfare of his children tempers his domestic performances of hegemonic masculinity. The interactions of household members with the wider community are determined by the hierarchical social relations of the patriarchal gender regime. If 'incoherencies' in patriarchy are, as Connell (2000) and Bourdieu (2001) argue, the important points of rupture in the structure of masculine domination, then the literary constructions of gentry masculinity attempt to preclude change in the overall structure of gender order by confirming the significant economic advantages of patrimony. In *Tiger in the Bush* however, the perpetuation of patriarchal authority founders because the older children, Lance and Iggy, fail to be instantiated into the paternal ideology which has no material or economic benefits to offer and appears in many ways to be regressive.

*Tiger in the Bush* demonstrates that a shift in representations of masculine subjects occurs into the family story genre. There is an expansion of domestic fiction, originally 'girls' books', to represent the lives and subjectivities of boys.<sup>4</sup> Badge is the hero of the primary level story but there is no doubt that we are dealing with a family story, as the representation of Iggy is significant and her importance is demonstrated by her rescue of Badge in the climax of the secondary level narrative (139-40). *Tiger in the Bush* also employs several character focalisers and so allows reader negotiation of the ideologies of the text in ways unavailable in *Good Luck to the Rider*. The literary analysis in this chapter,

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Webby 2000:270-2).

as in Chapter 4, focuses on four significant discursive practices that feature in both *Good Luck to the Rider* and *Tiger in the Bush*: spatial frameworks and the Australian literary tradition of the 'Bush Legend'; the significance of emplotments with traditional patriarchal gendered schemas of childhood and gendered storylines where participants are in hierarchical relationships with the father who is represented as the legitimate site of power and knowledge; the representation of masculine domination is metonymically figured in the literary discourse and in the manipulation of dialogues as sites of power. The fiction's central motif is the now extinct Tasmanian tiger, the thylacine. However in the storyline Badge, Liddle-ma and the Old Hatter frequently see or hear 'the last Tasmanian tiger in the world' (23,110).<sup>5</sup> The tiger functions as a sign of the sacred covenant between the initiated Australian subjectivities living appropriately with the land: in submission to its forces and avoiding destruction of any aspect of the landscape. Saxby (1998) states that in the 1950s

there developed a strong sense of locality and an affinity with "place". From this grew a sense of the land as sacred; sometimes a mystical force, accepting those who were in harmony with it and rejecting those who exploited it or who failed to respect its dignity. (22)

Spatial frameworks—representations of spaces and places—are ideologically significant in Australia's literary tradition and are thematised as a signifying element in the doxic texts of Australian children's literature during the 1950s.<sup>6</sup> In *The Proof of the Puddin'* Saxby (1993) argues that what makes a right relationship with the land 'is,

perhaps, the strongest note to be struck in the whole history of Australian children's literature. It is not just a question of the right husbanding of resources, it is a recognition of the land itself as a spiritual entity and a source of spirituality. (18)

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<sup>4</sup> See Kerry White's unpublished doctoral thesis, *Founded on Compromise - Australian Girls' Family Stories 1894- 1984* (1984) is held at the University of Wollongong Library, NSW.

<sup>5</sup> The numerous fictions and non-fictions concerned with the thylacine in the period 1941—1999 are

The relationship to the land, symptomatic of colonial and post-colonial settler literatures in English, is paramount in the storylines of both fictions although in different literary paradigms of Australian spatiality.<sup>7</sup> In the post-war children's fictions, the contrasting representations of masculinity in the doxic pastoral moment is inherent in the ideological differences between the two fathers' contrasting valuations of the land: as an exploitable economic resource devoid of spiritual meaning in *Good Luck to the Rider*, as examined in Chapter 3, or as sanctified space as in *Tiger in the Bush* (Gunew 1990:99; Saxby 1998:22). Graeme Turner (1993) argues that the isolated rural existence, exemplified by the Lorennys, is valorised in the Australian literary tradition:

The problem of survival with the land establishes a myth which sets limits to personal achievement and to personal endeavour. The threshold of transcendence is lowered, so that instead of mastering the land, the real heroism lies in surviving it. Living with the land is mythologised as the authentic Australian experience ... . The myth of the land is a myth of culture in that it tells us how we are to live within Australia ... . (1993:47)

Like Australian adult fictions of this period, children's fictions suggest that the 'difficulty of survival' in the landscape legitimates 'failing to do more than that' (Turner 1993:52) so that the pioneering task here is not taming the land. Even where the ideological construction of the land offers spiritual immanence there is the acceptance of 'a threat as well as a promise' (Turner 1993:26). In the adult literature a literary hero's resignation to intractable physical forces is interpreted as a nihilistic strain in the Australian fictions—death and suicide feature regularly as closure—but it is nevertheless implicit that this 'creates men who are visionaries, martyrs and heroes' (Pennell 1999:12). While

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discussed in Saxby's *Images of Australia* (2002:663).

<sup>6</sup> See Stephens (1992:209-13) for a discussion of spatial frameworks in children's historical fictions. See Mieke Bal (1997:136-7) for theoretical discussion of spatial frameworks.

<sup>7</sup> Both traditions have been extensively mythologised by literary critics and critiqued as 'constructed truths' by historians and scholars in cultural studies and Australian studies (Elliott 1967:321; Clunies-Ross 1986:227; Ashcroft et al 1989:8-9; Gunew 1990:99; Turner 1993; Pennell 1995:107-9; Veit 1998:93; Martin 1998:89-92).

children's fictions avoid martyrs, Dave is certainly represented as a visionary and pioneer bush hero and Badge is the new kind of Australian boy hero: any potentially negative ideological outcomes are replaced by the individual's achievement of freedom and metaphysical transcendence in the environment (Turner 1993:57; Ferrier 1998:204; Carter 2000:276). Turner describes the ideology of Bush Legend spatiality this way:

... the keynotes are those of the harshness and indifference of the land, and thus the difficulty of surviving in it; the compensations lie in the assertion of a unique natural beauty, in the discovery of a certain spirituality in communion with the land, or in the mastery of the stoical pioneering virtues of endurance and acceptance. (1993:28)

Turner states that 'the land operates as a source of meaning, offering a kind of spirituality or significance that is explicitly absent from society' (1993:29). The Lorennys' home in the isolated Tasmanian valley is a spatial framework that offers transcendent significance. Badge, Liddle-ma and Dad find 'the promise of harmony and metaphysical transcendence' in an environmentalism that repudiates the post-war 'Australian way of life' with its suburbs, cities, aeroplanes, Land Rovers and electricity which represent 'banality and spiritual starvation' (Turner 1993:26). *Good Luck to the Rider*, on the other hand advocates progress and prosperity on the land for those who strive hard enough. Here aeroplanes, interstate and international travel, boarding schools and universities are positively represented as desirable pleasures. In this tradition there is no recognition of the interdependence of people and the environment nor of a spirituality available in the relationship with the land.

The Lorennys' family's ideological imperative, then, is the conservation of the landscape. As the mythic bushman, Dave's intention is certainly appropriation of the land but never exploitation, as is the Trevor family's purpose. Dave's character is a composite of white settler masculine iconographies: bushman, explorer and prospector. He devotes himself to a fanatical protection of the wilderness valley he 'discovered' as a young

prospector. In free indirect thought Badge focalises Dave's imaginings:

Who knows how long Dad stood there with a gleam in his eye? What held him? Was it the peace of this wild place, its ancient air, its freedom from the taint of man? Was it because he was busy selecting the slope where he would build his home, and marking with his eye the line of a zigzag track he would cut to the valley floor? He may even have been worrying then about how to cross the Gordon with supplies. (3)

This shows Badge's understanding that the acquisition of property is his father's secondary concern because the pristine landscape is of primary significance. The same panoptic view that characterised Mr. Trevor's surveillance of his children and the property is exhibited here in the 'gleam in his eye' but for Dave it is not a matter of the transformation of the land, but its preservation. Niall (1984) writes that 'Dad is archetypal outback Australian; resourceful, wryly humorous, laconic', which belies the tenacious war game he sustains with the outside world (220). The comment fails to register the passion and material sacrifices that Dave's environmentalism entails for his family. Turner (1993) argues the 'authentic Australian experience' requires an acceptance of 'personal and socio-economic limitations, and of settling for survival as the highest good' (37).

Dave, like Mr. Trevor, in Bourdieu's terms, invests seriously in the 'games' that perpetuate masculine domination of the social space regardless of the personal cost to others (Bourdieu 2001:75). For instance, the 'harshness and indifference' of the landscape is exemplified in the circumstances of Dave's finding his Edenic valley. He was, in fact, lost but when the mist lifted, 'Dad found himself not a step away from a drop of about eight hundred feet, with a wide, unknown valley at the bottom of his precipice' (2). Nevertheless this is 'the place he had always hoped to find' (3). This environment—with its mists like 'white veils' (2), precipitous mountain ranges (3), constant rains (2), dangerously swollen rivers (17), bush fires and snakes (35), a savage wombat (65) and the tiger itself (126-7)—demonstrating the 'endurance and acceptance' Turner (1993) found to

be hallmarks of the literature (28). Dave's unconcern about such matters with regard to his family is characteristic of patriarchy which 'dispenses with justification' (Bourdieu 2001:9). Not the dangers of crossing the river on the wire, the inhospitable mountains and valleys nor the poor farming land interfere with Dave's idealisation of the place, nor lead him to question his role as its caretaker.

