

**The Effect of Bad Parents, Emotional Deprivation and Shame on Adolescent  
Characters in the Works of Alan Duff**

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## Abstract

The detrimental consequence that an inadequate, unloving and abusive childhood can have on the psychological development and psychic stability of a child or teenager is a prevalent theme in Duff's writing. All of Duff's characters deal with issues of lovelessness and unworthiness born from inadequate parenting. The majority of Duff's troubled characters have two parents who are, more often than not, unemployed drunks who have always neglected their children in favour of feeding their own addictions. Some of Duff's youths are lucky enough to have one good parent; however, in these cases, it is still apparent that one inadequate parent is sufficient to cause significant damage to a child. In his novels, Duff's focus is on the type of adolescent into which these unloved children grow. He depicts the turmoil they experience on a daily basis; he portrays their eternal search for parental replacements and love as well as the lengths to which they go in order to ease the hurt and shame with which they struggle as a result of being unloved and unwanted in childhood. It is surprising, therefore, that critics have typically overlooked this facet of Duff's work in favour of concentrating on more general criticism of his controversial attitude towards Maori culture and/or violence.

This thesis aims to rectify this imbalance by discussing a variety of Duff's youthful, highly troubled protagonists in terms of their abnormal emotional state and development. To address Duff's overriding preoccupation with the catastrophic effect of a loveless childhood, I have relied on psychoanalytic insights into abnormal childhood development. By using a psychoanalytic theoretical framework, I uncover a whole dimension to Duff's writing that has, thus far, not been adequately explored or understood.

The first chapter of this thesis sets up a psychoanalytic paradigm, outlining certain psychoanalytic theories that relate to the characters I go on to discuss. This provides a lens through which to look at the thought processes, behavioural transgressions and manifestations of shame with which Duff's characters struggle. Moreover, psychoanalytic theory is often accompanied by real life examples gleaned from the clinical material of the psychoanalysts themselves. This real-life facet to psychoanalysis gives weight and credibility to my assessment of Duff's characters, as I am able to compare them with and contrast them, to real people and real-life situations.

In chapter two, I align the psychoanalytic framework from chapter one with Duff's early male characters, who are portrayed as doomed to self-destruction. Chapter three deals with Duff's more recent male characters, who go through a process of enlightenment and are portrayed in a far more redemptive and optimistic light. Finally, in chapter four I look at Duff's female protagonist, Lu, who exemplifies Duff's interpretation of a female reaction to shame, and whose experience illustrates how Duff, in his latest novels, attains a far more hopeful vision for the future of children with unloving families. Apart from shedding light on some of the subtle insights into childhood psychology that Duff demonstrates throughout his writing, this thesis provides a substantial base for further work on this topic.

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## Introduction

Alan Duff is one of New Zealand's best selling authors. His reputation and notoriety was built on the success of his first, and most controversial novel, *Once Were Warriors* (1990). *Once Were Warriors* is an important piece of writing in New Zealand's history. It has attracted a huge number of reviews, interviews and heated public discussions that have been ongoing since the year of its publication, and still persist. *Once Were Warriors* was so influential that within four years it had made its way into popular culture via Lee Tamahori's powerful film adaptation. From this first success Duff went on to expand *Once Were Warriors* into a trilogy as well as establish an impressive output of writing which includes non fiction articles, children's books, his autobiography and seven novels, the latest of which, *Who Sings for Lu?*, was published in 2009.

One of the striking things about Duff's work is the frequency with which each of his youths follows a general pattern of behaviour. Duff's youths feel unloved and unwanted by their parents. They are often the victims of verbal and psychological abuse as well as emotional neglect. Their parents' unloving attitude towards them leads to emotional deprivation, expressed in feelings of immense shame and a deep yearning for love. Duff's youths often react to their internal psychic symptoms by adopting various behavioural coping techniques. These coping mechanisms, which take the form of a range of transgressive behaviours, can be seen as manifestations of their emotionally deprived and shamed psychic state.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore Alan Duff's representation of the emotional deprivation, shame and aggression that he shows as arising from a loveless childhood in his youthful protagonists. This theme is ubiquitous in Duff's fiction,

attesting to an ongoing preoccupation with exploring the self-destructive symptoms that his fictional youths display. It is clear that Duff's interest in this theme stems from his own childhood experience, given the specific parallels that one can draw between the experiences of his fictional youths, especially in the novels that have appeared since *Both Sides of the Moon*, and the experiences of his own adolescence as recalled in his autobiography, *Out of the Mist and Steam* (1999).

In order to explore this theme in Duff's writing, I will address the following questions: How, in Duff's view, does a loveless childhood and parental neglect induce emotional deprivation and psychic shame reactions in the adolescent characters he depicts? In which ways does Duff portray their delinquent and criminal behaviour as manifestations of shame? The behavioural coping techniques Duff's youths follow makes their characterisation seem, on a basic level, very similar. However, the way Duff depicts the reactions of each individual character to his or her shame differs over the course of his writing career. Therefore, I will explore questions about the way Duff's treatment of these issues evolves progressively in the course of his writing: are there any noticeable changes, shifts or progressions apparent in terms of Duff's stance on shame? If so, what is the significance of these changes, shifts or progressions? I will go on to compare Duff's male and female youth protagonists in order to identify any differences and similarities between them, with a view to establishing how Duff portrays a female versus a male reaction to shame and a loveless childhood. Works to be considered are: *Once Were Warriors* (1990), *One Night Out Stealing* (1991), the short novel *State Ward* (1994), *Both Sides of the Moon* (1998) and Duff's most recent novels, *Dreamboat Dad* (2008) and *Who Sings for Lu?* (2009).

*The Critics' Response to Duff*

As I mentioned previously, Duff's writing career has been successful both in terms of his book sales and his influence—negative or positive—on New Zealand politics. However, if we only look at the scholarship surrounding Duff's writing, we would form a very different opinion. Much of Duff's work, including some of the most interesting of his novels, is virtually ignored by the academic establishment. Only *Once Were Warriors* and *Both Sides of the Moon* have attracted enough attention from critics to warrant the publication of a scattering of scholarly studies. This lack of academic criticism presents us with an odd imbalance, as all of Duff's novels have been heavily reviewed due to his high sales. In general, reviews of Duff's writing have, in my opinion, been overly negative and critical in tone. This negative trend has ceased only recently with the publication of two very different critical studies which bypass the expected norm. These two studies, by Alistair Fox and Otto Heim, which I will discuss in more depth later, explore one of Duff's works, *Both Sides of the Moon*, in a way we have not seen before.

### *Early Views*

There are notable gaps in the criticism of Duff's literature despite the fact that he is one of the most successful writers in New Zealand's history. I will outline three common criticisms that dominate the scholarship on, and reviews of, Duff's writing. These criticisms include Duff's violent themes and perceived ambivalence towards violence, his political stance in regards to Maori and his use of his characters as mouthpieces to preach his own message. There is an overwhelmingly negative

response towards Duff's preoccupation with graphic depictions of violence. Although *Once Were Warriors* sets out to condemn violence, many critics have expressed concern over the graphic and brutal scenes in much of Duff's writing. Otto Heim's *Writing Along Broken Lines* questions Duff's motivation behind this representation of violence. Heim suggests that Duff may be ambivalent towards the violence he depicts in his vivid and confrontational re-creation of gang life in *Once Were Warriors*. Heim also comments on the "overexposure" of sacrificial elements in the novel (81). He sees the violent deaths of innocent characters, such as Grace and Nig, as being necessary in Duff's vision for the regeneration of Maori society.

