

## Fall and Response: Alan Duff's Shameful Autoethnography

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What has become of Alan Duff? The publication of *Jake's Long Shadow* (2002) has been followed by an uncharacteristically long silence, suggesting that it may have concluded a phase in the maverick author's career. After the impact of *Once Were Warriors* (1990), which one reviewer likened to "the noise and power of a new volcano" (Gifkins), Duff maintained an impressive momentum of publication by delivering a new novel every second year over the next twelve years. His second, *One Night Out Stealing* (1992) was followed by *State Ward* (1994), and the first sequel to *Once Were Warriors*, *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?* (1996). 1998 brought *Both Sides of the Moon*, which was succeeded by *Szabad* (2001), and the sequel to *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*, *Jake's Long Shadow* (2002). In between, Duff continued to write regular newspaper columns, some of which were expanded and collected in *Maori: The Crisis and the Challenge* (1993). He also published two children's books as well as a memoir, *Out of the Mist and Steam* (1999).

The suggestion that the third volume in the Jake Heke trilogy marks the conclusion of a phase in Duff's work allows us to consider his fictional output to date as having a certain gestural coherence, held together by a pattern of response that, in its unfolding over the years, also incorporates the author's response to the reception of his work. This pattern shows the writer on the one hand seeking to push forward into new thematic and stylistic territory, while on the other submitting to the impulse to return to the scene of his first success and the ongoing public controversy that surrounds it. Thus *One Night Out Stealing* attempts to go beyond the single focus of *Once Were Warriors* by coupling the Maori protagonist with a Pakeha thug more villainous than any of Duff's previous characters, while also exposing the world of middle-class affluence in juxtaposition with that of the criminal underworld. Similarly, in *Both Sides of the Moon*, Duff probes his warrior thesis of Maori culture by anchoring one strand of his narrative in the tribal world just before the onset of colonization. And *Szabad* abandons the suburban Maori setting familiar from his earlier novels altogether in favor of Hungary during the 1956 uprising. Meanwhile, the two sequels to *Once Were Warriors* reveal a continuing attachment to the world that brought Duff to fame, which is also evident in *State Ward* and in parts of *Both Sides of the Moon*. Revisiting this world, Duff seems motivated both by the phenomenal success of *Once Were Warriors* in the literary marketplace, and by the

wish to reiterate and restate his position in view of his first novel's critical reception. This is also apparent in his non-fiction books, which explicitly set out to explain how he came to write his first novel and why.

The pattern that the sequence of Duff's books reveals notably includes a hardening of his stance, especially in his attitude toward and depiction of violence, which suggests both a continuing motivating passion and a tiring of what appears to have become a formula, indicative of an as-yet unrealized desire to move on. This is most evident in *Jake's Long Shadow*, which unabashedly advocates vigilantism as the proper response to a problem that Duff's earlier novels deemed solvable by education. The unfolding pattern of Duff's writing therefore suggests how profoundly it is grounded in a response to his environment, even as he aims to pursue a literary career that was originally conceived as a series of innovative projects. Thus, if Duff was able to refer to the projects that would become *Both Sides of the Moon* and *Szabad* as well advanced as early as in a 1992 interview (Leigh), the vagaries of his tempestuous relationship with the public, combining unprecedented sales with severe critical alienation, apparently not only delayed the publication of these novels but also left imprints on their final shape.

The ability to respond, and specifically the ability to channel a visceral response into controlled and constructive action, forms a prime concern in all of Duff's fiction. This is exemplified by Beth Heke in *Once Were Warriors*, who responds to her daughter's suicide by overcoming her escapist habits and mobilizing her environment in a self-help campaign. In various ways, Beth's example is followed by the protagonists of subsequent novels: in *One Night Out Stealing*, Sonny's exposure to middle-class sensibilities in videos stolen from a wealthy home enables him to respond, albeit only half-consciously, as a witness to violence by saving a woman from being raped by his accomplice in crime. In *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*, Jake Heke, in response to his ostracization, learns to master his violent impulses and assume responsibility for his past and his actions. And in *Both Sides of the Moon*, Jimmy responds to the taunts of a stranger by learning about his family's past, eventually succeeding in breaking a cycle of delinquency and abuse by becoming "a voice for whatever reality fate had in store for [him]" (313). Jimmy's story, narrated by himself, most closely resembles Duff's own as told in his memoir, *Out of the Mist and Steam* (1999), which ends with his discovery of writing as a way out of a behavioral pattern that landed him in prison. This recognition of writing as a viable response to self-destructive tendencies has left its mark in an authorial posture that Duff himself describes as pugilistic: "Like the very best boxers is how I regard my writing style: hit them with a combination, move and dance!" (McLeod 74). Devised as a strategy for fighting back, Duff's writing thus seems designed to stage ritual contests, projecting its material and audience as symbolic antagonists with whom the author imaginatively identifies so as to secure his own position and room for movement.