The family has never legally purchased the land. Dave's brother, Uncle Link, argues that 'there was no point paying for he had discovered it. The land is his by right of pioneering conquest and hard work' (3). The 'collective collusion' so essential for the perpetuation of masculine domination is a strategy on which the family's way of life depends (Cranny-Francis 1992:88; Bourdieu 2001:75). This calls to mind Connell's comments about the difficulty of law enforcement on the frontier (2000:47). Dave is proud and pleased to be 'off the map' and anti-authoritarian pleasure is taken in the avoidance of bureaucratic regulation. Australian masculinity typically rejects centralised authority as an affront to the egalitarian principle mythologised in Australian cultural life (White 1981:48; Turner 1993:90-3; Carter 2000:270, 275). This extra-legal existence would be unthinkable to the Trevor family because government and the administration of the law are integral to the social structure that enables gentry masculinity. Mr. Edgar Turnbull in *The Min-Min* is a similar case. The land as patrimony depends upon the law upholding claims of lineage. However *Terra nullius* is ideologically in place as firmly as 'collective collusion': 'so they arrange to keep Dad's find to themselves' (3). Here the metropolitan centre is rejected and connections to the outside world disdained and figured as undesirable: 'The ford to the Lorennny valley was usable only during dry spells in summer' (1) so at any other time of the year people and goods enter the valley from the 'Outside' via a double-stranded wire bridge that is almost undetectable among the thick vegetation in the Gordon River regions (38), a 'secret engineering feat' (2).<sup>8</sup> Outsiders are 'invaders' (109).

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<sup>8</sup> The romanticism of descriptions of the landscape, usually character focalised, is marked in the tradition



There are not only differences between the Trevors and the Lorennys with regard to the land but also with regard to intersubjective familial relationships and patrimony. While the Trevors represent the attempt to transplant the concept of the family dynasty to the new Australian nation, the Lorennys' family of three siblings, becomes a particular version of the Australian community privileged by the Bush Legend mythology. The mythology of mateship in this fiction is extended to women, Liddle-ma and Iggy. Dave frequently calls Liddle-ma 'mate'. The dialogues of Liddle-ma and Dave represent husband and wife interacting as companions and as partners in their commitment to a pioneering way of life. Despite Badge's accession to iconic status the incoherencies and ruptures in patriarchal social regime are much more severe in this family although socio-economic disadvantage is a point of honour for Dad, Liddle-ma and Badge. However the older siblings have different views. In Dave's opinion, Lance, the elder son, ruined everything by winning a scholarship to a boarding school, heading for the city and opting for a professional career (10). The greater mutuality of the relationships between father and children and husband and his wife in *Tiger in the Bush* does not undermine the ideology of the separation of spheres which remains the grounding ideology, Hollindale's 'the climate of belief', implicit and explicit in the fiction:

'Badge has never seen the sea, Dad!' Iggy must chip in.

'I know thanks Iggy. You get on with your knitting or whatever that is. Badge knows what I mean, don't you, son?' he lifted a corner of the map and Iggy was shut out from the world of men. 'One day, Badge, you'll see for yourself. Now, you take your elbow off this map; I'm going to put it away ... .' (7)

The 'world of men' is explicitly a separate sphere of public life even in the secret valley. Again, as with Mr. Trevor, the father is not being unkind but his playfulness uses sexist humour as the means to exclude his daughter from the conversation. The implication of his

dismissive comment, 'your knitting or whatever that is' offers his humorous pretence that she knows too much, talks too much, is interfering inappropriately, and that her feminine activities are not worthy of masculine regard. This is despite the fact that Liddle-ma does not exhibit these traditionally stereotypical negative qualities at all although the same 'climate of belief' is present. The separate spheres exist and are not a natural or rational social division but a constructed socio-cultural distinction. Mutuality and reciprocity exist to a far greater extent than in the Trevor family. Liddle-ma and Dad play with Badge and empathise with his position as an outsider to Lance and Iggy. His Dad fishes with him and takes him with him as he works. Liddle-ma reorganises her work (31) so she can jump, sing and run with him over the buttongrass marsh as they take Dad his lunch (33-4). Dialogues between the parents about their children lack the hierarchical assumptions that require the feminine subject to be quietly spoken and deferential to men as is the case with Mrs. Trevor and Barbara (78-9). Again economic imperatives determine the need for women to be physically active beyond the traditional animal husbandry and vegetable gardening but, despite this, Dad doesn't cook. While a feminine subject may acquire masculine attributes, feminine attributes in a masculine subject are unthinkable. Likewise the word and texts remain the province of men. The news is old by the time the monthly trek from outside brings the supplies as well as the newspapers:

... he tried to get Dad's attention, but he persisted till the shaggy grey head appeared over the top of the newspaper and two kindly, faded blue eyes met his inquiringly.

'What's it mean, Dad?—what you said, us being "right off the map"?'

'I'll show you, son.' With which a gnarled brown hand reached for a certain box, it was slowly lowered to the rough-hewn table, the hand searched inside, and Dad spread out before his younger son his old prospector's map.

'Look, Badge, here's us.' His square thumbnail, ridged like roofing iron, jabbed a dingy space between the upper bend of the Gordon River and the far Denison ranges. (4-5)

Like Mr. Trevor Dave is ‘weather-beaten’ — ‘faded blue eyes’, ‘the shaggy grey head’ and ‘a gnarled brown hand’ — but his physical strength and size are emphasised as an outdoor pioneering hero particularly in the ‘square thumbnail, ridged like roofing iron’ so that every part of him evinces physical power. He is an explorer and a miner, an active frontiersman with ‘his old prospector’s map’. Dave’s reading skills are limited and polysyllabic words often defeat him (25, 166-7), nevertheless the newspaper serves the same function for Dave as it does for Mr. Trevor even though Dave is reading news that is a month old: this metonymically connects Dave to the public sphere and he interprets the meaning of the public text. Dave reads expertly in another field, that of the landscape, and Liddle-ma is quick to confirm that Dad knows far more than the experts in the museums about animal spoors and habitats (167).

Badge is an eleven-year-old boy and the youngest of three siblings. He is completely removed from culture having only ever left the valley twice and then only to visit Uncle Link’s farm. Badge accedes to the ‘spirituality in communion with the land’ that Turner (1993) identifies (28). He is the instantiation of the perfect Australian boyhood as the recirculation of romanticism’s idealised childhood provided by immersion in the Australian landscape. His process of subjectivity formation ensures his accession to the patriarchal ideology of the spiritually enlightened iconic bushman. Badge’s character epitomises both the romantic aesthetic of the ‘bush’ mythology — the Tasmanian wilderness near the Gordon River in this case — and the stoicism and endurance needed to constantly battle the elements: the iconic ‘battlers’ barely able to support themselves in the environment but inspired by a conservationist imperative.<sup>9</sup> This personal spiritual transcendence is Badge’s patrimony not only from his father but also from the Old Hatter who has forsaken all contact with society in order to be at one with the land (52-3).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Colin Thiele’s fiction *The Mystery of the Black Pyramid* (1996) demonstrates the re-circulation of these paradigms of Australian spatiality. All of these iconic aspects of the Australian landscape are mentioned in the fiction’s orientation, in this case, the first ten pages of the text.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick White’s *Voss* (1956) is the adult fiction that is the paradigmatic example of this form.

Badge receives the pseudo-religious blessing from the Old Hatter as they share the mysteries of the landscape and wildlife (63-5) and the Old Hatter assists Badge in duping the American scientists so that they leave with their scientific curiosity apparently satisfied (119-20). The way of life of his family, involving only sustainable agricultural activities (74-5), ensures that the valley remains pristine. The family develops strategies to repel invasion by visiting foreigners whose potential to exploit the wildlife as spectacles for 'scientific johnnies' (25) is despised. When the unwitting Uncle Link lets Americans, including an expatriate nephew, into the valley a temporary rift occurs in Dave's relationship with him even though he is—punningly—their vital connection to the outside world (163).

The resolution of the primary level story depends upon Badge's commitment to his father's world-view so that he devises a ruse that ensures that the American scientists do not find evidence of the presence of the endangered animal that Badge, Liddle-ma and Old Harry know to be in the valley. This comes at a personal cost as Badge has enjoyed the company of the visitors to the valley, especially his cousin. Turner (1993:49) argues that the literary bush mythology of 'living within the Australian context' involves 'learning to deal with the land in an unequal partnership. It is the land that sets the terms for co-existence. The 'hero' is never given any special powers other than humility of perception (selflessness) that provides access to the land's quality'. Badge understands these requirements and his survival and his access to transcendent experience is thus assured. In the extract below his accession to transcendence is explicit in discourse that for the child is hieratic:

He could feel the strangeness: his eyes stared and the hairs on his neck rose a little as he felt himself watched, yet could see no watcher, no living creature. Was it *surprise* the place felt at seeing him? Perhaps the solemn old bush was gazing at him, shocked, for it was a very ancient piece of earth which had never before known the pressure of

a boot on its mosses.

There was no movement but his own, no sound; not even the twitter of a bird, only an awful stillness. He moved in farther, his boots pressing deeper, disturbing the silence with a sucking noise each time he lifted them. He was coming to a wet place where life was going on much the same as before boots were invented, or the brown feet of men without boots—or, for that matter, any two-legged forerunner of a boy in boots.

Looking round, he found he stood in a vast green cavern roofed with leaves, domed and festooned with hanging moss and creepers ... (38-9, original emphasis)

The discursive representation of this experience when for the first time Badge is alone in the 'primeval rain forest, which is a strange eerie place' is clearly different from Badge's focalised thoughts as he imagines Dad surveying the 'secret valley'. Here 'spirituality in communion with the land' is explicit (Turner 1993:28). The land is personified as an omnipotent presence. The discourse—'strangeness', 'eerie', and 'uncanny place'(39)—all signifies its sanctity, beauty and mystery. The reverential silence indicates sanctity and its prelapsarian state demands respect with its ethereal 'awful' beauty. The lack of interference from mankind increases its mysterious power. There is no sense of appropriation in Badge's connection with this place: his movement through this natural cathedral requires 'courage' and respect: 'Not for the life of him could he have managed at that moment to whistle' (39). The discourse evokes the powerlessness of the individual in such an awe inspiring place with the land setting the terms for coexistence (Turner 1993:82). The two references to 'boots' are significant qualifications to *Terra Nullius* and the more usual literary effacement of the indigenous populations. This ancient land yields its secrets to the initiated like Badge as he is given access to the mysteries of the thylacine and the nesting chamber of the platypus (39).