In the same vein, nearly all the scholarship and reviews surrounding Duff's fourth novel, *Both Sides of the Moon* (1998), accuse him of an ambivalent attitude towards violence. Chris Prentice, in her dual review of both Heim's article, mentioned above, and *Both Sides of the Moon*, questions the purpose which Duff's violent content serves in his writing and the message his writing holds. Prentice asks: "can the detailed representation of violence be wholly against violence, or is there inevitably a complicity or ambivalence?" (161). A much more intensely scathing review of this novel entitled "Duff's Angry Rave", proclaims that the "prolonged and loving descriptions of cannibalism" indicate a desire to "shock his audience" and be sensational (Bilbrough 20). Moreover, David Eggleton held nothing back when he described his attitude towards Duff's "decontextualised psychopathic bloodlust" in *Both Sides of the Moon*. "The violence," Eggleton argues, "builds up to regular spasms of intensity that leave you gagging. Here is the stench from a ruptured bully-bag of bile that the author insists on rubbing your nose in" (42). As we can see, these opinions are seething with contempt. As we move onto the next two common criticisms of Duff's writing, we should keep in mind that the comments expressed

echo each other. As a whole, the criticisms and reviews form a pattern of opinion of Duff, which suggests that these scathing comments seem to be conditioned by the very indignation expressed by those who have preceded them. In other words, the critics seem to simply elaborate the standard criticisms and ultimately reinforce them.

### *The Maori Reaction to Duff*

The next two common criticisms of Duff's writing are interlinked. Critics have tended to condemn Duff's controversial political ideas as well as his use of characters to preach this message to the New Zealand public. Initially, the majority of New Zealanders accepted Duff's politically charged writing; he was regarded as an alternative and dramatic voice that could speak on Maori affairs with an honesty acquired out of having had first hand experience of them. However, this changed dramatically after the publication of *Maori: the Crisis and the Challenge* in 1993. Ranginui Walker, a highly regarded Maori academic and writer, concluded that, "[t]o the Maori, Duff is irrelevant" (qtd. in Cox 21). From this point on, Duff's self-help message to Maori was considered a kind of betrayal; a stance that went against everything that the politically active Maori leaders were trying to achieve, and one that pandered to the "redneck and new-right audiences" of white New Zealand (Cox 20-21).

As I mentioned earlier, critics have also criticised Duff for his use of his characters as "mouthpieces" to express his repetitive and controversial political message (Heim 45). The majority of critics and reviewers who write on Duff have succeeded in characterizing him as a "hellfire and brimstone" preacher and evidence

of this can be readily found in reviews and scholarship on his writing (Eggleton 42). Eggleton describes Duff's novels in terms of how they act like "a pulpit" for the author to stand on; "an opportunity to preach his familiar message" (Eggleton 42). The 'loud' and uncompromising style of Duff's writing has critics claiming that his heavy-handed message and preaching obtrusively overrides his characters' true voices.

### *The Emergence of Alternative Readings*

Alistair Fox and Otto Heim are the only critics to produce studies which address one of the most interesting and prevalent issues Duff explores: Duff's emphasis on the negative effect that an unloving and shameful childhood has for the psychological wellbeing of a Duff's young protagonists. Heim's article, "Fall and Response: Alan Duff's Shameful Autoethnography" (2007), is the first of the two. In this article, Heim looks into Duff's depiction of his characters' ability to respond to the trauma of an external "gaze" after a fall from grace. As the title suggests, Heim also suggests that the characters' response echoes Duff's own ability or inability to respond to the Duff-bashing from critics through his literature: "the ability to channel a visceral response into controlled and constructive action, forms a prime concern in all of Duff's fiction" ("Fall and Response" 2). Heim goes on to concentrate his attention on *Both Sides of the Moon* where he rightly points out that "Duff's concern with the ability to respond is focused most intensely in a preoccupation with shame" ("Fall and Response" 4). He concludes that in *Both Sides of the Moon* shame is at once a "burden and a catalyst for reform" ("Fall and Response" 4). Shame is a burden

because it victimizes the individual by diminishing his or her global sense-of-self; however, in manageable doses the violence of shame is not necessarily a negative thing. In small bursts, shame acts as a warning or in-built protection device that provokes us to “recompos[e] ourselves in response to the presence of others” (Heim, “Fall and Response” 9).

Heim acknowledges that, for many of Duff’s characters, the shame they are exposed to is not at a level that is psychologically manageable or beneficial. The prolonged or repeated exposure to shame essentially numbs the characters, paralysing them and making them unable to respond: “the attempt to rid ourselves from shame by disavowing it [...] tends to trap us in the negative state from which its acknowledgement might protect us” (Heim, “Fall and Response” 10). In *Both Sides of the Moon*, and many of the novels that follow it, Duff explores both sides of the shame-coin. For example, Heim maintains that Duff depicts the fall and the ascent as representational of two choices. Jimmy can choose to fall into a shame-induced spiral of delinquency that will eventually cause him to become unaware of his shame and powerless to initiate his ascent out of shame. Jimmy begins this falling process, but eventually he starts to choose a different path; by looking into his family history and identifying the root of the shame he has inherited, Jimmy confronts his shame and is able to work towards overcoming it.

Whilst Heim is certainly on the right track, Alistair Fox, in his chapter on the bad mother in *The Ship of Dreams* (2009), further explores Duff’s representation of shame in relation to its connection with an unloved childhood. Like Heim, Fox selects *Both Sides of the Moon* as a subject in which to investigate the complex psychic processes Duff represents in his adolescent character Jimmy. Fox outlines Duff’s “awareness of the link between psychic damage and the transgressive behaviour in

which his characters engage—especially psychic damage caused by a lack of love from indifferent or abusive mothers”—by giving us an overview which tracks this theme’s early emergence and shows its development in Duff’s other writing (190). Moreover, Fox reveals how Duff has used the concepts of psychoanalytic theory to give his fictionalised autobiography “plausibility” and goes on to suggest that Jimmy’s psychic conflict, his sense of being half and half, and his diminished sense of self is a direct result of narcissistic deprivation (Fox 195).

The narcissistic deprivation Jimmy feels drives him to “seek compensatory alternatives” most of which are also a form of self-soothing. For example, Jimmy submerges himself in the thermal hot pools of Rotorua that, Fox suggests, Jimmy “strongly associat[es] with his mother” (Fox 198). Fox also points out that Jimmy’s compensatory maternal self-soothing “objects” are most often manifested in a transgressive sexual context, leaving him open to manipulation from others. Jimmy also attempts to sooth the effects of his psychic trauma by seeking substitutes for maternal love through transgressive stealing and fighting. These inadequate maternal substitutes become “compulsive and addictive” because of the way they provide only fleeting psychic relief followed by pain and shame (Fox 198).

### *Methodology*

My thesis will follow this new, more positive trend set by Heim and Fox in regards to Duff’s writing. I will endeavour to expand their arguments as well as establish new insights into Duff’s portrayal of the negative effects of a loveless childhood by looking at his most recent novels, *Dreamboat Dad* and *Who Sings for*

*Lu?* To do so, I will draw upon psychoanalytic theory to shed light on the effects of the loveless childhood that Duff depicts in his adolescent characters. In my first chapter, therefore, I will outline the psychoanalytic paradigms that I have found most useful for this purpose.

Chapter one outlines three main psychoanalytic theoretical structures that I have identified as being crucial to my thesis: the theory of emotional deprivation; the theory of shame; and the theory of the shame-rage spiral. I will use this psychoanalytic theoretical paradigm to examine Duff's representations of the negative causes and consequences of a loveless childhood. Psychoanalytic theory is often accompanied by "real life" clinical observations as well as specific references to scientific studies; therefore, aligning Duff's characters with psychoanalytical theory will give weight and credibility to the issues I believe he is attempting to address in his writing. In my second chapter, I analyse Duff's representation of an inadequate and neglectful childhood and identify its consequences in his early male youths, Charlie from *State Ward* and Sonny from *One Night out Stealing*. I will use the theoretical structures previously outlined to explore the way in which Duff represents emotional deprivation, psychic shame, narcissistic rage and the yearning for love these adolescent characters develop.