Witi Ihimaera was one of the first to recognize this quality in Duff's writing, and he responded to it astutely when he called *Once Were Warriors* a haka and "a kick in the guts to New Zealand's much vaunted pride in its Maori/Pakeha race relations" (Thompson 399). By and large, however, Duff's pugnacious stance has not helped him gain critical attention. While all his books have been dutifully reviewed and there is no shortage of interviews and portraits featuring him as a bestselling phenomenon and controversial public figure, hardly a handful of articles have engaged in any depth with his literary efforts. Considering his reception over the first few years of his career, Danielle Brown notes that "[a] kind of dialogue is perceptible between Duff's writing and some of the critical responses which are situated within a context of identity politics" (72). Yet the dialogue quickly seems to have reached a stand-off, as Brown detects a marked shift from acceptance to rejection in response to Duff's third book; there is evidence, in her view, of "an active politics of exclusion at work which serves not only to marginalise Duff, but to discredit him personally as well" (75).<sup>1</sup> If "Duff is now generally considered beyond the pale" and deemed not to merit the attention of literary criticism, as Iain Sharp observed already in 1994, he has, in turn, not hesitated to express his frustration with the "limp-wrists and wankers who write obscure books read only by each other" (Waldren). This ostensible hostility between Duff and his critics has so far hindered critical attention to the way Duff's fiction creatively engages with the pattern of response that underpins it, and the extent to which this engagement allows him to articulate views that his more off-the-cuff statements may not be able to express.

Insofar as an antagonistic attitude towards both his material and his audience provides a vital stimulus to Duff's creative powers, the broad acceptance of his early books, which left him "comfortably ensconced as New Zealand's best-selling author" (Waldren), must have presented no less a challenge to him than his later snubbing by the critical profession. Christina Thompson recognized this dilemma already in 1994 when she noted Duff's growing recalcitrance and guessed "that this overall shift to the right, away from more 'progressive' ideas about the recuperation of traditional knowledge and practices, stems from an unwillingness to be co-opted by the liberal Pakeha establishment" (407). At the time, it seemed that this response to his reception was leading Duff away from fiction and into a more direct confrontation with the public in the form of essays debunking

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<sup>1</sup> While generally favorable and appreciative of the literary achievement of his first novels, Maori reviews of Duff's work became more disapproving after the publication of *Maori: The Crisis and the Challenge*, in response to Duff's simplifying and generalizing diagnosis of problems besetting Maori society and his scathing attacks on Maori leadership. Conceding that "Duff probably means well", Apirana Taylor considered his answers "hopelessly naive" (51), while Ranginui Walker declared that "[t]o the Maori, Duff is irrelevant" (137). The impression of "an active politics of exclusion" (Brown 75) must be qualified, however, in view of Duff's inclusion in important anthologies, such as Witi Ihimaera's *Growing up Maori*, and efforts to engage him in public dialogue, such as Andrew Vercoe's *Educating Jake*.

that very establishment. Yet his subsequent fictional output suggests that Duff has been at pains to resist the curtailing of his literary ambitions by polemics and to probe the limitations of argument by transforming them into figurative boundaries organizing narratives of transgression. What is most remarkable in this persistence is that Duff, faced with the disregard of the critical industry and the bland acceptance of the book-buying public, seems to have taken it upon himself to test the limits of the reactive energies that have fired his writing. If these energies appear to have exhausted themselves in *Jake's Long Shadow*, we witness them at their greatest intensity four years earlier in *Both Sides of the Moon*. In this novel, which, according to one reviewer, "makes *Once Were Warriors* look like the Teletubbies" (Lay), Duff most deeply engages with the powers of antagonism in order, as it seems, to explore the viability of an identity that is not grounded in conformity but in the ability to respond to the presence and viewpoints of others.

In *Both Sides of the Moon*, Duff's concern with the ability to respond is focused most intensely in a preoccupation with shame. The adolescent Jimmy, who identifies with his restrained Pakeha father, is shamed by the recklessly hedonistic behavior of his Maori mother to the point that it leaves him helplessly vulnerable to sexual abuse and liable to aggressive compensatory behavior. This situation pins him to a trajectory spiraling downward into delinquency, but his shame also triggers an inquisitiveness and curiosity about himself and others that sets him on an upward course of learning. In this latter process, he discovers a legacy of unacknowledged shame among his Maori relatives that reaches back to pre-colonial days and it is by coming to own this legacy that he finally emerges from the turmoil of his youth as a voice of hope.

Jimmy represents a character type familiar from Duff's previous fiction, and his example serves to highlight the importance of shame as both a burden and a catalyst for reform in much of Duff's writing to date. Jimmy's direct predecessors can be found in characters like Grace and Nig in *Once Were Warriors* and Sonny in *One Night Out Stealing*, troubled bystanders who helplessly struggle to dissociate themselves from scenes in which they are forced to participate. Yet his ability to redeem himself by confronting his shame makes him more akin to Jake Heke, who survives the shame to which he is exposed in *Once Were Warriors* to rise from his fall in *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?*. As a narrative nexus linking these novels, shame draws to itself a cluster of motifs that recur frequently in Duff's fiction, such as the fall or descent (and its opposite, ascent), the invidious gaze, and eroticized violence.