For Badge, keeping the American scientists away is a sacred duty more important than being honest and generous to the American cousin whom he feels very bad about

deceiving (111). Defining the authentically 'Australian' against what are represented as 'foreign values' is a common literary strategy used here (Turner 1993:119). The conservation of the flora and fauna are the moral imperative (156-7, 168-9) and eventually he contrives his trick (111-2). Niall (1984) argues that

Badge Lorennys is the least assertive of heroes. The strategy he uses to defend the tiger is characteristic: an ingenious hoax, quietly carried out, sends the Americans away without any suspicion that they have been outwitted. His parents and Badge's sister take Badge's victory as an enjoyable but private family joke; he remains a little uncomfortable about winning. Shy, awkward and often fearful, Badge is the fiction's best guarantee against complacency: Like the other wild creatures in the Lorennys' valley he threatens no one but is himself endangered. (1984:222)

Badge however is better understood in terms of Turner's argument about the democratic egalitarian strain in Australian fiction displaying 'an anti-individualist trope—the fear of difference' (1993:92) which privileges community above the individual. He may be appropriately 'a little uncomfortable about winning' but he is a winner nevertheless. His status as winner is publicly confirmed by Dave who refutes Iggy's importance in favour of Badge because 'Harry reckons it was Badge's idea that tricked 'em' (168). His 'ingenious hoax, quietly carried out' in fact requires the cooperation of the other ideologically attuned inhabitant of the valley, the Old Hatter, whose help is essential to the success of the duplicity.

In the Lorennys' 'battler'<sup>11</sup> family the economic ties to patriarchal authority are non-existent and so the older siblings see their futures in the metropole. It is only Badge who inherits his father's metaphysical relationship with the land, that mythic realm of the Australian bushman (38-9). As his name suggests, Lance punctures the patriarchal vision

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<sup>11</sup> Writing about Henry Lawson's fiction, Wilkes (1981) argues that the 'battler is not required to exert himself against a hostile world; he has only to occupy a lowly place in it. So in Lawson even the failures may come to seem honorific through their apartness from the privileged and the affluent' (87). See also Turner

and his social trajectory conflicts with his father's as this 'clever' son wins a scholarship to a Hobart school (10). Dave and his elder son, Lance, are already at odds over the timber cutting industry (46-7). Dave's disparagement of the benefits of schooling and the metropole is explicit. For instance, he determinedly repudiates the 'improvements' Lance suggests which would mean interference with the landscape. For Dave and Liddle-ma it appears that Lance embraces 'urban pretensions and decadence' and they reject his suggestions about the production of electricity (7) and the acquisition of appliances like washing machines (8).<sup>12</sup>

While patriarchy underpins the structures of social relations in both of the families in *Tiger in the Bush* and *Good Luck to the Rider*, my argument is that they instantiate different hegemonic masculinities. In *Good Luck to the Rider* Mr. Trevor's masculinity is shaped by gentry masculinity's socio-economic imperatives that assume a requirement of overt hierarchical power in all social and economic relations. This masculinist vision connects the family, and metonymically the nation, to the metropole and to international market and socio-economic patterns. Dave's patriarchal vision provides a contrasting configuration. Dave's vision forges an isolationist project for his family and metonymically the nation, that advocates separation from social centres of any kind. This configuration of the Bush Legend masculinity in *Tiger in the Bush* denies socio-economic imperatives, promotes a familial mateship as essential to achievement of the bush way of life and is xenophobic in its desire to protect the pastoral environment. Dave and Badge schematise iconic forms of Australian masculinity that evince the strength and courage necessary for survival in the landscape and the non-conformism, initiative and audacity that enable a rejection of urban and materialist pressures so that they can live outside the mainstream. Feminine subjects also exhibit most of these qualities so that the idealised bush community can thrive but they follow rather than lead as closure insists. Also clearly

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(1993:118-21).

demonstrated in the process of contrasting the two fictions is Turner's (1993:33) argument about literary spatiality, that '[t]he image of nature depicted in art is essentially ideological, and the most important relation it bears is not to the "real" qualities in nature, for example, but to an ideological formation of nature in the culture'.

### **Progressive fictions of the counter culture**

As my discussions in Chapter 2 indicated, Ivan Southall's *Bread and Honey* (1970) is the children's fiction that unequivocally ruptures the ideologies of Australia's masculinist pastoral idyll. Its publication occurs at the zenith of the 1960s counter-culture and synchronises with that era's radical reconceptualisation of the child and childhood. Metcalf (1997) highlights the importance of Ariès' (1962) work in foregrounding child/adult relationships as a significant aspect of the cultural revolution that led to the 'demythification and democratization of childhood' (50). She argues that 'it renewed the debate about the status of children and adults, gave rise to a fundamental rethinking of intergenerational relationships and cleared the way for a new social and cultural construct of the child that has affected much of the literature created for children since then' (1997:51). Metcalf (1997) further claims that

[t]he debunking of canons, of authority figures, and of authoritarian structures that took place in the streets and the universities in the late 1960s entered children's books surprisingly quickly, resulting in a creative push. (51)

The discussion that develops below indicates that Australian and international mediators of children's literature were not prepared for the extent of the reconceptualisation of the child nor for the reconfiguration within gender relations that impacted upon all social institutions and economic relations in the public sphere as well as patterns of intersubjectivity. The

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<sup>12</sup> For further discussion see Ferrier's 'Fiction in transition' (in Bennett and Strauss 1998:195-8) and Richard White's *Inventing Australia* (1981:136).



disappearance of ‘the “niceness” and naive innocence of pre-“revolutionary” Australia’ was not understood, approved or critically sanctioned (Gerster and Bassett 1991:187). As I discussed in Chapter 2, *Bread and Honey* undermines the concept of the ‘proper childhood’ and its ideals of innocence and dependence. Its confrontation with traditional childhood ideologies highlights the ‘increasing disjuncture between romantic ideal and lived reality’ of the child (Cunningham 1995:188).

In Chapter 3 I argued that *The Min-Min* is a watershed text in Australian children’s fiction with regard to the role of the father in Australian social life. Here my argument is that *Bread and Honey* serves a similar function in its subversion of the mythology of ‘the republic of boyhood’. This fiction explores the processes of engendering boyhood subjectivity. The dialogism of the text offers a potentially subversive engagement with the masculinist social structure and its normative gender regimes across the Australian social space. It constructs a self-reflexive masculine subject, the thirteen-year-old boy Michael Cameron, who reveals the points of rupture in hegemonic masculinity and problematises the regulatory pressures on boys’ subjectivities. Michael’s scrutiny of child and adult schemas of masculinity dismantles the apparent potential for subjective agency offered by patriarchy’s hierarchical arrangement of ‘man’ and ‘boy’ as unitary, monolithic and stable identity categories. The narrative strategies demonstrate that masculinities are ‘configurations of practice’ and that learning about masculinities is ‘the outcome of intricate and intense manoeuvring in peer groups, classes and adult-child relationships’ (Connell 2000:12). This is narratively constructed by the representation of a boy participant who observes the ways that children—girls and boys—are immersed in an acculturation process of oppositional engendering, that is, in the ‘constant work of *differentiation*’ Bourdieu describes (2001:25, original emphasis).

To briefly recapitulate the outline of *Bread and Honey* I offered in Chapter 2, the spatio-temporal frame for the storyline is the township of Deakin Beach on Australia’s

national war commemoration day, Anzac Day. Michael's meeting with Margaret for the first time on the beach that Anzac morning, discussed in Chapter 2, enables *Bread and Honey* to challenge the conceptualisation of the 'good child' as sexually innocent and ignorant. In this chapter my focus is on the ways that this fiction makes masculinity visible as a relational issue across a broad section of the Anglocentric Australian social space in the social macrocosm of Deakin, a fictive beach community.<sup>13</sup> Here the national war commemoration day, Anzac Day, offers a powerful symbolic site for the examination of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinities. The reconfiguration of the iconography of Anzac Day in the fiction has significant implications for the national social space and is examined in Chapter 7. Three families offer social microcosms with contrasting family habitus and gender regimes representing different socio-economic sites in the social space. Michael is the main focalising participant, the youngest of three brothers in the economically advantaged Cameron family. They possess large symbolic capital in the form of educational achievement and political and scientific connections. Dr Cameron's professional commitments keep him away from care-giving responsibilities which devolve to Michael's eighty-three year old grandmother.

Their neighbours, the Farlows, are a traditional nuclear family and Mrs. Farlow in particular believes that her children are being given a 'proper childhood'. In her opinion Michael's household organisation means that surveillance of health, welfare, personal habits, tidiness and modesty are lax (5, 36-7, 107). This makes her complicit in patriarchal social structures and gender regimes. Gran, on the other hand, resists its totalising discourses and a subordinated subject position.