In my third chapter, I will continue to explore the manifestations of shame and emotional deprivation by looking at Duff's more recent adolescent youths: Jimmy, from *Both Sides of the Moon*, as well as Mark and Chud from *Dreamboat Dad*. I will identify the evolving nature of Duff's vision by tracking the shift that becomes apparent in 1998 with the publication of *Both Sides of the Moon*. After the publication of *Both Sides of the Moon*, it is increasingly clear that Duff is exploring alternative options for his unloved and ashamed fictional youths which offer a much more

hopeful and redemptive vision for the future. For example, his earlier troubled youths are portrayed as doomed to self-destruct, but his more recent unloved youths are portrayed as possessing a sense of hope and the potential for redemption. Through these later characters we can see that Duff's vision has developed to include the possibility of the cycle of bad parenting, shame and violence having the potential to stop with them.

In chapter four I discuss the similarities and differences in how Duff portrays a female response to shame as apposed to a male one. Aggression and violence are apparent in both male and female adolescence; however, Duff's female protagonists are far more prone to violence against themselves, such as suicide, risky sexual behaviour and substance abuse, whereas their male counterparts are more susceptible to violence against others, such as fighting, gang involvement, criminal behaviour and committing acts of sexual abuse. The contrast between the sexes, Duff shows, is consistent with the psychoanalytical theory that explains the kind of violence that arises from shame. However, Duff's most recent female character, Lu from *Who Sings for Lu?*, while she initially follows this male/female division, moves later in the novel, from a typical female response to shame to behaviour that is much more in line with a male response to shame.

## Chapter One

## Emotional Deprivation, Shame and the Shame-Rage Spiral: Theoretical Perspectives

Psychoanalysts propose that the influence of early childhood is so incredibly profound that it can dramatically alter a person's personality and shape his or her emotional states and thought processes into adulthood. Through this connection between childhood and the psychic make up of an individual, psychoanalytic theory has revealed significant insights into how our parents' role in the first few years of life has shaped us as individuals. When someone experiences a traumatic childhood the vulnerable facets of that person's being are negatively impacted on, dramatically reducing their ability to cope with the world, and the people around them. This leads them to develop neuroses, pathological behaviours, social problems and, more often than not, leads to delinquency and/or criminality later in life. In this chapter, I will discuss several psychoanalytic theories which relate to this developmental process. I will outline how psychic development *should* occur during an adequate and loving early childhood period, and the consequences for the psyche when this is not the case. The detrimental consequences on the psyche arising from the traumatic experience of a loveless childhood broadly fall under the term "Emotional Deprivation".

Sigmund Freud, the original founder of psychoanalytic theory, has been influential for all those who follow him despite his sometimes controversial ideas. A statement has been imputed to Freud that "the mind is like an iceberg, it floats with one-seventh of its bulk above water" (Burdein 359). This metaphor illustrates the general concept behind psychoanalytic theory. The tip of the iceberg represents

external behavioural signifiers. As we all understand, the tip of the iceberg, visible floating on the top of the water, is only a fraction of the whole body of ice. Therefore, this metaphor suggests that external, abnormal behaviours, visible on the outside, will often indicate larger psychic problems beneath the surface. Kilmartin also points to this, suggesting that “deeper regions of the psyche are more important in understanding behaviour than the [individual’s] conscious sense of self” (65).

Following on from Freud, many psychoanalytical theorists deal with the impact that parents, and especially the mother who does not adequately provide for her infant’s needs, have on a child. The theorists in this field, especially D.W. Winnicott, “consider the relevance of early childhood experience to be profound”; they view abnormal adult behaviour as reflecting and reworking childhood psychological issues (Kilmartin 65). For example, Christopher Bollas, developing the ideas of Winnicott,<sup>1</sup> describes how, in the ordinary course of things, a child’s physical and psychological needs are met by the mother.<sup>2</sup> The mother’s main objective is to keep her child in a continual state of contentedness until such time as the child is old enough to mirror internally the love and security that she provides as a maternal figure. The child’s successful transition from dependency on the mother to internal mirroring and self sufficiency is a skill necessary in preparation for adulthood; it requires the child to internalise the mother’s love by developing what psychoanalysts call “internal introjects” at critical moments during the separation process. Well

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on the psychoanalysis understanding of the importance of early childhood, Winnicott’s *Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* is one of the most important studies on the role of the mother.

<sup>2</sup> I will use the word “mother” throughout this study to suggest the primary, maternal caretaker of a child.

developed internal introjects secure a sense of psychic-self and narcissistic equilibrium for the child.

If parenting is inadequate, however, “the infant’s nascent ego capacities will suffer, perhaps irreparably” (Bollas 41). If children do not experience expected levels of love and attention from a maternal figure, they cannot internalise a sense of importance and security that allows them to develop into functioning, self-assured adults. Moreover, any maternal influence to which the unloved child does have exposure is likely to be a negative one, thus compounding the negativity the child feels about himself and heightening his psychic trauma. To ease his or her psychic trauma, an unloved and therefore emotionally deprived child will search for objects that can satisfy the desperate need to fill the void left by an inadequate maternal figure in infancy.<sup>3</sup> Thus, emotional deprivation, caused by an inadequate and neglectful childhood, has the ability to spark a series of unconscious psychic processes that manifest themselves through an individual’s later behaviour.

The psychic processes involved when someone is emotionally deprived in this way expand out to include many different feelings, responses and behavioural manifestations: individuals feel worthless and unwanted, and they constantly long for love. They become easily enraged, violent and frustrated and they often experience crippling guilt, isolation, and a stifling inability to express themselves. They develop an inability to trust and therefore love. To compensate for their lack of love they often engage in addictive and compulsive self-soothing obsessions that can be transgressive in nature. Moreover, emotional deprivation often fills them with a painful and constant feeling of shame, which, when toxic and ongoing, develops into the cyclic

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<sup>3</sup> Psychoanalytic theory often uses the word “object” to describe something an individual, who is in a state of psychic trauma, will invest with emotional energy, or cathect, in order to relieve their emotional stress.

shame-rage spiral. For the remainder of this chapter, I intend to expand on this brief overview of emotional deprivation, shame and shame-rage. First, I will outline how the psychic development of a child is highly influenced by his or her connection to the mother. Next, I will explore the three major phases of psychic distress that an unloved child goes through: emotional deprivation, shame and the shame-rage spiral.

### *The Importance of Motherhood*

Psychic disorders and narcissistic imbalances are often the consequence of an unloving childhood. This is because, as infants we are totally dependent on our parents to provide not only the basics of survival—food shelter and warmth—but also the security, love, and attention that help us to create a sense of our own internal identity (McDougall, “Narcissus” 300-301). Our parents, or primary caregivers, are the only people who can provide us with a reliable and stable psychic base from which to grow into well-adjusted adults.

Nancy Chodorow, an interdisciplinary scholar with an interest in psychoanalysis and sociology, has examined the importance of the mother for the developing child and, consequently, the importance of the mothering role in society. In her study entitled *The Reproduction of Mothering*, she states that, in early childhood the “infant’s mental as well as physical survival depends on his or her social environment and relationships” (57). Infants are not born with a sense of their own internal psychic-self; they must develop it. Therefore, when Chodorow talks about looking after the child’s mental as well as physical needs, she is suggesting that the parent must facilitate her child by playing the role of “external ego” until such

time as he or she has successfully developed his or her own “adaptive ego capacities” (58).