Duff deploys such motifs in a way that not only exposes the shame or shamelessness of his characters, but also seems designed to elicit shame-like responses from his readers as well, primarily by imposing on them a form of attention that forces them to betray emotions they would prefer not to reveal. The effectiveness of this strategy seems borne out by the mingling of admiration and embarrassment and the abrupt veering from praise to dismissal that

Christina Thompson and Danielle Brown have observed in both Pakeha and Maori readers' responses to Duff's early books alike. Considering the discomposure which many Pakeha reviewers admitted to in "assessing [books] that they felt implicated them in an uncomfortable way" (402), Thompson suggests that "secretly they felt themselves to blame" (403). She goes on to point out that Duff eventually "exonerates these readers" (403) by faulting Maori people alone. Yet, insofar as this exoneration, as Thompson rightly points out, does not stand up to historical analysis (404), the extent to which it can succeed is questionable and we may wonder whether, as flawed rationalizations, Duff's explanations may not tend to reinforce a response they purport to dispel. As a result, Duff's fiction may be seen to promote a confrontation of shame rather than its evasion, bringing the capacity to feel shame back into view as a catalyst for reform and the discovery of an unacknowledged bond between opponents.

*Both Sides of the Moon* does this more unflinchingly than any of Duff's other novels, pushing Duff's imaginative immersion in the most revolting acts to an extreme and barely veiling his autobiographical investment in the narrative. For some readers, the result is a book Duff himself should be ashamed of having published. Ruth Brown, in reviewing the novel, rebukes the author for failing to heed "his grandfather's [Oliver Duff's, founding editor of the *New Zealand Listener*] belief that a writer should hesitate to hurt family and friends by 'a too ruthless exposure of himself as he really is'" (22). Suggesting that in his pursuit of "commercial success," Duff has overstepped the boundaries of propriety, Brown in part echoes an earlier appraisal by Nigel Cox, which calculates Duff's earnings from his books, columns, awards and film rights in order to show how much he has profited from exposing the underbelly of Maori society and to question his claim that he writes "because [he] care[s]" (Cox 19). As Cox notes, however, this loss of credibility is the result of Duff's rapid commodification, which has focused on the easy marketability of his controversial message at the expense of the harder-won rewards that might be gained from paying attention to his fiction. Such an assessment hints at the need for a broader conception of the economy of Duff's writing in order to understand the "vested interest" which, following Kenneth Burke (17), we may assume Duff has in the "burden" that, in *Both Sides of the Moon*, preoccupies him so conspicuously in the form of shame.

Duff's grappling with shame, as a form of self-attention that estranges one from one's surroundings, expresses itself most prominently in an ambivalent engagement with the autobiographical basis of his fiction. His self-involvement is a major source of both fascination and irritation in his writing, registered not only thematically but also stylistically. In his fiction this shows itself, for instance, in his trademark substitution of first and third person pronouns; in comparison, in his essays, it is expressed in his invective-laden exposure of what he considers failures of Maori figures and institutions of authority. Indeed, as Christina Thompson has observed, "[s]o offensive are some of his remarks on this subject that one is half-tempted to psychologize, to read into his analysis of authority a

personal sense of hurt” (406). While such a shift of attention to—crudely put—what is wrong with the author would seem but to acknowledge a reader’s difficulty in responding to his work, it can nevertheless introduce a useful perspective on Duff’s fictional strategy in an otherwise barely readable text like *Both Sides of the Moon*. Paraphrasing Burke (73) again, we might hope that in trying to understand what Duff’s writing is doing for the author himself, we could arrive at an understanding of the kind of work that his texts, or texts like his, can do for readers more generally. In other words, by reading Duff’s fictional maneuvers as a strategy devised to encompass a disadvantageous situation so as to turn it into an opportunity for (self-)improvement, we may be able to appraise the imaginative potential for change inherent in such a disadvantageous experience as shame.

*Both Sides of the Moon* highlights a contradiction that is characteristic of much of Duff’s writing, his appeal to the authority of first-hand experience and simultaneous disavowal of any autobiographical impulse. Rhetorically, this contradiction expresses itself in his enlistment of two interdependent yet conflicting discourses: a fictional imagination that is irresistibly drawn back to the sites of bad experience, and a non-fictional, what we might call essayistic, rationalization that with equal persistence seeks to distance itself from these sites. Embodied in a double-voiced narrative mode that is convincingly able “to get inside the head of [...] Maori loser[s]” yet tends to use such characters as “mouthpieces” (Cox 20), this conflict has given rise to a string of commentary by which Duff has sought to clarify his position regarding his writing, but which, taken together, only tends to reinforce the contradiction. Thus in the introduction to *Maori: The Crisis and the Challenge*, he maintains, “I wrote [*Once Were Warriors*] because it had much, too much, to do with my childhood. What I’d witnessed. What I’d experienced” (xii), contradicting an earlier disclaimer of the novel’s autobiographical motivation: “I don’t need to write about myself. It is not self-indulgent. I defy anyone to find anything autobiographical in *Once Were Warriors*” (Leigh).