The third family is represented as economically disadvantaged, so Flackie's

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<sup>13</sup> See Stephens (1994) for comment on the beach as a spatial framework in Australian children's picture books (1994:76). Saxby argues that Stephens' view applies across genres (2002:785). This makes the use of the beach in *Bread and Honey* atypical and more complex as will be discussed in Chapter 6 where examination of the national social space and national mythologies occurs. In this regard, Gillian Rubinstein's family story *At Ardilla* (1991) offers an interesting point of comparison in its complex use of Australian beach spatiality, although in my opinion its ideological implications with regard to gender and the family are

existence is hand-to-mouth in a household with nine children and overworked parents (54). Both Ray Farlow, whom Michael thinks 'should have been his brother' (12), and Flackie become focalisers which allows the representation of their contrasting points of view on familial and masculinity regimes. The hierarchical gender order that interacts with social class pressures ensures that Michael and Flackie have no understanding of each other's domestic contexts. The social tensions represented within and across this socio-economic range demonstrate the need to replace the mythology of the unitary concept of masculinity with positive representations of a diversity of self-reflexive masculine subjectivities whose intersubjective experiences with women, girls, and other men do not legitimate implicit hierarchies or inequalities based on them.

Michael is represented as an alienated subject and more importantly as a marginalised and subordinated masculine subject: a subject in need of redemption. In Chapter 2 I examined the general critical acclaim accorded *Bread and Honey* at the time of its publication. However Niall (1984:279-80) and McVitty (1981) dislike the representation of Michael. Again like other critics, Niall (1984:280) values *Josh* rather than *Bread and Honey* and wryly comments that 'Michael is beside himself, his usual position. If the reader takes him seriously, the fiction will be painful from beginning to end. The only alternative reaction is boredom'. It seems that the narrative's discursive practices that allow the elaboration of the child's subjectivity and the conflictual nature of that subjectivity are unappealing. The reconceptualisation of the child as independent with evolving capacities is rejected. *Bread and Honey* certainly ruptures the traditional conceptualisations of childhood as a 'garden of delights' and Michael's subjectivity evinces little innocence or dependence. Niall rejects what is to become symptomatic of the new paradigm of literary childhood subjectivity. Metcalf's (1997) argument about the general shift observable in the 1970s children's literature was that it

constituted an arena for assertiveness training of both author and reader. Authors assumed the role of children's advocates and spoke largely *for* children as they let children speak up in their fiction. Children's literature simply modelled behaviour to be emulated. (52).

*Bread and Honey* exemplifies this 'assertiveness training' with the fiction's advocacy of a reconfiguration of masculinity and gender regimes. I assume Niall's use of being 'beside oneself' has pejorative connotations since she links the idiom to 'boredom'. Michael experiences many moments of agitation, frustration and distress: 'He felt so mixed up, so uncertain of himself' (62) and nine-year-old Margaret calls him a 'grizzler' (77). But Michael is also represented as 'beside himself' in the sense of ecstasy and exhilaration (10, 23, 32). He experiences both intense sorrow and *joie de vivre* at different times and the sensual pleasures of the body are foregrounded in the opening and closing episodes (9, 15, 117). Michael describes himself self-deprecatingly as 'a common twit' (62) 'barmy', 'nuts' 'crazy' (65). Such descriptions are also synonymous with being 'beside oneself', but connoting mental disturbance. This discursively constructs the self-reflexive participant. This is foregrounded by the repetition of Michael focalising 'as if he was watching himself as others saw him' (32) and 'looking at himself again; from a distance he seemed to be regarding himself with astonishment' (57). This enables the discourse to reveal incoherencies and contradictions in the 'patriarchal dividend' and demonstrates Bourdieu's (2001) argument that 'Male privilege is also a trap, and it has its negative side in the permanent tension and contention, sometimes verging on the absurd, imposed on every man by the duty to assert his manliness in all circumstances' (50).

In Michael's social context conformity is expected and any failure to submit to normative pressures is deemed either transgressive or a mental disturbance. Niall's (1984) commentary on *Bread and Honey* ignores Michael's constructing many things and situations as funny: his viewing of his body in the mirror (4); his father's thinning hair (5);

attempts at imagining his grandmother's omnipotent Christian God (11); fighting with Margaret (77). Michael's humorous discourse in which he even parodies his own self-pitying discourses of alienation:

Some fellows were born lucky and some were born smart, but Mick Cameron had been chucked into the world on a day when nothing good had been left lying around to pick up; they'd cut him loose, smacked his bottom and chucked him out, tumbling him down to earth through space, over and over arms and legs flapping like old rope. Crunch. He had hit rock and not got over the shock. 'The world,' Dad said, 'is gas liquid and rock.'

Michael moaned. 'Just for once couldn't I be right?' (59)

The emotional impact results from the discursive effect of the use of Michael's free indirect thought. The humour, albeit wry, is conveyed by the rupture of the conventional mystification of childbirth for children and the inversion of the usual celebration of the arrival of a baby in Australian society. This irony is constructed through the accretion of actions that reduce Michael to a discarded pet. The repetition of the colloquial 'chucked', meaning 'thrown' in this context, links to the phrase 'they'd cut him loose' which is a disparaging description of the cutting of the umbilical cord. Michael thereby represents himself as the runt separated from the main herd. The description of 'tumbling him to earth' turns Michael into waste unceremoniously ejected from the place of baby-creation. Children's knowledge of 'where babies come from' has been raised by Margaret's telling Michael to have his mother buy him a sister (48). The mention of 'being smacked on the bottom' refers to the practice offered in everyday accounts of birthing as a requirement for a baby to take its first breath. Here it also connotes the punishment meted out to transgressive children. The humour of 'Crunch' lies in the fact that it suggests the opposite of the safe landing assured most babies born in metropolitan Australia. The word set consisting of 'crunch', 'rock', and 'shock' functions to remind Michael of his scientist

father. The significance of returning the description to his father lies in the reiteration of his feelings of marginalisation and isolation. They are clearly represented as the responsibility of a private sphere where the father ignores the emotional needs of children: work outside the home is privileged above serving domestic needs of family members. Emotional work devolves to women traditionally but is represented as unsatisfactory in this fictive world. The representation of the masculine child subject objecting to aspects of patriarchy ruptures the masculinist gender order in ways not attempted in *The Min-Min*. The fiction specifically implicates hierarchies in the construction of marginalised and subordinated masculinities and age is a disempowering factor. Michael's problems are connected to the father and to masculinist social structures.

Commentators like Saxby, McVitty and Niall highlight subjectivity—formerly selfhood or identity—as significant issues in the fiction. While at times Michael thinks of himself as 'grown-up' (61) the interpellations of others vary from 'You're growing up. You're a big boy' as his Dad says (5), to a 'child' when Mrs. Farlow is annoyed that adult surveillance of Michael is not up to her standards and 'You're old enough to know better' when she is directly condemnatory of Michael. Further elucidation is also possible of Michael's apprehensions about his identity, about entering the social space with positive self esteem and about being valued by others. The narrative strategies of the fiction attempt the double articulation familiar from feminist texts in an attempt to make visible the forces that impose hegemonic masculinities on masculine subjects. Davies (1993) describes the complex dynamics of social change:

Any attempts to disrupt old cultural patterns and to invent new ones must deal simultaneously and in a multi-faceted way with individual psyches, with social structures and patterns and with the discursive practices with which those psyches and those structures are constituted. (198)

*Bread and Honey* attempts a schematised literary representation of this complex social

matrix that allows the interrogation of the interpellation of the masculine subject. In the extract below, the boy's expectation of regulatory manhood and adult masculine subjectivity are focalised by Michael. He problematises the apparently unitary masculine subjects of his father and brothers. In free indirect thought Michael observes ruefully that 'Other kids had boys for brothers; Michael's brothers were men' (8). Michael is so far only 'half a man—the half that was expected to behave, of course, not the half that could do as it pleased' (2). Masculinity is associated with powerful agency by implication denied to children. Michael awaits for his accession to their manhood powers: to be without doubt, implacable, deliver verdicts, indeed to inhabit the subjectivity that 'dispenses with justification' and is beyond contradiction:

It was all right for those grown-up Clever Dicks with their gases and liquids and rock being rock. Being a boy was different from that. Maybe they'd never been boys at all, Dad or Richard or Gregory. Maybe they'd been born six feet tall with size ten boots on, with answers to everything learned off pat. Never for them having to wonder about things that grandmothers said. They didn't listen, just shut their ears or shook their heads or went away smiling. Things like stupid little girls didn't worry them. Things like sad people or happy people or stories or songs or Salvation Army bands or kids with heads full of crazy imaginings didn't matter to them unless they could add them up like sums. Two and two made four in *their* world. Wouldn't it have been great for once if they made three or ninety-eight or a thousand and one and he was the fellow to prove it? 'What,' they'd have gasped. 'Two and two can't make ninety-eight!' And their eyes would have stood out on stalks and their pants would have dropped from shock. (63, original emphasis)

Michael bitterly reveals the implacable words of the father and the emotional burden they place upon the boyhood subjectivity. Michael's sarcastic use of the colloquialism 'Clever Dicks' identifies the assumption of masculinist domination but pejorates and subverts the logocentrism of the hierarchical masculinist order and its presumption of supremacy and

superiority. The discourse returns to this focus on the seat of masculine power when Michael concludes jokingly with the hope that something that he achieves will so amaze them that 'their pants would have dropped from shock'. The idiom 'wearing the trousers' signifies someone who holds power and assumes that this should be a man. In a temporary interpellation of masculinist ideology Michael imagines gaining supremacy over his father and brothers but this position is repudiated by the fiction's thematic closure. Michael's father, Dr Cameron, represents the bureaucratic/technocratic models of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2000:142). As part of such an educated bureaucratic/technocratic elite Dr Cameron's masculinity operates in a spatio-temporal framework radically different from that of all the other father participants discussed so far, yet the ideology of masculine domination remains. Cultural and symbolic capital give Dr Cameron access to political power (9). He is accustomed to 'Laying down the law' (6). This space of the 'Clever Dicks' is one where rationality supposedly rules and it is possible to have 'answers to everything learned off pat'. The corollary of this means that in the totalising discursive practices of science and technologies there is no room for the unfathomable, mysterious, imaginative or inconsistent (10, 16) nor any need for negotiation in social relationships. He is the implacable father as he instructs Michael about life and nature and the 'Blood and claw' existence that is the real world (10). Armed with certainty, such masculine subjects show disdain for less powerful people including women and children: 'They didn't listen' because the ideas of children are not worthy of consideration. Alternatively they 'went away smiling' condescending to sentimentality and triviality. In positing that 'Maybe they'd never been boys at all' Michael draws the reader's attention to the performance of manhood as 'strength, self-sufficiency and control' that educational research shows to be the expectation of Australian school boys despite the denial of this in their lived experiences (French 1999:146).