In order for the child to develop his own ego capacities and advance to this level of psychic independence, a certain kind of parenting must be available from birth. This kind of parenting is warm and loving as well as “consistent and free from arbitrariness” (Chodorow 58). In other words, for a child to develop normally, he or she must be given enough psychic and emotional support to build up a sense of separate self and to stockpile generous reserves of self-reliance, self-esteem and self-worth. The mother’s job is to be the supportive and attentive “training wheels”, carrying the child’s psychic security for the first few years of life (McDougall “Narcissus” 300-301; Bradshaw 43).

John Bradshaw, who wrote *Healing the Shame that Binds You* (1988), also emphasises the importance of the loving maternal figure in a child’s development. Bradshaw uses the analogy of a house to explain the different levels of psychic protection we have throughout the various stages of life. In his analogy, the house represents the psyche or the psychic-self. The image of a door on a house symbolizes, what Bradshaw calls, an “ego boundary” (43). An “ego boundary” acts as a barrier; it protects the self by shutting off any negative outside influence that may threaten the stability of the psyche. An ego boundary is, as Bradshaw puts it, “an internal strength by which a person guards her inner space” (43). For example, if someone with no ego boundaries were told that he is worthless and stupid, that person’s sense of self would be diminished because of this lack of internal strength. For the individual with no ego boundaries, any false or dehumanising statements would be taken on by his psyche as a truth. In contrast, a person who has developed ego boundaries is likened to a secure house with doors. Bradshaw also goes on to extend this metaphor by differentiating

between someone with strong ego boundaries, who is likened to a house that has doors and all the doorknobs on the inside, and someone with weak ego boundaries, who is likened to a house with doors, but all the doorknobs on the outside (Bradshaw 43).

If we use Bradshaw's analogy, an infant or small child is psychologically unprotected—a house with no doors. A successful maternal figure protects the child's unstable and unprotected psyche by looking into the child's eyes, meeting his need for recognition of himself as a “separate and unique being,” and reflecting his existence back to him (McDougall, “Narcissus” 300-301). The child sees, on one level, his reflection in her lens, but on another level he sees what he represents for his mother: that he is in existence and that he is valued (McDougall, “Narcissus” 301). When a child sees these things in the eyes of the mother he recognises himself as having a “privileged place and a personal value in the eyes of another” (McDougall, “Narcissus” 301).

When the “good-enough mother” is within the child's reach she is constantly reflecting his existence back to him (Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* 141). Because of this, the child's psyche remains protected from the trauma of experiencing the sensation of “psychic death” (McDougall “Narcissus” 302). This “mirroring” of the self through the mother is an effective form of psychic protection for the infant, but only if the mother is reliable and attentive to the child's needs.

As we have seen from both Bradshaw and Chodorow, a small child's vulnerable psychic state is firstly protected by the maternal figure. However, there is a secondary protection device that also protects the child's psychic balance: his or her naturally egocentric nature (Bradshaw 42). The young child's underdeveloped brain leaves him inherently egocentric. The egocentric mind does not possess the ability for

“moral thinking” and it is not until around the age of seven or eight that the psyche begins to grow out of this infant state (Bradshaw 42). Even then, it is not until around the age of sixteen that children become “capable of pure altruistic behaviour” and thinking (Bradshaw 42). For example, the child’s egocentric way of viewing the world and his place in it involves the belief that all things revolve around him and everything happens because of him. In the egocentric mind of the child, his parents exist only in terms of their interaction with him; the egocentric child is naturally incapable of seeing from another person’s perspective (Bradshaw 43).

Christopher Bollas explains this concept further. He refers to the “infant’s subjective experience of the mother” (41). A subjective experience is one that is not based on facts, but exists, rightly or wrongly, in the mind of the individual. In the subjective experience of an infant, the mother is one with the baby. Her actions are not attributed to her maternal “logic of care,” and the infant is not aware of his own individual separate “ego capacities” (Bollas 41). Bollas explains the subjective, egocentric world-view of the infant, using the example of the distress that a baby feels when his self-securing mirroring is broken in the mother’s absence. He says, the infant “experiences distress and the dissolving of stress through the apparitional-like presence of the mother. Agony of hunger, moment of emptiness, is transformed by mother’s milk into an experience of fullness” (41-2). As Bollas’ explanation suggests, primary transformations or infantile protection devices—in particular the baby’s egocentricity and the mother’s mirroring—work together to keep the child in a stable and contented state. The child’s good, attentive mother acts as his mirror, securing the child’s psychic reality in his mind. This is complemented by his naturally egocentric nature that confirms his mother’s intrinsic link to him in his mind.

*Separating from the Mother: Finding the Separate Self*

At this point, it is important to delve slightly further into the specific mechanics employed at the transition stage of separating from the mother. What psychological steps does the child have to take in order to successfully develop his own internal introjects, ego boundaries and sense of separate self, and in which ways does emotional deprivation hinder this crucial process? When we understand how the separation process *should* eventuate with “good-enough” parents, we will see how bad parents, and the emotional deprivation they inflict, can disrupt the child’s narcissistic security and inhibit the separation process with severe and ongoing consequences. These consequences have the power to impact negatively on the psyche for the rest of the individual’s life (Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes* 145).

Joyce McDougall, a leading psychoanalytic theorist, proclaims that, initially, all children live under the illusion of several “impossible and forbidden wishes” and desires (*Theaters of the Mind* 10). Examples of the forbidden and the impossible are as follows: the forbidden is typically the socially condemned, but “potentially realizable,” desire to commit incest with the parents (McDougall, *Theaters of the Mind* 8). Overcoming the infant’s impossible desires on separation from the mother is slightly more complex. The child must realize he or she is not omnipotent or all controlling and therefore, cannot “control another’s thoughts and actions” (McDougall, *Theaters of the Mind* 9). The child must also come to accept the reality of the fact that he or she is one sex or another and “does not have the power and sexual attributes of both parents” (McDougall, *Theaters of the Mind* 9). The child must also grow to understand that he or she can not live forever, or as McDougall

suggests, the infant must realise “the inevitability of death” (*Theaters of the Mind* 9). Finally, the most important impossible desire in terms of understanding the consequences of emotional deprivation is breaking the illusion of the child’s imagined “fusional oneness with the mother” (McDougall, *Theaters of the Mind* 8). This impossible illusion is connected to the child’s egocentric mind. The child does not see the mother as a separate person, but simply as an extension of himself.

The mother—who initially supports these forbidden and impossible desires—will later also partake in helping the child overcome the trauma of realising that his impossible and forbidden desires are illusions. It is important to note that, because all infants go through this process, impossible desires and separation from the mother are “connected to inevitable narcissistic wounds that beset the human infant from birth onward” (McDougall, *Theaters of the Mind* 8). However, in the case of bad and unloving parent, these narcissistic wounds take on a much larger significance for the future of that child.

When a child begins to realise his separateness to the mother, he will often develop an attachment to an inanimate object. We are all familiar with the fact that many children carry around with them a very special object such as a toy, a blanket or a dummy. This object becomes so attached to them and so much a part of their psychic stability that they will refuse to go about daily routines without it. Psychoanalysts refer to this special kind of object as a transitional object; an object that assists in the transitional space from helpless and dependent infant to the slightly more independent stages of toddler or preschooler. The transitional object is a primary step in the child’s early separation from the mother because of its soothing and stabilising role. The transitional object is “situated on the border between internal and external reality” (Fintzy 107). Winnicott was the first to acknowledge the importance

of the transitional object; he states that it is “a symbol of the union of the baby and the mother” an introject of the internalised mother that helps the child develop his own internal strategies separate from the mother (“The Location” 4-5).