In *Both Sides of the Moon*, the conflict disrupts the narrative discourse itself when Jimmy, in the midst of a fictionally autobiographical account that happens to prefigure precisely Duff’s own, as given in *Out of the Mist and Steam*, is paradoxically made to voice the author’s need to dissociate himself from his story:

It’s a sketch, a necessarily selective outline. No such thing as autobiography, not true, not exact, not near truth or exactness. And my father would at least be proud that this son sought broader explanation and did not concern himself with talking about people when it is concepts the wiser person is interested in. Concepts. (78)

Duff’s diction here provides us with clues to the way his writing charts his contradictory situation so as to figuratively exploit it. Autobiography is veiled as fiction (“not true”), associated with self-indulgence and an interest in people, and countered by a non-fictional (essayistic) dissociation, linked with explanation and an interest in

concepts. Thus the autobiographically-motivated imaginative immersion in the lives of people who are themselves driven by self-indulgence is opposed to the striving for intellectual explanation by recourse to abstract concepts. In the wider context of the novel, and of the bulk of Duff's writing as a whole, this contradiction acquires the quality of a paradox, as the ostensibly superior discourse of essayistic explanation is framed by, and thus in a sense subordinated to, an implicitly declared preference for imaginative fiction.

*Both Sides* elaborates this sketch by allegorically articulating it with Jimmy's autobiography, specifically with his bicultural parental heritage. In this context, Jimmy's Pakeha father represents a rational, analytical orientation with a reverence for "logical argument" (74) and the written word, while his Maori mother stands for the immersion in experience and "instant gratification" (71), with a love of laughter and argument by invective and fists. As their offspring, Jimmy embodies their opposition as a person who, cherishing discrimination, is forced to accept inexplicable adulteration, "a union born in someone's bizarre imagination" (93). Mirroring Duff's analysis of his own family background as rendered in *Out of the Mist and Steam*, Jimmy also embodies the fictional response by which the author may be seen to encompass his own situation.

Insofar as any situation is given, occupying it as an opportunity or condition involves a response, an engagement with a position of otherness. This can basically take two forms, acceptance or rejection, siding with or siding against, but when a situation is contradictory (and as Burke (250) reminds us, it is difficult to think of any situation that, under analysis, does not turn out to be contradictory), the full response to it is likely to be contradictory or at least ambivalent as well. In the particular case of Duff confronting his bicultural parentage, the basic pattern of response could combine acceptance and rejection of the mixture. However, since, in Duff's chart, the mixture does not produce a viable synthesis but only a bizarre union and a divided self, the full range of responses to the situation yields the following four main orientations: (1) siding as Pakeha with the Pakeha father and against the Maori mother, which leads toward analytical abstraction and rational argument in essayistic expression; (2) siding as Maori with the Maori mother and against the Pakeha father, which results in direct immersion in experience and the pursuit of instant gratification; (3) siding as Pakeha with the Maori mother and against the Pakeha father, which leads toward imaginative immersion in the lives of Maori people in fictional enactment; and (4) siding as Maori with the Pakeha father and against the Maori mother, which results in the experience of shame, the affective registering of a flawed state calling for explanation.

Jimmy's story in *Both Sides of the Moon* incorporates all four of these responses in its narrative framework. The two "pure" and irreconcilable responses, siding as Pakeha with Pakeha and as Maori with Maori, form the meta- and infra-narrative levels respectively, entering the text in the form of dissociating comments by the narrator, such as the one quoted above, on the one hand, and Jimmy's

autobiographically related experiences on the other. Between them, the two mixed responses, siding as Pakeha with Maori and as Maori with Pakeha, form a mediating narrative that confronts the experience of shame, largely in a fictional immersion into Jimmy's Maori family history. The set of blocked responses, siding with or against both Pakeha and Maori, seems discernible indirectly, dreamlike, in conflicting emotional emphases in the text, such as the extended nightmarish fascination with monstrosity and abhorrent violence, or the gropingly arrived at promise of love at the end of the novel. *Both Sides* seems readable in terms of the dramatic or dialogic enactment of these responses; however, overall, its main imaginative work is focused on the mediating narrative generated by the two mixed responses. The irreconcilable contradictoriness of the other responses seems to heighten their emotional intensity as it prevents their untempered elaboration. As a result, their emotional weight falls on the narrative where, in symbolically embedded form, it lends motivational urgency to the work of mediation.