Dr Cameron is often not physically available let alone emotionally available.



Emotional denial is figured in the extract in ‘Things like sad people or happy people or stories or songs or Salvation Army bands’ and emotional inarticulacy is represented as a deliberate choice because Dr Cameron is impressively articulate on other subjects. He engages in frank disputes about ideological issues with Michael’s grandmother in Michael’s presence (8-9). These diatribes often disavow the value of emotional connections and memory. His refusal to publicly mourn war comrades (9) or his wife’s death suggests his inability to cope with grief (8). Ironically his failure to offer patterns of mourning means that Michael only grieves openly for his mother on Anzac Day, the day for commemorating manhood (28). Michael’s father and brothers are not available for nurturing: ‘the men in his family never being near him when he wanted them. He was always on his own with the world against him’ (40). Michael regrets his emotional needs but knows that they are real. It is important to note that in *Bread and Honey* fathers are not demonised despite their inadequacies. Michael’s father is important to him because the opening of the fiction tells us that ‘it was *difficult* when Dad was away’ (1, original emphasis) and later Michael acknowledges ‘... it was dreary when Dad was away’, and there is a tangible ‘emptiness’ about the house (16). Likewise, Ray Farlow idolises his father even though his dad makes him feel inadequate.

The extract confronts the conceptualisation of masculine embodiment as site of imposing and dominating physical power: ‘Maybe they’d been born six feet tall with size ten boots on.’ The masculinisation of the body is mentioned in the fiction’s orientation as Michael examines himself in his bedroom mirror:

He edged to the mirror and expanded his chest until his ribs almost cracked. ‘Not bad,’ he thought, and inspected himself from several different angles, flexing his muscles and posing, and saw a stunning-looking fellow on the cover of a health magazine, with the face of Michael Cameron, a chest of about fifty inches and a weeny waist and a purple sash across a mighty shoulder bearing the words Mr.

Universe. When he looked a bit harder it was only Michael in the shadows of the mirror, bones and all. (4)

Issues of gendered embodiment are linked to sexuality and codes of behaviours in the public sphere. The media endorsement of the sculpted body as an ideal is ironised here by being linked to health rather than to a mode of symbolic domination (Davies 1989:14; Bourdieu 2001:51 *n.* 80). The reiteration of such machismo perpetuates the concepts of traditional masculinity being connected to size, strength and ‘the capacity to fight and to exercise violence (especially in acts of revenge) ...’ (Bourdieu 2001:51). The gendered nature of embodiment is clearly represented in Michael’s concerns about his body and its approximation to the masculine ideals and these are confirmed as socio-culturally dominant by Margaret’s later reiteration of them and the concern shown by all of the masculine subjects. Michael’s disillusioned reading of the mirror’s image offers a subject who is aware that this is just the first aspect of his failure to meet hegemonic masculinist ideals. The failure of his ‘bones and all’ body is just the first way that Michael is aware of his subordinated masculinity. Bully Boy McBaren for instance always refers to him as ‘young Mick’ (40). The privileging of the strong male body and its assumption of power and the means to violence operate across the entire social space regardless of socio-economic position.<sup>14</sup> This is an issue with Margaret as well as with Michael’s being bullied. Margaret has an older brother, Phil, so she knows about the ideal masculine body and comments insensitively to Michael, ‘Ooh ... You’re little for thirteen’ (45). She also expresses the maternal opinions that Michael does not look strong and could possibly have a ‘weak chest’ (79). She is very interested in whether Michael’s refusal to take off his wet clothes is because he has pimples or does not have muscles and body hair (83).

Closure in the primary level story—Michael’s relationships with men and boys—narrativises Michael’s subversion of the values of hegemonic masculinities,

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<sup>14</sup> Australian educational research argues that very little has changed since the 1970s. See Carosi and Tindale

unmasking the *illusio* of masculine games: 'the investment in the game itself, the conviction that the game is worth playing all the same, right to the end, and according to the rules' (Bourdieu 2001:74), especially games of violence and revenge that are residual concepts of masculine honour (Bourdieu 2001:50). The fiction undermines competition, violence and the quest for supremacy as satisfactory ways of being in the world and rejects the 'Generic alienation' that underpins 'the double-edged privilege of indulging in the games of domination' (2001:75); the alienation that critics recognised in the description of Michael as 'beside himself'. This then is a repudiation of the traditional narrative coherences and closures that privilege the character who 'wins' or is triumphant and who, thereby, accrues symbolic and actual power. With double irony Michael thrashes Flackie rather than his real tormentor, Bully Boy, and it is Flackie who, like Michael, constructs himself as alienated, 'having always been on the outer, like a stray dog, always getting pushed' (54). Disagreement about appropriate treatment of Margaret alienates Flackie from both Michael and Bully Boy. Michael's caregiver role is usurped by Bully Boy who responsibly returns Margaret to her bandsman father (113). Incensed and fearful Michael throws down the gauntlet to Flackie (110) and then 'He threw himself blindly and hopelessly and their bodies met, a collision of flesh and bone and dread' (111) until 'Michael Cameron had won' (112). Victory is only momentarily sweet. Michael who now 'possessed the world' finds his feelings of supremacy compromised and the process of 'virilisation' disempowering (Bourdieu 2001:26). Separation and alienation result from these masculine ways of being in the world: '... Everyone else had gone; the game had been played; they'd all gone home' (113). The possibility of intersubjectivity is eliminated as a result of his performance of hegemonic masculinity. Confused, Michael imagines himself talking to his grandmother: 'Please, Grandma, what's the sense of it, being on your own all the time, even when you're the winning side?' metonymically invoking the destiny

of the unitary, coherent masculine self (115).

In the opening and in closure the routine daily shower functions metonymically. It incorporates the 'bread and honey' motif from the title so that the shower is where the ordinary and the extraordinary aspects of each day intermingle, the nose bleeds along with the bread and the honey, and all are 'swirled ... down the plug hole and into the earth' to be forgotten (17). In the opening episode Michael decides not to shower after his adventure naked in the rain in his yard: 'it had been terrific out there on the grass; how could he wash that off? Like washing something sacred off' (17). Wanting to remember these experiences he dresses over the top of mud, grass and sand. There is a significant internal retroversion to the showering metonym (117). In closure showering reflects the urgency of cleansing away his recent experiences. Now Michael desires purification and his focalised thoughts reflect a need for redemption from the violence of his vengeful battle with Flackie: 'He stood there and stung; hot-water pebbles raining on his back' (117). Michael is being 'scarified' and the two meanings of 'scarified' are invoked, to make incisions and to excise. The connotations express the desire to cut into his skin in order to excise his disillusionment with supremacy.<sup>15</sup>

The self-reflexive process of degendering his intersubjective experiences with Margaret, discussed in Chapter 2, leads Michael to establish new ways of communication with his grandmother. He accepts that Margaret's departure with Bully Boy is appropriate considering her 'evolving capacities'—'She was so little; she didn't understand' (115)—and he knows that his grandmother is the significant person in his life (3, 27). While locked in the bathroom showering he responds to his grandmother's lament about missing the Anzac Day march by shouting a verdict that resembles his father's discourse: 'You've missed it this year, Gran. It's happened. You can't put back the clock ... It's a fact, Gran, isn't it? What's the use of dressing it up?' But unlike his father and brothers,

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<sup>15</sup> This reconfiguration of the masculinist paradigm is examined in more detail in Chapter 8.

this verdict is not the end of the matter. After he emerges from the bathroom and sees her the tenor of the dialogue changes:

‘Don’t take on, Gran. It’s all right.’ He gave her a kiss and tasted salt. ‘It’s not too late for the wreath. The War Memorial’s still there. It’s a day for forgetting, anyway, same as for remembering, I guess. We’ll go together, if you like. Just the two of us. I’ll wear my best suit. How about that?’ (118)

He immediately acknowledges Gran’s distress and shows his engagement with her point of view by expressing his affection with a spontaneous kiss. In tasting the salt on her cheeks he feels her sorrow and is reminded of his own recent pain. Here there is a rejection of implacable verdicts and a move beyond condescension in his relationship with Gran as happened with Margaret. He negotiates an arrangement that meets his grandmother’s needs as well as his own: to mourn and to remember and forget. The discourse of closure has a willingness to share power and to seek mutually satisfying outcomes. Connell’s (2000) ‘democratic gender relations’ (225) are figured as highly desirable. The internal retroversion to Gran’s hand-made wreath (2) indicates that for Michael it is now the symbolism of ‘green for heroes, white for sorrow and red for love’ that is significant rather than his grandmother’s patient attention to the tedious process of its preparation (118).

At the time of its publication critics read the closure of *Bread and Honey* monologically and found it ‘surprising’ because its non-patriarchal ideology meant that it reconfigured literary reality rather than confirming traditional outcomes. The fiction dismantles reader expectations about the linear development of the storylines that encourage conventional expectations about closure in the representation of the child subject negotiating with the adult and with the masculine negotiating with the feminine subject. In doing this it identifies power as the central issue to be addressed in altering gendered social relations between men and women and also among men. In his rejection of the power of masculinist hegemony Michael becomes a non-patriarchal masculine subject.