For any child’s early psychic makeup, “[t]he establishment of a transitional object [...] is a progressive manoeuvre” (Fintzy 107). It helps buffer the otherwise traumatic and unbearable realization that it is impossible to be one with the mother and, in most cases, it is a healthy step towards independence (McDougall, *Theaters of the Mind* 8). As the child’s first “not-me possession” and external symbol of the mother’s love, the transitional object arouses “feelings and reactions in the infant as would happen were he reacting to a person” (Fintzy 107). In the healthy, loved child, the transitional object is gradually discarded because it is not longer needed; the child’s narcissistic self is stable and secure. For the emotionally deprived, unhealthy child the transitional object may remain with them all their lives, in one form or another, to their detriment. These children are hindered during the separation process because they have not successfully formed their own sense of self and narcissistic stability, and so the transitional object—which, in adulthood, may morph into transgressive impulses such as drug use, alcohol abuse or unhealthy attachments to a sexual partner—remains the means by which the individual maintains their “narcissistic equilibrium” and shields their vulnerable psyche from the traumatic feeling of “psychic death” (McDougall, “Narcissus” 302).

*Emotional Deprivation: the Trauma of the Unloved Child*

As we have seen, in early infancy the child is at the mercy of the mother. She is the only one that can keep the child content and safe from the traumatic experience of feeling that one's psychic existence is threatened. As the child grows, the mother is extremely important in supporting the separation process involving the child's development of internal introjects and a stable sense of self. Internal introjects allow the child to become separate and independent from the mother over time. A child who has well defined and stable internal introjects also has a secure sense of their self-identity and narcissistic image. If either of these processes is not managed properly—as often happens in a neglectful and unloving home—the child's psychic base and narcissistic stability will always feel threatened. When the parent is emotionally unavailable or physically absent the child will suffer emotional deprivation and the normal separation of the mother and child will not occur.

John Bradshaw, an academic and professional counsellor, calls all kinds of parental neglect “abandonment” (41). He defines abandonment, not only in the traditional sense that includes physical distance and separation from the child for prolonged lengths of time, but also in a sense that includes various forms of emotional abandonment and abuse. Emotional abandonment, Bradshaw claims, comes in many forms: “stroke deprivation, narcissistic deprivation, fantasy bonding, the neglect of developmental dependence needs and family system enmeshment” (41). Therefore, in this context, all types of child abuse—sexual, physical and emotional—fall under the term “child abandonment” (Bradshaw 41).

Bradshaw also suggests that emotionally abandoning a child, as opposed to simply physically abandoning a child, is much more damaging psychologically. He suggests, “to be abandoned by someone who is physically present is much more crazymaking” (42). For example, if the parents—although they are around the child everyday—fail to invest in the child a sense of love and positive attention, that child will feel “flawed and inferior” (Bradshaw 13). This devalues the child internally; he or she feels unworthy of the parents’ love and is dehumanised and psychologically damaged by their emotional abandonment (Bradshaw 13).

James Gilligan—a director of the Center for the Study of Violence at Harvard Medical school, a former medical director of a hospital for the criminally insane, and a director of mental health for the Massachusetts prison system—often refers to the emotional deprivation during his analysis of the criminals with which he works. Gilligan associates a healthy self with love, stating: “the self cannot survive without love. The self starved of love dies” (47). Gilligan is especially interested on the effect of parental violence, or abandonment as we have dubbed it, on young children: he asks, “how can violence to the body kill the soul, even if it does not kill the body?” (47). The answer to this question, Gilligan suggests, is simple: when a child is abused by his or her own parents, the most important and influential people in his or her life, the child is not only physically hurt, but deeply emotionally scarred. Violence is the ultimate communication of “the absence of love by the person inflicting the violence” (Gilligan 47).

Love, or the absence of love, in childhood is an important concept in Gilligan’s analysis of criminality. He believes that the love someone receives from others, and one’s own love for oneself, are the only two sources of love available for

the self. If a child is unloved by his or her parents that child will “fail to build up [...] reserves of self-love” and will become emotionally deprived; “[w]ithout feelings of love, the self feels numb, empty and dead” (Gilligan 47). With no reserves of love to access, the emotionally deprived child will be unable to love him or herself and, as an adolescent or adult, will not be in a position to cope with the inevitable human experiences of rejection, humiliation and shame.

As we have seen, experiences of abandonment threaten the child’s psychic existence and expose him to narcissistic mortification and the fear of psychic death. When an infant is abandoned and neglected by the mother, he has effectively “experienced a break in life’s continuity” (Winnicott, *The Location* 5). This prompts him to organize his “primitive defences [...] to defend against a repetition of ‘unthinkable anxiety’ or a return of the acute confusional state that belongs to disintegration of nascent ego structure” (Winnicott, *The Location* 5). Joyce McDougall looks in detail at what happens when an infant experiences the abandonment of the mother. McDougall explains the mothering role as the human baby’s first experiences of the Other. She looks at the “role of the Other, in the economy of identity” with a particular focus on people who are “fraught with a particularly sensitive narcissistic fragility” because of emotional deprivation and abandonment (“Narcissus” 303).

For fragile individuals, the stabilisation and maintenance of their “narcissistic homeostasis” is an ongoing conflict that follows them throughout their life (McDougall, “Narcissus” 302). In order to survive psychologically, the person must set up “innumerable defences or protective relationships which play a truly vital role” in keeping their narcissistic economy from falling out of balance and threatening their psychic survival (McDougall, “Narcissus” 302). The impact of the threat of “psychic

death” on the individual is profound (Phillips 21). When one’s psychic existence is threatened, an individual will fight just as hard to preserve his self-image, as he will to keep himself physically alive when his life is threatened (Dodd 885; Phillips 20-21; Winnicott, “The Location” 5). Likewise, McDougall also places great emphasis on the strong instinct to protect one’s psyche from death. She states:

I would furthermore propose that the maintenance of this feeling of personal identity might be considered as a primordial need in the individual’s psychic life—equal in intensity and importance to the instinct of self-preservation in relation to biological life—an unending struggle against psychic death. (“Narcissus” 301-302)

The unending struggle McDougall is referring to is the long-term effects of severe psychological deprivation in childhood. She presents two case studies of women who show clear signs of ongoing psychic trauma in adulthood that can be traced back to their childhood. These two women, Sabine and Sandra, “constantly struggle to maintain their narcissistic homeostasis” and this struggle is manifested through their abnormal behaviour (McDougall, “Narcissus” 303). It is interesting to note that these two women have developed opposite neurotic needs. The neurotic impulses that each of these women feels is strong and both women feel that their individual needs must be met in order to secure their psyche and keep it stable.

Sabine, McDougall’s first case study, was emotionally abandoned early in life by both her parents. Later, their death left her physically abandoned as well. In order to “contain intense feelings of narcissistic mortification or overwhelming anxiety,” Sabine became staunchly independent from an early age and denied herself some basic

and vital parental needs (McDougall, "Narcissus" 309-310). McDougall suggests that young Sabine had created a "system of psychic survival" with a structure, in terms of how she related to others, that was a "practically unshakeable series of narcissistic defences" ("Narcissus" 310). This strict self-protection structure still exists in her adult life, keeping the damaged child safe inside her. However, Sabine's protective structure can only be maintained with the strict compliance from those around her. Sabine makes sure others keep their distance from her emotionally and psychically because she is mortally afraid of being invaded, in a psychic sense, by others ("Narcissus" 312). In the presence of others, Sabine feels as if she is losing her sense of self. Therefore, McDougall states, "the only way [for Sabine] to preserve her feeling of identity and to maintain narcissistic homeostasis is to flee into solitude" ("Narcissus" 314). Sabine essentially closes "the door against others, against the terror of being swallowed up by them and losing her individuality" ("Narcissus" 314).