This work of mediation can be described as a kind of translation that opens the two polarized identities to a recognition of their mutually constitutive relationship. The translation takes the form of encoding the knowledge of one party in terms of the knowledge of the other. Accordingly, the affective response of shame translates the discriminating and analytical knowledge Duff associates with the Pakeha father into the experiential mode of knowing associated with being Maori. Conversely, the literate response of vicarious fictional confrontation translates the experiential knowledge associated with being Maori into the mode of knowing based on written representation associated with the Pakeha. In each case, the translation orients the self in an attitude that enables it to acknowledge the authority of the other over its identity. The figurative significance of Duff's adopted strategy of a fictional confrontation of shame can therefore be located in its tendency to de-essentialize cultural identity and to resituate it in a constitutive relationship with the other, where its foundation can be discovered in the ability to respond. The value of this discovery is perhaps most immediately pertinent to Duff's analysis of his own situation, as it opens up an imaginative possibility that the fixation on oppositional identities seemed to preclude. Insofar, however, as this analysis in its allegorical dimension reflects "the either/or proposition" on which, according to Danielle Brown, New Zealand's "official government policy of biculturalism seems to be based" (77), the significance of Duff's strategy extends further. While it does not resolve the underlying antagonism of biculturalism into the hybrid alternative of both/and, the strategy in effect reinterprets biculturalism as a constitutive relationship which enables each side to recognize and value its identity in the quality of its response as the imaginative assimilation of the position of the other.

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In *Both Sides of the Moon*, shame is intricately associated with violence and its confrontation involves extensive and explicit representations of violence, much of it of an atrocious kind. If “[s]hame hurts,” as Jimmy emphasizes (100), the pain that characterizes it is of the kind that is an effect of the symbolic dimension of violence, its diminishing impact on the self. Thus shame can be experienced as a form of violence that is visually mediated; as Jimmy also observes, “shame is the eyes of others declaring it. No eyes, no shame” (98). What makes shame akin to an experience of violence is that it victimizes the subject experiencing it, isolating a person in a similar way to physical pain. According to Silvan Tomkins, shame is the affective response of a person who suddenly and unexpectedly finds him- or herself estranged and cut off from his or her company (143). As Tomkins points out, this “sting[s] and hurt[s]” and, while it is typically transient, “shame, if magnified in frequency, duration, and intensity [...], can become malignant in the extreme” (150).

This malignancy consists in the power of shame to authenticate a diminished sense of identity, and it is this authenticating power that, according to Rosamund Dalziel (129), assimilates shame to pain. As Dalziel suggests, this authentication is itself of a contradictory nature: “Shame, being an emotion of self-attention, has a bearing on a person’s sense of identity. But the emotional suffering deriving from shame may also be an ‘attestation’ of the reality of the self” (253). Shame may be both misleading (to the self and others) and a reliable reminder of the true nature of the self. This is due to the phenomenological duality of shame as both an affective response and a cognitive emotion, which makes it possible to emphasize either its similarity to innate affects like fear or surprise (Tomkins) or its character as a conscious emotion presupposing a developed self (Lewis). According to Michael Lewis, “shame is elicited when the self orients toward the self as a whole and involves an evaluation of the total self” (71) that could be verbalized in the form, “Stop. You are no good” (35). This self-evaluation is triggered and thus made compelling by a violently unpleasant and virtually paralyzing affective response. “Shame,” as Lewis writes, “is a highly negative and painful state that also results in the disruption of ongoing behavior, confusion in thought, and an inability to speak” (75).

While shame compels us to confront ourselves in a negative state, however, the very capacity to feel shame itself contradicts this self-image. Its message might thus more appropriately be phrased, “Stop. You don’t want to be like that.” The way shame presents us to ourselves (and others) is precisely not as we really are but as we risk becoming if we persist. As an affect, its function is essentially protective, alerting us to the detrimental effects on our selfhood of a pursuit of interest that is oblivious to our surroundings (Tomkins 143) and prompting us to recompose ourselves in response to the presence of others. Shame, therefore, reminds us that the wholeness of our self depends on our recognition of the viewpoints of others and that it is diminished to the extent that it is preoccupied only by itself and thus incapable of looking at itself through the eyes of others. A truly

diminished self would be one that is incapable of feeling shame, and its loss would be commensurate with its inability to respond. Given the probable universality of shame (Tompkins 155, Lewis 195, Moore 64), such an incapacity is conceivable only as the effect of suppression, which may itself be a result of repeated or prolonged exposure to shame. The attempt to rid ourselves from shame by disavowing it then tends to trap us in the negative state from which its acknowledgment might protect us. This may result in a severe curtailing of our ability to respond to our situation, typically expressed in the form of depression or rage (Tompkins 151, Lewis 149). Thus, if the transient experience of shame allows us to catch our fall by renewing our bond with others, prolonged or bypassed shame estranges us (from ourselves and others) more permanently, as if we are cast into the torment of a hostile world.