The closure then is remarkable rather than ‘natural’. It is also groundbreaking in its historical context. *Bread and Honey* articulates masculinist power and then repudiates it achieving far more than just the recomposition of participants’ gender attributes. The fiction represents shifts in the power relations and alters story coherences and closures. Michael is not entirely committed to either his Grandmother’s or his father’s views but has more respect for his grandmother’s disposition and habitus than for his father’s, his father being explicitly as well as implicitly declared to be in error particularly with regard to matters of emotional articulacy and intersubjectivity. None of the masculine participants is demonised by the narrator but some are by Michael. For the narrator all the boys have qualities that redeem them to some extent—even Flackie and Bully Boy McBaren—and I expect the same is true for most readers. They are represented as placed in a structure that isolates them and places limitations on personal agency. But a rejection of the normative configurations of practice means that Michael must accept the consequential loss of power, ‘the charm of power’ that the traditional gender structure offers him (Bourdieu 2001:79).

### **Transformative fictions at the *fin de siècle***

*Bread and Honey* delineates the challenge for progressive degendered children’s literature in our own historical moment. Reconfigured representations of masculinity in literature may be under way but these remain problematic because the schema of masculinity still claims the most socially desirable attributes, except in pro-feminist discourses. Schemas of masculinity underpin patriarchal ideology and legitimate men’s power in society. Is it possible that the traditionally superior and presently dominant gender identity may be represented convincingly in narratives as relinquishing power? Connell’s crucial argument is that the diversity of masculine subjects must be recognised so that whatever is posited as the current ‘hegemonic’ form of masculinity is contestable. Connell’s (1995) life-history studies demonstrate this diversity so he writes that, ‘Men’s interest in patriarchy, then, does

not act as a unified force in a homogeneous structure' (242). Not only must social relations between gendered subjects be reconfigured, as is represented in literature with Michael and his Gran and Margaret, but the differing states of relations between groups of men must be foregrounded.

Power is at stake if the mythologies of a 'hegemonic masculinity' and the unitary masculine subject are not to be perpetuated, but Connell (1995) argues that men's interest in maintaining this 'is fissured by all the complexities in the social construction of masculinity ... . There are differences and tensions between hegemonic and complicit masculinities; oppositions between hegemonic masculinity and marginalised masculinities' (242). Connell (1995) argues that the complexity of the power matrix of masculine social relations opens up the potential for alliances across the gender boundary and *Bread and Honey* represents this potential. From this it seems that redeeming masculinity in literature requires not only the representation of empathetic social relations between masculine participants who are very different from one another but also between masculine and feminine participants. The formerly indomitable unitary masculine subject must be pluralised in order to represent a range of valued masculine subjects reflecting the diversity familiar to readers from their everyday experiences. The character attributes from the traditional schema of femininity which are deemed abject in masculine subjects must be redeemed as valued qualities to be displayed by all members of society in the appropriate contexts.

Stephens (1996b) argues that of all the fictions he examines only Allan Ahlberg's pro-feminist text *Ten in a Bed* successfully subverts the engendered literary conventions of story and discourse (21-2). Its success depends upon the use of metafictional strategies which foreground the instability of linguistic signs and rupture narrative conventions. In *Ten in a Bed* these strategies enable the interrogation of the traditional feminine gender schema and feminine stereotyping constructed in the fairy tale genre and enable the

subversion of traditional fairy tale closures. I want to extend Stephens' study to show that metafiction is an effective tool for representing transformed power relations between gendered subjects. Metafictions reveal the constructedness of gendered subjectivities and represent masculinity and femininity as relational concepts enabling a double articulation. *Bruno and the Crumhorn* represents a shift away from the ideological and political need of both patriarchal and pro-feminist texts to either efface or pejorate the gendered 'other'. This supports Connell's arguments that constructions of hegemonic versions of masculinity are 'inherently historical' rather than universal and 'natural' and that masculine subjectivities are diverse and are able, often at some personal cost, to resist the impetus to distinction. By the repudiation of oppositional hierarchical gendering, this fiction redeems masculine subjects in gendered intersubjective relationships. *Bruno and the Crumhorn* moves beyond the feminist double articulation because it provides a third articulation that shows masculine subjectivity, Bruno's, firmly rejecting interpellation into the models of desirable masculinity available to him and overtly choosing to negotiate connections, intersubjectivity, rather than separation from others. He also rejects certain femininities as inimical to honest intersubjective relationships.

As metafiction, *Bruno and the Crumhorn* is also a polyphonic text which enables representations of a wide range of masculine subjectivities and the dialogic construction of the fiction's very humorous commentary on masculine subjectivities. In this it reflects Connell's (1995:37) argument that masculinities are dialogically constructed in the social space. The eponymous Bruno is involved in a wide range of interactions in a variety of social contexts where schemas of masculinity and femininity are instantiated, interrogated, reconfigured and transgressed. His interpellation into a range of subject positions, where he recuperates qualities that are traditionally devalued as defining femininity, or even effeminacy, and are consequently abject in masculine subjects, expands the repertoire of behaviours and values endorsed for masculine subjects. Bruno, like Michael in *Bread and*



*Honey*, is self-reflexive about his emotional turmoil and sense of inadequacy. His need for articulate intimacy in intersubjective relations is joyfully represented when he finally finds that someone who confirms that he should be happy with his own way of being in the world. He dares to resist normative masculine behaviors and the impetus to distinction but at a price, for 'it is a brave man who attempts to live other than as a patriarch' (Cranny-Francis 1992:88). This is what Bruno does when, at the Early Musicians concert, he decides to cooperate with Sybil instead of competing against her. His relationships with feminine subjects are varied and valued although heteronormative desire prevails as a marker of 'normal' masculinity. The fiction's distancing strategies position both implied feminine and masculine readers to question the representations of masculine subjectivities and invite a comparison of fictional masculinities with those encountered by readers in their everyday experience.

The humorous significance of the title was mentioned in Chapter 3 with the mighty phallus reduced to a 'crummy horn'.<sup>16</sup> In the storyline, and metaphorically, possession of the crumhorn proves a burden to masculine and feminine subjects alike and it links the participants as the central motif and as story constituent. Operating metaphorically it connotes the way patriarchy and post-second wave feminism continue the interpellation of traditionally gendered subjectivities, regulate behaviours and attitudes and perpetuate masculine domination. Bruno is inveigled to learn to play the crumhorn by his mother who hopes he will achieve distinction through music. When the crumhorn is handed to Bruno the narrator continues the phallic joke: 'The family curse fell into his lap' (34). The family is in fact unmusical so to Bruno the word 'instrument' conveys 'something that you cut people open with and extracted things. The curved edge of it peered over at poor Bruno and he shuddered from deep within' (22). Bruno believes that the crumhorn has a voice, a soul and a 'perverse individuality' (63) and that it is a curse (34), a view that Sybil shares

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<sup>16</sup> Colloquially 'crummy' means 'very inferior, mean or shabby' and 'horn' refers to an erection (*The*

(59) although she is referring only to the musical instrument. It is certainly Aunt Ilma's instrument for torturing Bruno because he reminds her of the man from whom she has stolen it, the man she is blackmailing, literally and emotionally, into becoming her fifth husband (174-5). The economic dependence and warring state of traditional adult heterosexual relationships is thus parodied and intertextual links with the pretext of Dickens' man-hating Miss Betsey Trotwood in *David Copperfield* are established.<sup>17</sup> The crumhorn thus also symbolises the complicity of some women in the patriarchal gender order (Cranny-Francis 1992:258-9). Renunciation of the crumhorn is central to Sybil and Bruno's potential for forging a degendered alliance and undermining the perpetuation of masculine domination.

The materialisation of Bruno's subjectivity is fraught because he refuses to be interpellated into hegemonic masculinity as demanded by his mother and refuses the impetus to distinction that she endorses. His mother's active pursuit of distinction for Bruno leads to his crumhorn lessons. Escaping the impetus to distinction is vital to Bruno's intrapsychic world:

If only he'd had the courage to protest—to shake his head and say no! I won't! It's wrong and it shouldn't be! I don't want to learn the crumhorn! I don't want to learn anything! Can't I just be? Just be Bruno? (34)

Bruno lacks models of emotional articulacy since normative masculinity valorises emotional restraint. As we saw in Chapter 3 Bruno's father is relieved of the need to be emotionally articulate and involved with Bruno because his wife undertakes that role for him. Honest, reciprocal intersubjective relations between Bruno and his parents are impossible because of his mother's reiteration of the desirable unitary form of masculinity of which Bruno's brother, Max, is the exemplar: 'Now Max was different—always on the

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*Macquarie Dictionary* 1997:463, 916). The crumhorn—in German 'Krummhorn'—is 'a wind-capped double reed instrument of the Renaissance according to *The Macquarie Dictionary* (1997:467).

run, always occupied—swimming, jogging, skating, football, basketball, cricket—three different varieties of that—even hockey. There was no need to worry about Max’ (28). The intertextual link to Sendak’s *Where the Wild Thing Are* is, as with *Sand Monkeys*, unmistakable. The iconography of boyhood connoting physicality and wildness is invoked and then problematised. The excess here is humorous and if it were not, the reader realises, there may be reason to worry about why Max is compulsively on the run: the constant pressure of competition to reiterate one’s supremacy especially with other men and boys. His mother despairs of Bruno’s failure to seriously engage with being a winner and earning distinction: ‘But as for Bruno! This was one of her phrases—but as for Bruno! And how it made Bruno sad. The four words rang in his head at night, and if the tears started to growl from deep behind his eyes, he would quickly start to think about something else’ (28). The reader now understands why in his prologue Bruno, who is awake during the storm, ‘pushed his hands tight against the plaster walls next to his bed, as if he were holding the whole house above his head, like Samson’ (3). There impinges upon him a gender regime so rigid that epic strength is required to withstand its force. In the representation of Bruno’s subjectivity we see marginalised masculinity attempting to negotiate a position in the social space. Situated in the patriarchal family, his mother complicit in patriarchy, Bruno by embracing passivity, chooses a subordinate masculinity and that Connell (1995) would argue, means he is a failure (242). He will make his own intersubjective connections and will struggle against domination by regimes and orders imposed upon him.