McDougall's second case study, Sandra, is quite the opposite of Sabine. Sandra desperately *needs* the world of others. She clings to others "with the hope of achieving a more stable narcissistic image and economy" ("Narcissus" 314). Sandra needs to have the mirror of another's gaze to confirm that she is in existence and still holds "personal value" ("Narcissus" 315). This need for a mirror object is often tied up in a sexual object desire, and so, Sandra's relationships with men are continually fraught with anxiety. For example:

Sandra demanded a perfect reply to every wish that linked her to her lover; and these wishes were treated like urgent needs. If they were unfulfilled, she could only hope to die. Such a relationship is that of the babe in arms and, like the nursling, Sandra attempted to obtain magical

control of her need-dispensing object. Every gratification confirmed her feeling of existence and of self-esteem. Each disappointment exposed her to narcissistic mortification and the threat of psychic death.

(“Narcissus” 319)

Through McDougall’s case studies, we can confirm again that the childhood and individual experiences can greatly influence the psychic make up of that person. In the case of inadequate parenting, these consequences can be ongoing and severely detrimental to the future life of the child.

#### *Shame: a Painful and Dehumanising Emotion*

If we consider the child’s naturally egocentric nature, we can see how his or her egocentricity, mixed with parental abandonment and emotional deprivation, can accelerate the rate at which a child’s psyche and sense of self can be diminished and broken. A neglected and emotionally deprived child’s subjective view of his parents, instead of helping protect his psychic stability by working alongside the mother’s mirroring, begins to work against him. The child’s egocentric thinking leads him to believe that his parents’ emotional abandonment and unloving behaviour is a direct reflection of his self worth. He will believe that he is not worthy of love and attention and that there must be something inherently wrong with his inner being (Bradshaw 47). Emotionally deprived children will always fail to understand that it is the parent who is at fault and/or being manipulated by his or her own internal demons, and he

will, by nature, always blame himself (Bradshaw, *Healing* 43). This causes a hugely painful and damaging sense of shame to essentially overwhelm the child.

The founding theorist in the psychoanalytical study of shame is Helen Block Lewis who wrote the introduction to *The Role of Shame in Symptom Formation* (1987). Lewis opened this collection of essays on shame by divulging that, after forty years as a practicing psychoanalyst, she has “slowly come to appreciate the power of shame to create neurotic and psychotic symptoms” (H. Lewis, Introduction 1). Lewis goes on to explain how her acknowledgement of shame was an important step in examining and understanding the link between childhood shame and its connection with neurotic imbalances and disorders.

Lewis sheds light on the fact that Freud neglected and underestimated the importance of shame during his initial research into mental illness. Subsequently, his analysis and psychoanalytical findings in this field contain significant gaps and misunderstandings. Freud’s initial insights into mental illness were “drawn mainly from the sufferings of hysterical women [...] in middle-class Vienna” who lived in a highly patriarchal society and were considered members of the “inferior” sex (H. Lewis, Introduction 4). Lewis points out that in every one of Freud’s first eighteen cases of “hysteria,” the women reported that they were victims of sexual abuse in childhood. Therefore, as one would expect, Freud’s initial hypothesis regarded sexual abuse as an important factor in development of adult “hysteria” (H. Lewis, Introduction 4).

Tragically, Freud moved away from his initial theory after he became interested in infantile sexuality (H. Lewis, Introduction 4). His new focus on libidinal sexual fantasy in childhood led him to skip over shame in favour of guilt. These changes in Freud’s focus led him to form a very different perspective. Freud

dismissed the women's sexual abuse claims as false, a convenient conclusion as he was finding it difficult to believe that the accused men—men of considerable standing in the community—would commit such horrifying acts of child abuse. Freud claimed that his patients' "hysteria" merely evolved out of their sense of guilt about "illicit childhood fantasies" (H. Lewis, Introduction 4). He suggested the women simply imagined the abuse in response to the guilt they felt over their forbidden sexual desires towards their father (H. Lewis, Introduction 4). By turning "his attention away from actual seductions to guilt over fantasies, Freud turned away from shame" and its role in mental illness and psychic disturbance (H. Lewis, Introduction 5).

By exposing Freud's oversights, Lewis has re-evaluated psychoanalytic theory, putting shame and its consequences in the forefront of psychoanalysis. She has made space for shame, insisting on its importance in the analysis of mental illness and disturbed psychic processes. Lewis was the first to differentiate clearly between shame and guilt. She led the way in terms of exploring the different types of shame reactions and the long-term effect of shame on an individual's behaviour and psyche. In 1971 Lewis published, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, a groundbreaking study in which she sets out the foundational differences between shame and guilt that had been commonly misunderstood and confused, and differentiates between the way in which these two emotions each affect the psychic balance of an individual. She also gives shame a distinct role, apart from guilt, in shaping how the identity of a person is formed—a distinction that becomes paramount for her subsequent analysis of shame that will frame her career.

Lewis suggests that when an individual experiences shame he or she places emphasis on blaming the *self*, not the shameful event. A shamed person's perspective

involves “more self-conscious[ness] and self-imaging” than a guilty person, making the individual much more concerned about the implications of negative events on themselves than they are about the consequences for others (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 33; Tangney 63). An individual who has experienced long-term exposure to shame has an increased vulnerability to narcissistic disorders. For example, they will have thoughts such as: how could I do that; I am worthless because I stole from Peter. This is quite different from someone experiencing guilt, where the emphasis is put on the action or behaviour, not on the self. A guilty person will have thoughts such as: what was I thinking doing that; I really hurt Peter. In a more recent study, June Tangney summed up Lewis’ findings:

[T]he fundamental differences between shame and guilt centers on the role of the self. Shame involves fairly global negative evaluations of the self (i.e., “who I am”). Guilt involves a more articulated condemnation of a specific behaviour (i.e., “what I did”). This difference in focus [...] has far reaching implications for the immediate phenomenological experience of these emotions, for subsequent motivation, and [...] ultimately for behaviour. (24)

From Lewis’ clear differentiation of the effects of shame versus guilt, we can see that shame is undoubtedly connected to the self. Therefore, shame is extremely influential in a naturally egocentric child who has not developed a stable or protected inner self.

Psychoanalysts, such as Lewis, are interested in exploring ongoing shame in early childhood. They conclude that an ongoing and deeply ingrained sense of shame is detrimental and highly disruptive for the emotional makeup of the child and,

therefore, this unhealthy shame can be referred to as “toxic shame” (Bradshaw vii). Through no fault of the individual, toxic shame is introduced into his or her being during the early stages of childhood and negatively impacts on the individual’s sense of self, potential and future life trajectory in substantial ways (Bradshaw vii). John Bowlby picks up on the toxic shame an unloved child experiences, saying: “[a]n unwanted child is likely not only to feel unwanted by his parents but to believe that he is essentially unwanted” (quoted in *Shame: The Exposed Self* 115).

Toxic shame in childhood—born out of emotional deprivation and an egocentric world view that children carry—moves an individual away from experiencing normal, healthy shame—a healthy shame that signifies our limits—into experiencing shame that is a “state of being, a core identity” (Bradshaw 10). Toxic shame eventually becomes a part of an individual’s identity when it is continuously evoked in them. Long exposure to shame is highly detrimental because shame is such a painful and unbearable experience. The pain of toxic shame “always necessitates a cover-up,” or the projection of a false self which hides the shameful true self from the world (Bradshaw viii). Toxic shame makes the person feel that his or her true self is defective or flawed. Bradshaw argues that “once one becomes a false self, one ceases to exist psychologically” (viii).