Duff's fictional engagement with shame in *Both Sides* focuses precisely on such scenes of falling. Jimmy's initiation to shame is emblematically captured in his witnessing the collapse of his mother in a drunken brawl, which psychologically abases him likewise:

Brawling males don't fall over with such instant loss of dignity, displaying underwear and pubic hair and blacked patches of cunt bleed. Yes, cunt bleed. These bitches don't have menstrual cycles—they have bleeding cunts and bleeding children who feel like cunts [...]. (90)

Shamed by association rather than anything he has done, Jimmy is powerless to rid himself of the feeling and left only to vent his anger, which, as his language shows, seems bound to reinforce his shame and isolate him further. Insofar as his shame is not related to his actions, his attempt to violently suppress it is almost the only way for him to deal with it.

But while in doing so he seems to follow his mother, his more conscious experience of it is acquired from his father, whose own self-consciousness has left him painfully susceptible to shame:

He urged us always to look people in the eye when we were speaking or being spoken to [...]. Yet we saw him unable to hold other people's gaze himself, how he'd wipe at his brow, and his hands would go up behind his head [...]. He told me once [...] that shyness is as bad as being physically crippled. (93)

Finding that his father's advice to tell himself that "[he is] not responsible for [his] mother's action [...] doesn't get off the ground" (100), Jimmy is torn between two paths in response to his shame. One suppresses the feeling by assimilating the identity of an outcast, leading him to descend into delinquency and fall victim to sexual abuse. The other seeks explanation by turning his isolation into the position of an observer and leads him to inquire into his family's history. It is along this second path that Jimmy, with the help of an old relative, learns about the origins of his shame and discovers a whakapapa that enables him to own it and accordingly resituate himself.

The tribal history that Jimmy discovers and in turn relates takes the form of the quasi-mythical story of an ancestor whose awakening to shame precipitates his fall from the heroic state of a warrior chief

and leads him to turn his back on his past. Yet Te Aranui Kapi is no Adam; the society from which he eventually casts himself out is rather like that of Cain. His tribe lives in an almost perpetual state of rage, betraying a permanent collective disavowal of shame. Indeed, *Both Sides* most clearly outstrips *Once Were Warriors* in the explicit detail with which it extrapolates the violence of Jake Heke's shame-induced nightmares (*Warriors* 169) into a collective way of life. In Kapi's pre-colonial Maori world, the rule of the social bond is absolute and maintained by a violent enforcement of the collective gaze. The demand for complete conformity makes the slightest indication of individuality the equivalent of a shameful betrayal that must be violently suppressed. Just as a man has to suppress his private self by silently enduring the painful tattooing on of the collective gaze as his "true face" (257), any look that sets an individual apart is punishable by death, and the punishment inevitably also involves the humiliation of the victim. Thus, in the opening sequence of Jimmy's narrative of Kapi, the latter's brother, known for once "killing a slave on the spot for just glancing with eyes as though an equal" (61-2), is himself gruesomely and humiliatingly killed by Kapi for his vanity. Similarly, the prescribed suppression of any look unsanctioned by the collective gaze conditions the members of the tribe to blindly transfer their unacknowledged sense of shame onto the members of any other tribe. The very existence of the other tribe's members is a source of irritation that cannot be quelled by slaughter alone, but in addition requires the torture of the living and mutilation of the dead, characteristically including the gouging out of eyes and spitting into "sightless faces" (108). Jimmy's graphically detailed description of such scenes again betrays his ambivalent response to his own shame because it smacks of vicarious participation even as it angrily submits his ancestors, in turn, to a shaming gaze, exposing their warrior pride as a sham and emphasizing their diminished humanity, making them akin to a pack of dogs.

In this, Jimmy reveals himself as the descendant of Kapi, who is finally cut loose from his tribal bonds by an experience of shame he is not able to suppress. His awakening occurs during a raid on another village when he pitilessly watches a child drown, only to find the boy unexpectedly return and hold his gaze and smile back at him. Unable to disacknowledge the enemy child's look, Kapi's mind is overwhelmed by a flood of reflections previously unknown to him:

Kapi ran along the bank; halted and stared and stared at the raging surface for a smiling child to reappear. [...] And as he waited, the order of the thoughts he knew in the only universe he thought he lived in fell apart. It was like a spiritworld in a breaking mist, ready to reveal thoughts and concepts he had never even dreamed. (134)

The experience irreversibly changes Kapi, as the activation of a spiritual bond with the enemy unsettles his identity and renders him unfit to perform his duty as a leading warrior. Lying in ambush before yet another battle, he at last loses his nerve and runs, thereby permanently severing his ties to his tribe.