The patriarchal dividend, represented in *Good Luck to the Rider* and *The Min-Min* and interrogated in *Bread and Honey* as a problematic birthright, is subverted in *Bruno and the Crumhorn*. When Bruno again asks himself ‘Can’t I just be? Just be Bruno?’ (34), the rhetorical answer is ‘No’ because, as his mother explains, ‘... boys do things’ (29). For Bruno there is no ‘republic of boyhood’; being a boy is a burden rather than a privilege.

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<sup>17</sup> Sybil, like the eponymous David Copperfield, is a ‘posthumous child’. Aunt Ilma is significantly

Bruno's passivity is as unacceptable to his mother as his unfocused subjectivity. He longs for that apparently unitary selfhood and drive that allows individuals like Max to control all aspects of their lives because Bruno 'had nothing to justify himself. This is what I do, this is what I'm good at, this is what I am' (158). After he loses the crumhorn on the bus, Bruno is desperate as he considers the hopelessness of finding it anywhere, even in a pawn shop, and this chapter's first epigraph focalises thoughts about his need for redemption (88-9). The sorrow of his searching for something that makes him miserable is very far from the endless joy and pleasure-filled days of Lewis Carroll's Bruno in the pre-text *Sylvie and Bruno*. For Bruno redemption lies in resisting the power of those traditional social structures like the family and in rejecting the interpellations to hegemonic masculinity constructed in the discursive practices of cultural formations like literature, film and other media.

From his marginalised position, Bruno, and the reader, contemplate the various versions of masculinity that he encounters: bus drivers, lost property officers, barbers, musicians, school friends, as well as his father and Max. There are also the four imagined versions of Victorian manhood—Great Aunt Ilma's four ex-husbands—'all extant' in far away North America. Bruno's historical imaginings are influenced by the 1980s constructions of Victorian gentry manhood in the film *The Bostonians* based on Henry James's anti-feminist fiction of the same title. The link here is that eighty-two-year old Great Aunt Ilma is from Boston, a city that identifies itself with the tagline 'The Hub of the Universe'. These varied representations of masculine subjectivities and stereotypes ensure that the reader is positioned to acknowledge the diversity of masculinities operating in society, countering the unitary view of the masculine subject demanded by Bruno's mother. The fiction accurately demonstrates Connell's (1995) 'oppositions between hegemonic masculinity and subordinated and marginalised masculinities' showing that

patriarchy is not a 'homogeneous structure' (242). The fact that Bruno and Max are diametrically opposed in interests, educational achievements and in 'commonsense' negotiations of the world suggests to readers that resisting the norms of hegemonic masculinity is both possible and sometimes desirable. While he waits 'hoping for rescue' from the feminine space, Bruno longs to be rescued from hegemonic masculinity. This paradigmatic shift in the literary representation of masculinity is significant.

In *Bruno and the Crumhorn* thematised word-play is a metafictional strategy that foregrounds masculinity, with word association games that examine diverse historical and contemporary masculine stereotypes and clichés. Both Sybil and Bruno focalise these narrative digressions, which means that readers are offered interpretations of masculinities from both masculine and feminine viewpoints. Bruno's digressions consider clichés like 'a gay blade', masculine spaces like the barber's shop (62) and men's workplaces (78-82). Bruno's four imaginary stereotypical Victorian gentlemen represent successful wealthy 'men of the world' with interests in business, politics, fine food and horse racing. 'Newland and Arthur were business rivals and always trying to outdo one another' (64), while Harrison is given to 'carousing':

Carousing. Bruno rather liked that word. He looked forward to the day when he would be old enough to go out carousing. He despaired as he sat in his room, crumhorn to his lips, thinking about Great Aunt Ilma's four husbands, his shoulders hunched. Would he ever escape from Great Aunt Ilma as they miraculously had? (42)

The reader is being shown, comically, that a gendered subjectivity, in this case becoming masculine, materialises from the appropriation of schemas of normative behaviors that must be reiterated, as Bourdieu (2001:82) and Judith Butler (1993:15) argue in order to maintain their regulatory function. In the context of this crumhorn practice, the masculine conviviality connoted by the use of 'carousing' is constructed as oppositional to the power that patriarchy devolves to women in the domestic sphere. The reader sees Bruno

interrogating dominant social and cultural paradigms of identity formation related to schemas of masculinity. Bruno rejects the burden of materialising this clichéd masculinity by blaming Great Aunt Ilma for circumscribing his activities. But ironies proliferate with regard to gendered identities because Great Aunt Ilma is a thief and a blackmailer; she teaches music under false pretences; and does not conform to the ‘nurturing grandmother’ schema that Bruno’s mother instantiates when she first asks Great Aunt Ilma to teach Bruno to play the instrument. She has no legitimacy but convention demands deference and that the good boy be submissive. In Chapter 3 I discussed Sybil’s linguistic play with adult masculine stereotypes. In the following extract we have her thinking about adolescent masculine stereotypes. The example shows the ‘active interpretive roles’ assigned to implied readers by the text and lay bare the ‘discursive and narrative structuring’ of fictions. While Bruno feels alienated and disempowered, Sybil’s understanding of Bruno, whom she does not meet until the final chapter of the fiction, is based on Aunt Ilma’s demonising of him. In her narrative digression below, Sybil contemplates the different connotations of ‘Bruno’, ‘boy’ and ‘youth’. The stereotype of transgressive masculinity represented by ‘youth’ is a part of the stigmatising of subordinated masculinities:

Bruno—such a teddy-bear of a name. He should be round and friendly with his hands in a honey jar, Sybil decided, although this was plainly not how Great Aunt Ilma saw him. Her dark references conjured up a ‘youth’ rather than a boy: delinquent, self-seeking, deceiving, negligent, perverse ... . In fact, Sybil came to feel that she had never known a child of her age with so many monstrous qualities. She pictured his swollen, sullen face, snarling at her, his fingers stained with black bicycle grease, kicking a wall with rage, flexing tattooed biceps ... . (101)

Sybil’s instantiation of the schema of transgressive masculinity foregrounds violence, both physical and verbal, instigated to instill fear and to maintain dominance. This stereotyped imagining of bullies contrasts with their representation as an imminent threat by Michael in

*Bread and Honey*. There is irony for readers because Sybil's description of Bruno based on the connotations of his name as Winnie-the-Pooh is quite accurate. While Bruno's economically privileged family is regulatory and normative in terms of hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality, the spatial framework for Sybil is a central city lane, so undesirable that visitors 'did not imagine anyone lived there, let alone a child' (5). She has regular contact with homeless men and men who are affiliated with the gay lifestyle of Sydney's Oxford Street. In terms of the extended range of subject positions offered to the implied reader, the polyphony that results from the shifting character focalisation is most significant. Readers are likely to be distanced from the family habituses of either Bruno or Sybil and from their idiosyncratic musings because of the bizarre nature of their imaginings. Even more important, there are moments when gendered readers, both masculine and feminine, must identify against themselves. Some episodes problematise the concepts of stable gender and sexual identities. Sybil's neighbours, for instance, include three men 'who when they go out to parties, put on make-up and shiny red dresses and wore flowers in their hair' (8). There is also the man 'in a lavish white bridal gown' who arrives in a cafe where Sybil and her family are having breakfast (134).

Stephens (1996:21) argues that avoiding the androcentrism of traditional fictions requires transformations of narrative outcomes and closures to remove 'gendering at story level'. Multiple closures are needed in *Bruno and the Crumhorn* to democratically allow each participant equal space. Ideologically the fiction's closure is progressive in its problematising of hegemonic masculinity and its subversion of the concept of a 'core gender identity'. It is also subversive in its interrogation of mothering and women's power over children under patriarchy. The narrative reveals that patriarchal gender regimes, like marriage, serve the interests of privileged feminine subjects like Great Aunt Ilma and Bruno's mother if they submit to its hegemonic norms and its intrinsically oppositional gender regimes. This power continued largely unchallenged throughout the decades of

feminism's ideological ascendancy as was discussed in Chapters 3. In *Bruno and the Crumhorn* literary redemption is ironically made possible by the feminine subject's interpellation of a subject position: Sybil, the feminine subject, speaks the words that bring Bruno into being,

Just be Bruno, that's what she said. Sybil said that. Just be. Don't play the crumhorn. Don't play anything. Don't do anything. Just be Bruno. Why had no one said this to him before?