Lewis pioneered several basic terms that describe the different types of shame reactions an individual may unwittingly employ in order to protect his or her psyche from the painful and damaging feeling of toxic shame. For example, she distinguishes between “overt, unidentified” shame and “bypassed” shame (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 197-198). In Lewis’s theory, overt, unidentified shame is characterised by severe “autonomic stimulation,” such as blushing and a faster heart

rate, a sense of disharmony and inconsistency within the self and a reduction of the size of the self (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 198). Someone experiencing overt, unidentified shame will feel small; he or she will desire the ability to hide away from others and not be seen (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 197-198). In the same vein, an overt, unidentified shame experience also leaves the individual diminished in size in terms of their reduced ability to function normally or react to their situation (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 197).

Bypassed shame, on the other hand, is characterised by the feeling of a sudden cringe, jolt or state of wordless shock followed by constant ideation (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 233). Lewis proposes that ideation, where one forms, imagines or conceives an idea about how “others” perceive them, “creates distance between the self and the emotion which would otherwise be evoked as shame” (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 233) Therefore, the shamed individual bypasses shame and does not acknowledge its existence. Michael Lewis picks up on her discussion of bypassed shame. He suggests that despite toxic shame being “unacknowledged, denied, repressed or bypassed,” the toxic shame, and its ability to influence our behaviour, does not go away (M. Lewis 120). In other words, the individual who bypasses his shame does not fix his problems, but simply covers them over. Furthermore, the individual who bypasses his shame can no longer account for the ongoing and negative behavioural manifestations of his bypassed shame. Lewis also includes the idea of “emotional substitution” in his study (M. Lewis 167). Emotional substitution is where the shamed individual avoids shame by replacing shame with another, less painful emotion such as embarrassment, sadness, or, most commonly, rage (M. Lewis 167).

I would like to propose that both of these theorists' insights into bypassed, denied and repressed shame and emotional substitution can be grouped together under the term disavowal. The disavowal of shame is a self-defensive reaction to the psychic pain shame inflicts. To disavow is to deny the existence of toxic shame by embracing another emotion. Those who have a diminished and broken sense of self, and those whose narcissistic equilibrium is constantly under threat, are prone to experience abnormal, continuous shame, and almost always have an inbuilt and highly toxic sense of shame from childhood. These fragile individuals, as we have seen, are constantly putting in place protective devices to stabilise their narcissistic image and keep them from feeling as if their psychic self may disappear and cease to exist altogether. Such individuals must also deal with the toxic shame that threatens their psychic self because of the way shame has a deeply painful and dehumanising effect on the psyche.

When a person is consistently dehumanised and diminished through the shame of parental rejection and abandonment, he will not possess a stable sense of internal self. He must find it elsewhere. Most commonly he will look to the Other in order to gain a sense of his self. In order to establish a sense of self he will constantly "view [... him]self from the standpoint of the 'other' " and speculate about how they perceive him (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 38). However, because this person suffers from ongoing, toxic shame he will always experience painful feelings of "being unable to live up to the standard of an admired 'imago' " despite the reality of the situation (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 41). "For shame to occur," Lewis explains, an emotional relationship or "tie" must exist between the individual and the admired imago (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 42). The most

common example is that of the parent/child relationship where by the child is conscious of how the admired parental imago perceives him or her.

An emotionally deprived and ashamed person's inner feelings of self-loathing and worthlessness taint his understanding of how others perceive him, as well as attesting to a dark and secret internal battle that is far too painful for the psyche to acknowledge or address. In other words, the ashamed person's inner neurosis constructs a negative false-reality of how the Other perceives him. This false-reality is conformation of his own inner self-loathing and quickly becomes a new source of shame, humiliation and pain—adding to, and punctuating, the childhood shame he still carries around in day-to-day life. This is how a cycle of shame, rage and guilt is established and circulates throughout a person's consciousness and eventually becomes part of his way of living and thinking.

### *The Shame-rage Spiral*

Toxic shame causes a kind of deep pain that is ongoing and centered around the self. Moreover, the pain from toxic shame is self-perpetuating; for example, when a person is “infected” with toxic shame, that person will hold on to the shame and become locked into a cycle of self-perpetuating shame. This makes the disavowal of shame and the evacuation of the pain that shame causes all the more necessary for psychic survival in the subliminal mind of the individual.

The transition from shame to rage is not hard to understand. What is the primary reaction of someone who has been hurt? When someone is deeply hurt by another, intentionally or not, the person who has been hurt feels angry towards that

person. In order to make sense of the painful experience of shame, the shamed individual will very often embrace rage against another. Under the cover of shame-based, surface rage, the person is able to evacuate the pain that suppressed, bypassed shame will continuously create. By “evacuating” the pain of shame outward through rage, the ashamed person diminishes his ability to feel the pain of shame and, in a sense, becomes “immune” to the shame he harbours. Therefore, we can conclude that a shamed individual will use rage to disavow toxic shame and protect himself from the conscious acknowledgment of his deep sense of shame.

Later, the person will begin feel to guilty for becoming so enraged, and this, in turn, will set off another round of shame. The shamed individual moves “from shame into humiliated fury and retaliation and thence into guilt for ‘unjust’ or ‘irrational’ rage” (H. Lewis, Introduction 4, 2). The person becomes essentially “‘caught’ in [various] shame reactions without being aware of his shamed state” (H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 39). This emotional cycle, or “feeling trap,” is made up of a series of subconscious reactions to shame to which humans revert in order to protect their psyche from the acutely painful experience of shame (M. Lewis, *Shame: the Exposed Self* 111).

Many theorists refer to the “shame-rage spiral,” or “shame-rage,” and collectively they have expanded the idea of a shame-induced feeling trap (Scheff 111; M. Lewis 153; H. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* 41). For example, Scheff states that, “when shame is evoked, and not dispelled, it usually touches off a sequence of emotions in rapid succession” of which the most prominent pattern is as follows: shame followed by anger [or rage] followed by guilt, and so on (111). Michael Lewis explains the cyclic pattern of the shame-rage spiral by suggesting that the spiral imagery theorists use to describe a shamed individual’s behaviour derives from the

way prolonged and intense shame, and its aftermath, commonly follow a circular movement; the individual moves “from shame to rage in an alternative spiral fashion” (M. Lewis 153).

Lewis clarifies the shame-rage spiral theory further by exploring and defining the differences between anger arising from shame and rage arising from *prolonged* shame. He argues that rage is a much more intense emotion as it is “associated with a serious, intense wounding of the self;” an emotion that is evoked in response to an “injury to the self” (M. Lewis 153). Shame has the ability to dehumanise and destroy an individual’s sense of self-worth and, therefore, it makes perfect sense that rage is a common response to the pain arising from shame. Lewis goes on to differentiate anger and rage further: anger arising from shame, he states, is because of a singular event, however rage arising from shame is a response to a repetitive and ongoing prolonged shaming (M. Lewis 153). Unlike anger, a natural and fairly common emotion that “assists in [an individual’s] daily attempts to overcome barriers,” rage inhibits the ability to overcome an obstacle and take action (M. Lewis 152). Rage can be understood as a reactive response, not an intelligent and thoughtful response. For example, rage is a generalised response and thus it “tends to be diffused both in terms of its occurrence and in terms of its object,” whereas anger is a much more “restricted, focused response” (M. Lewis 153). When one is angry there is a way out and a way to resolve the problem. However, with rage one is trapped in a cyclic and unbound series of progressively reactive, compulsive, highly painful and inhibiting states (M. Lewis 153).