Kapi's shameful act of cowardice forces both him and his tribe to confront shame, and Jimmy's subsequent account outlines three alternative outcomes of such confrontation. Anticipating the breach of their fortifications, the warriors decide to lure their enemies into a system of tunnels leading to the edge of a cliff from which they hurl themselves in a suicidal fall, hoping to take as many enemies with them as possible. Rejecting this plan, Tangiwai, Kapi's lover, who is pregnant with his child, convinces a majority of the tribe to join her in the dangerous descent from the cliff-top village and to "[c]hoose life as an outcast who can be redeemed" (194). Barely in safety, however, they fall among another band of outcasts who have become so inured to shame that their depravity knows no bounds. While most of the survivors gradually abandon themselves to this half-life, Tangiwai and a few others resist and eventually manage to escape, securing the survival of the tribe and restoring part of its honour. Kapi meanwhile, having run from battle, makes his way to a very different group of outcasts who have taken advantage of their freedom to pursue non-conformist lines of thinking and the quest for knowledge in general. Entangling him in philosophical disputes, this company teaches him to cultivate and develop the thoughts that now crowd his mind and to appreciate the views of people who see things differently than he does. It is here that he learns of the presence of newly arrived white people in the country and his story ends with him and his new wife arriving in one of the first Pakeha settlements, where Kapi is able to imagine new roles for himself, including one that prefigures Jimmy's, and Duff's own. As his wife shrewdly tells him of the strangers, "I have heard they are a people who have admiration for a warrior's fighting courage; and yet they do not allow it amongst themselves. She smiled. The tales you could enthrall them with" (311).

This remark acknowledges Kapi's new-found ability to respond to the presence of strangers in ways other than violence, and also reminds us that Jimmy's story, even if based on fact, deals with first-hand experience in the form of fiction. Indeed, Jimmy's Maori ancestors seem no less "born in someone's bizarre imagination" (93) than the marriage of his parents. As Jean Harkins' comparative study, for instance, shows, Maori culture as such is evidently not characterized by a violent suppression of shame but has its own concept of a shame-like emotion, designated as "whakamaa," which is linked to distinctive "cultural scripts" (93-94) that enable people to respond positively to it. Yet if the traditional Maori in *Both Sides* look more like Orcs than historically accurate representations of actual inhabitants of New Zealand, Duff's portrayal of them nevertheless acknowledges the historical impact of cultural contact on Maori and Pakeha identities and highlights the role of shame in the formation of their bicultural relationship.

While Kapi's story enables Jimmy to dissociate himself from a diminished self-image that his shame had prompted him to assume as his inherited identity, his retelling of the story also engages with the cultural inscription of the look that authenticates this identity and underpins its reproduction. In Duff's framework of responses, this

corresponds to the third response, betraying a Pakeha's interest in Maori life through imaginative immersion mediated by observation. Textually, this is realized in the deployment of features that are characteristic of ethnographic writing, which makes Jimmy's autobiographical account readable more specifically as a fictional autoethnography.

Like Duff's other novels, *Both Sides* presents a picture of traditional Maori culture as singularly characterized by an aptitude for war. According to Christina Thompson,

This view of Maori as tuned to the mystic chords of warfare has a wonderfully long and complex history in the annals of New Zealand. It is present in the earliest European descriptions of the country; it is the centerpiece of every contact encounter; it is historically the single most important feature [...] of Pakeha accounts of Maori from the eighteenth century onward. (408)

While elsewhere Duff seems unambiguously to assume that this image is an authentic representation of Maori culture, however, in *Both Sides* he shows it more precisely to be authenticated by shame as an involuntary acknowledgment of the authority of the other over the self. The allusion to the fictional nature of the image of the warlike Maori therefore makes this representation readable as an imaginative foil to the Pakeha, betraying the latter's shame by projecting the image of an apparently shameless other. Yet rather than acknowledging shame as a bond that constitutes identities in cross-cultural response, the construction of the Maori "as the passionate, violent, physical alter ego of the cool, cerebral Pakeha self" (Thompson 411) effectively divides the shameful self into two separate identities, securing for the Pakeha the position of the detached observer, while trapping the Maori in blind indulgence of their passions.

Duff foregrounds the connection between such identity formations and the reproduction of shame by lending Jimmy's account of his Maori origins the rhetoric and authority of ethnography. Thus Jimmy, siding as Pakeha with the Maori, plays the role of a "Participant Observer [who] 'enters into' the stationary alien culture, obtains a view of that culture 'from within,' and then 'gets back out again' to present a vision of the whole that is unavailable to the 'incarcerated' natives" (Buzard 69). The role is emphatically enacted in the long opening section of the novel, in which Jimmy immerses himself in the communal bath with his cousins and uncles, "familiar, [...] related, but still the essential stranger in their midst" (*Both Sides* 9), and eventually steps out, having "set these people out as best I can, at least in their bathing environment" (41). Likewise, his account of his Maori ancestors is based on imaginative immersion and underpinned by the authorizing features of ethnography, most conspicuously in the "distinct primacy [it] accord[s] to the visual" (Clifford 31), but also in its tendency to abstract cultural principles from observed data, to interpret individual aspects synecdochically as representative of the whole, and to view culture as a whole synchronically rather than as subject to historical change (Clifford 31-32). And, as in classic ethnography, in which the "dialogical, situational aspects of

ethnographic interpretation tend to be banished from the final representative text" (Clifford 40), Jimmy's narrative is primarily framed by the fiction of direct observation, even though it briefly identifies its sources in conversations with his old relative Mereana and in books found "at our school library [and] in my home" and maintains that "[w]ritten records on the Maori are no more than accounts gleaned from oral knowledge" (*Both Sides* 52).