Sybil said it. Sybil. Like a fairy freeing him from a curse. (160)

This is a comic and symbolic epiphany for Bruno. The narrative humorously evokes and then undermines the magical powers of feminine literary characters like fairy godmothers or indeed the magical Sylvie in *Sylvie and Bruno*. This is a significant metafictional element because by saying 'the magic words' that redeem Bruno, Sybil is pursuing her own ends and not acting benevolently. The reader also knows that she only states what Bruno has been telling himself throughout the narrative. Here then the narrative asserts the importance of intersubjectivity for framing the self. On the primary story level, and thematically, it remains significant that Sybil 'frees' Bruno as this redresses the negative representations of his mother and Great Aunt Ilma. In this the story closure represents the evolutionary nature of socio-cultural change. Sybil and Bruno have a tug of war over the crumhorn because they both believe that playing in the concert is important but for quite different reasons. Bruno releases the crumhorn and 'He didn't really notice Sybil tumbling onto the floor' (158). After negotiations, an alliance is forged across the gender boundary in order to deal with the need for one of them to perform at the concert. By negotiating a solution, Bruno refuses the impetus to distinction and the other imperatives of hegemonic masculinity. His desire for mutuality and reciprocity with Sybil allows him to articulate his own desires for positive intersubjective experiences ahead of the need to be seen as a winner by the members of his family. Negotiation and consensus are represented as



essential in any new gender regime where power is not hierarchical. Bruno's 'gift', the narrator tells us, is to become emotionally articulate and to form successful intersubjective relationships across the gender divide (160). Story closure for the hero has been rewritten in this ending (Connell 1995:234). After hearing Sybil confront Aunt Ilma's hypocrisy on the subject of honesty Bruno is inspired: 'I never want to look away again, Bruno told himself dreamily and Great Aunt Ilma and the crumhorn disappeared forever from his life' (172). Negotiated honest connections that allow him to behave consistently are what Bruno resolves to pursue.

A traditional narrative structure is apparent in the architectonics of *Bruno and the Crumhorn* with symmetry achieved by three character epilogues balancing three prologues. Thematically however these closures are open-ended and powerfully metafictional. The epilogues show that the meanings of everyday experiences are interpreted differently by each of the participants. In Bruno's epilogue he escapes from the confinement of the fantasy world of the Victorian drawing room into a more exciting world of the imagination. This world is free from the regulatory power of his family and the norms of hegemonic masculinity:

Bruno looked about him—on the bookshelf lay a pipe still smoking in a dish; on a side table a folded over newspaper; on the floor a bowl of apple-crumble, half-finished; and on the open piano a book of music, a song—Bruno bent down to read the title—*The Triumph of ...*—but he was distracted by a noise on the street, a clattering, a spinning, freedom!

Bruno stepped up on the window-sill, and down from the drawing room and away, following the others into the hub of the universe. (181)

Metonymy proliferates the range of meanings offered by the stereotypical masculine artefacts noted in Chapter 3 as recurring motifs of adult masculinity, the public sphere in opposition to the private sphere action rather than passivity—the smoking pipe,

the newspaper, the dessert left on the floor, the piano and the song book. As we saw in Chapter 4 with Mr. Trevor and Dave, these associate traditional masculinity with symbolic power in the public sphere, with economics, politics and artistic life. In children's fiction the newspaper is a traditional motif employed metonymically to represent the father's connection to the public sphere even when he is in the private sphere. The implication is that he is still connected to activities beyond domestic duties. Mr. Trevor was represented talking to Barbara while reading the newspaper and lighting his pipe. The metonymic use of the newspaper and pipe is subverted here. Such vestiges of anachronistic masculinities offer no 'refuge' (148). The rejection of the word 'triumph' repudiates the impetus to distinction and reminds the reader of the humorous use of this musical intertext. It is the first musical piece that Sybil and Bruno are required to learn on the crumhorn. Great Aunt Ilma tells Bruno that it is *The Triumph of Time and Truth* 'Lightly adapted, of course, ... For the juvenile player' (122-3). Earlier Sybil recognises it immediately as the melody of the nursery rhyme *Three Blind Mice*. This comments ironically on the problematic state of the intersubjective relationships between the three participants as well as on their subjective states. It is also linguistic play, of course, as the reader sees the misandric power games Great Aunt Ilma inflicts on Bruno. His closure highlights the desirability of escaping from the metanarratives of hegemonic masculinity and its oppositional hierarchical gender regimes. The 'hub of the universe' is revealed as a shifting signifier in an unstable relationship with a plethora of signifieds. 'Masculinity' is another such shifting signifier whose 'semantic duplicity' is revealed (Ommundsen 1989:272).

Closure in *Bruno and the Crumhorn* offers vastly different insights about the engendered nature of literary texts from those constructed in the earlier fictions examined in this chapter. At the level of story significance the closure offers what Stephens (1996) calls 'inscribed indeterminacy' (73) that is typical of postmodernist textuality although not so usual in children's fiction as Stephens (1992) argues '[i]n both society and in literature

it seems that the individual strives for autonomous selfhood, and it is usual for narratives in children's literature to represent this striving as having a positive outcome' (57). The indeterminacy of *Bruno and the Crumhorn* then is not usual in children's fictions. Nevertheless, as with adult fictions, it offers readers the chance to determine for themselves what range of social and political outcomes are possible and desirable. Importantly this closure reverts Carroll's monologic patriarchal outcomes of *Sylvie and Bruno* and thereby offers a transformative ideology rather than contributing to cultural reproduction.

I argue that the most important change that this metafiction demonstrates is that the implied readers constructed in children's fictions thematising gender are no longer assumed to be masculine subjects. Reading positions are pluralised for both masculine and feminine readers. Readers are distanced from these fictions by having to evaluate conflicting viewpoints from within gendered subjectivities and between gendered subjects. This means that all readers will identify against themselves at some stage. The intrusive narrator in *Bruno and the Crumhorn* explicitly canvasses diverse reader reactions. I would argue that *Bruno and the Crumhorn* asserts that harm is done to children by the imposition of regulatory gender norms which circumscribe ways of being oppositionally masculine or feminine.

## Conclusion

While much has happened in society regarding gender binarism and its representation in literature since Hollindale's paper was published, his comment about a degendered sociality being an ideal rather than a reality still pertains in Australian society. Our reading pedagogy must provide contexts for the child to become familiar with the codes and conventions implied by Hollindale's catch-phrase, 'knowing "how to read a fiction"'. He argues that the child reader thus empowered is enabled to identify the 'sexist' text as well

as being able to interrogate the representations of sociality in which reconfigurations of gendered practice are represented. Stephens demonstrates that when writers attend to a wide range of narrative constituents and not just to reformulating gender attributes, they can effect greater control over the ideological significances constructed in all levels of their fictions. Most importantly, writers can employ narrative strategies that construct texts offering a range of implied reading positions rather than just the traditional masculine one.

*Bread and Honey* is a product of an age of counter culture counter-narratives; the powerful interpellations of gendered subjects are articulated across the social space but these can be interrogated and ruptured. Michael is represented as a participant in an 'engagement in a collective process of re-naming, re-writing, re-positioning oneself in relation to coercive structures' (Davies 1993:199). Readers are invited to position themselves with regard to Michael's dilemmas. The ruptures in hegemonic masculinity demonstrate the need for the redemption of masculine subjects. In *Bread and Honey* this remains a matter of an individual project of reform. This, then, as a strategy of social change, has the same limitations that we saw in *All We Know* with regard to Michael and the schema of reconfigured fathering. Connell indicates the limitations of such individual projects. The achievement of *Bread and Honey* with regard to the process of degendering children's literature is its problematising of hierarchical gender binarism within peer relationships as with Michael and Margaret and with Michael and the boys of the town and between adults and children in the private sphere with Michael and his Grandmother: the story represents the complexity of the social matrices that continue to interpellate masculine subjects. The fiction enacts how childhood culture is subject to the regulatory practices of a masculinist adult society and in this engendered acculturation process women are complicit in the perpetuation of the power of hegemonic masculinity. Rather than the storyline contesting the father's view and then justifying capitulation to it, Michael's character problematises the expectations of manhood in both the private and

public sphere. I discuss the latter in Chapter 6. While Dr Cameron ruptures aspects of the masculinist warrior paradigm he is nevertheless fully implicated in the perpetuation of the systems of symbolic and military domination of individuals and nation states. Michael ruptures the symbolic order in his need to redress the excesses and pain. He does not walk away from the plurality of meanings, including its meanings for women, who are symbolised in the day of war commemoration. *Bruno and the Crumhorn* demonstrates that it is more complicated than the feminist double articulation because it offers a third articulation of gender regulation. This occurs in the representation of Bruno's subjectivity, and his refusal to be interpellated into his family's preferred model of masculinity. The fiction's significance in drawing together these three articulations subverts family story genre.

Metafictive and comic modes offer important strategies for representing the transformation of social structures. Self-reflexive texts, such as *Bruno and the Crumhorn*, offer shifting representations of feminine and masculine subjectivities and their social relations. The androcentrism of patriarchal discursive practices and the misandry of pro-feminist texts are challenged and redressed both thematically and narratologically, but this remains in many ways 'unfinished business' (Stephens 1996b:29). Advocacy of 'difference and degendering' (Connell 1995:253; 2000:202-11) in literary narratives requires the representation of diverse subjectivities that redeem and valorise difference within and between gendered subjects. Pursuing this objective means repudiating traditionally gendered subjectivities where difference means disempowerment if not abjection. This is evident in the way that the episodes are constructed to represent the active engagement of men in the advancement of life opportunities for feminine subjects, and second in valuing the articulation of their emotional needs, their perceived and genuine limitations, and in seeking assistance from girls or women as equals and experts where this is appropriate.

In Chapter 5 I examine the literary processes employed to reconfigure schemas of

Australian femininity in children's fictions. I focus on fictions that rupture representations of feminine child subjects, especially that of the archetypal Australian girl, an archetype developed in the 1890s by Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* and still very evident in the fictions of the post-war period. The most significant shift is the disruption and then the transformation in the representation of a unitary feminine life course of marriage and motherhood. In the post-war fictions there is an explicit expectation that the feminine subject's destiny is to become a 'good mother' devoted to the private sphere. By the new millennium, this ideology recirculates in conservative dialogism with the advocacy of the rights of women to full individualisation as Australian citizens. This latter ideology promotes women's active participation in the public sphere throughout their pluralised life courses that are freed from ageism. By mapping the moments of rupture in realist metanarratives, my discussion marks the problematising of the gendered structure of the literary social space in storylines, story constituents and discourse in Australian children's fictions.