Jimmy's recognition of his tribal identity is thus framed by a view of culture that occludes its basis in a relation and response to others. Foregrounding the role of suppressed shame in this identity, *Both Sides* correlates this view of a self-contained cultural identity with a diminished self that has lost sight of its foundation and can regain it only by falling. Jimmy senses this when he feels that he is "not standing on anything": "I'm standing on air. I—we—have no base. [...] I think I'm going to start falling and never stop—nothing to stop me" (175). Yet as the story of his ancestors shows, such a fate awaits only those who reject the position of otherness that their shame reveals to them as the ground on which their true self rests in its ability to respond to the presence of strangers. Against this, Kapi's path, which leads him to confront his shame and to redeem his selfhood by assimilating and engaging with the way others perceive him, offers Jimmy a viable alternative.

Kapi's exemplary fall and response, then, acts as a metaphor for Jimmy's own resituating of his sense of selfhood from an involuntary identification with his estranged state to an imaginative assimilation of the estranging gaze itself. Textually, this expresses itself in the autoethnographic mode of his narrative, which engages with the self as it is seen by others and as other. Ostensibly, as James Buzard points out, the authority of autoethnography relies on a similar notion of identity as "insiderhood" (71, 76) as is promoted by ethnography. Yet as an enactment of identity in writing, autoethnography, whether in the form of life writing that reflects on how the self is othered or in the form of a counter-discursive appropriation of colonial representation, resituates identity on the basis of the ability to respond, which articulates difference as a form of belonging. Duff's fictional exploration of shame incorporates both forms of autoethnography and thereby affiliates itself with a small tradition of Maori writing that has so far chiefly been the domain of women, such as Makereti, Rangi Dennen and Mihi Edwards. Like Duff's, these writers' sense of their Maoriness, as expressed in their autoethnographic accounts, has been shaped by their engagement with the Pakeha world and in response to their, at times shameful, exposure to the way others perceive them. While it may be surprising to find Duff in such company, implicitly acknowledged in the way the portrait of Jimmy's mentor Mereana is clearly based on Guide Rangi, it is perhaps less surprising that this tradition of writing has emerged in the area of Rotorua, where Maori cultural identity has been living under the gaze of strangers and in the neighborhood of its ethnographic enactment since the early twentieth century.

If *Both Sides of the Moon* suggests that the image of the fierce Maori, despite its long history, still has the power to shock, it also indicates that what makes this image still compelling is the residue of unacknowledged shame in the bicultural relationship of Pakeha and Maori. As Jimmy's story seeks to demonstrate, the confrontation of such shame can lead to the discovery of one's ability to respond to how one is perceived by others and to imagine bicultural identities that acknowledge history without being trapped in it. Responding to his own reception, Duff's shameful autoethnography seems to express his unease with his public perception by both defiantly stepping up his debunking rhetoric and gropingly searching for a more charitable attitude towards his enemies. If the former response appears to have exhausted itself in his latest novel, the latter still seems to leave room for imaginative exploration.

This leads us back to the question of the author's next move. The suggestion that *Jake's Long Shadow* concludes a phase in Duff's work seems borne out by the fact that shame no longer holds a reforming potential here. The novel can still be seen to develop Duff's preoccupation with shame further, now focusing on its neutralization when it becomes bureaucratized. *Jake's Long Shadow* highlights the distorting effects of a liberal establishment's shame at Maori lack of achievement, which results in excessive self-blame and a tendency to condone Maori offending. Rightly critical of this ideological use of shame, Duff, in rejecting it, however also seems to reject the entanglement of opposite identities that the acknowledgment of shame reveals. As a result, the novel reverts to an essentialist reliance on identities as they are falsely authenticated by shame, a simple view of society as divided into the shameless and the righteous, which serves to justify vigilantism as a solution to social conflict. In choosing this retreat, *Jake's Long Shadow* falls flat in comparison with the more deliberate and unflinching probing of shame in *Both Sides*.

Can we interpret the silence that has followed *Jake's Long Shadow* as a sign that Duff is reluctant to persist along this line and is relocating his fictional bearings? As the interval grows, an intriguing parallel suggests itself between Duff and Witi Ihimaera, whose early career was similarly propelled by the public response to his texts. Thirty years ago, after his fourth book, "consider[ing he] had created a stereotype", Ihimaera "place[d] a ten year embargo on [his] work" ("Maori Life and Literature" 53). As his vigorous, prolific and daring output since his return in 1986 shows, the pause that answered the exhaustion of his first phase enabled him to regroup his creative powers in deliberate response to the textual foundations of his work. As we await Duff's next book, I rather like the idea that he may have reached a similar juncture and that he may yet surprise us, as Ihimaera did twenty years ago, by coming back from a prolonged recess in a form no one expected.

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