Gilligan published a comprehensive study of the psychology behind criminality and violence, entitled *Violence: our Deadly Epidemic and its Causes* (1996). In this study, Gilligan sheds light on the theory that psychoanalysts propose

about the dangers of shame-rage. He does this by identifying how a traumatic, neglectful and loveless childhood can often lead to a gripping cycle of shame, violence and criminality: the shame-rage spiral. His insights into the minds of the violent criminals, people he works with on a daily basis, are well thought out, and at times, extremely compassionate. He tells of the horrific childhood circumstances these men grew up with alongside the devastating crimes they went on to commit, whilst outlining the links between a loveless childhood and criminality, offering his analyses of the origins of violence and repeat offending. Gilligan's study of the link between violence and criminality supports the shame-rage spiral theory propounded by psychoanalysis. Moreover, Gilligan's study provides a real life example of how important it is to understand patterns of lovelessness, shame, rage and violence. The psychoanalytic theory I have discussed along with the clinical examples of patients and Gilligan's study into criminal psychology, all contribute towards our understanding of the consequences of an inadequate childhood. This understanding also contributes towards my analysis of Duff's troubled characters and the message that Duff himself is voicing through them.

In this chapter I have explored psychoanalytic theories relating to three key aspects of a traumatic early childhood: emotional deprivation, toxic shame and the "feeling trap" or shame-rage spiral. With these three ideas I have created a theoretical paradigm from which I can go on to explore the psychic processes that Duff's fictional youths go through because of the psychic trauma they suffer in childhood. Duff's characters are so obviously acting out the trauma of their childhoods that they could easily serve as case studies of the psychoanalytic processes involved when a person is unloved and unwanted in childhood.

To summarise, emotional deprivation and toxic shame caused by a neglectful and loveless childhood has a seriously damaging impact on a child's developing psyche. Recent studies into shame have made it increasingly clear that parental betrayal, leading to ongoing toxic shame, does not manifest itself simply. The experience of toxic shame is such a complex and elusive state that, because it is so painful and dehumanising, forces a person to reject and disavow it in order to relieve the threat of psychic death. The disavowal of shame occurs most commonly through a series of different transgressive behavioural reactions and emotions. It is in precisely this way that toxic shame from infantile emotional deprivation and abandonment promotes neurotic, dysfunctional and pathological behavioural patterns.

## Chapter Two

## Transgressive Behaviour: Alan Duff's Adolescent Male Characters

Over the course of Alan Duff's writing career, his choice of protagonist has, more often than not, been a troubled or delinquent adolescent or child. These characters all share one thing in common: they have all experienced the hurt of a bad childhood and some form of parental abandonment causing emotional deprivation and shame, as defined in chapter one. All of Duff's troubled youths possess neuroses arising from their narcissistic fragility and unstable internal sense of self, and none of them is psychologically whole or stable. When we study Duff's characters in terms of how their inadequate upbringing has affected their future, we begin to see striking similarities between their behaviour patterns and coping mechanisms and the psychoanalytic theory and case studies explored previously.

*Once Were Warriors*, the first novel in the Heke trilogy, showcases the environment that produces such troubled youths. Pine Block, the setting for *Once Were Warriors* is, like the majority of Duff's settings, devoid of hope and purpose. Pine Block is a poor and downtrodden community that functions, so it seems, to keep benefit-dependent Maori hidden away from white New Zealand's eyes; it is full of "hard drinking men, and not a few women, who [are] appalling parents, [...] wife beaters, child rapists [and] beer sodden lowlifes" (Duff, *Maori* ix). Much of the text depicts the primary protagonists, Jake and Beth Heke, living out the Pine Block reality day-to-day with their five children. Jake and Beth are both terrible parents. Jake is the worst; he is violent, pig-headed and unemployed and spends most of the

family's weekly benefit at the pub. Although Beth has the potential to be a good mother, her good intentions are consistently overridden by her acceptance of Jake's violent and abusive behaviour as well as her own alcoholism. Beth fails her children on two counts: she fails to protect them from the violence of Pine Block, the type of violence that Jake brings into their lives, and she directly damages them through abandonment and emotional deprivation caused by her own inability to cope.

In this first novel, Duff depicts Jake and Beth's children's struggle to relate to their parents as well as the community that surrounds them. However, in *Once Were Warriors*, the connection between the children's inadequate childhood and the emotional damage that fuels their behaviour is not fully developed. At the point of writing *Once Were Warriors*, Duff seems not to have been fully aware of the motivation surrounding his concern with the troubled adolescent. As Alistair Fox points out, Duff seems to suggest that that the Maori depicted in some of Duff's early writing "are culturally and genetically predisposed to violence and, therefore, are ill-equipped to succeed in a Pakeha-dominated world" (Fox 190). Many Maori and white liberals were offended by Duff's depiction of Maori; they saw Duff's writing as a betrayal of the Maori people and as working to undermine the political grievances and compensations they were fighting for. The indignation over Duff's attitude toward Maori resulted in Duff being publicly discredited and undermined (Cox 21). However, Fox suggests that the "genetic-flaw" concept Duff propounds in parts of the earlier novels in his trilogy is simply an example of his "intense [...] indignation" and hot-headed response to the horrors often portrayed in his writing (Fox 190). As Fox puts it, it is almost as if Duff is "carrie[d] away on these occasions to express a more extreme conclusion than he may actually mean" (Fox 190). Moreover, Fox goes on to trace the signs, primarily in the Heke trilogy, which indicate that Duff is "aware of the

possibility of an alternative explanation” which he is unable to fully comprehend or express sufficiently at this point.

The signs that Fox points out suggest in Duff a developing understanding of the connection between a loveless childhood and the consequences that emotional deprivation, psychic trauma and toxic shame arising from an inadequate childhood have on his youthful protagonists. In this chapter, I endeavour to support Fox’s argument by exploring the transgressions adopted by Duff’s youths. I will focus on Duff’s male protagonists from two of his early novels: Sonny, from *One Night out Stealing* (1991), and Charlie, from Duff’s short novel, *State Ward* (1994).

*One Night Out Stealing* and *State Ward* were published in the twelve intervening years between *Once Were Warriors*, published in 1990, and *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted* (1996) and *Jake’s Long Shadow* (2002), which complete the Heke series. Charlie and Sonny, the protagonists of *State Ward* and *One Nigh Out Stealing* respectively, are characters through whom I believe Duff begins to consolidate one of the dominant themes in his writing—the detrimental effect of a loveless childhood. Through the characters of Charlie and Sonny, Duff maintains a focus on trying to uncover the ways in which these two boys’ transgressive impulses are fuelled by deep trauma and pain. Charlie and Sonny are essentially the same character; they are simply at different stages of life. Charlie is portrayed by Duff to be a younger, more innocent version of Sonny. At the end of *State Ward*, Charlie has failed to move forward in overcoming the pain and hurt of his deprived childhood. We can assume, therefore, that Charlie will continue to use and develop his transgressive coping patterns of behaviour well into adolescence as Sonny has. Jimmy, from *Both Sides of the Moon*, whom I will discuss in chapter two, is slightly more developed. Unlike Charlie and Sonny, Jimmy presents us with a sense of hope for the future. This

increasing sense of hope reflects another development apparent in Duff's writing that I will explore in depth later. In this chapter, I will look at the hopelessness and the self-destructive tendencies apparent in Charlie and Sonny, Duff's early male adolescent characters.

Thirteen-year-old Charlie Wilson is the youngest of the group. Because of his youth, Charlie has not yet become fully immersed in the kind of transgressive lifestyle that Sonny displays and, as a result, Charlie makes a good starting point for exploring how an inadequate childhood negatively impacts on a child's emotional development and behaviour. When we are first introduced to Charlie, he has abruptly found himself a state ward of Riverton Boys' Home, a youth detention center for delinquent boys. Although Charlie is shocked at suddenly being labelled a juvenile criminal, he is also quietly proud. Charlie narrates his story in the first person through Duff's typical stream-of-consciousness technique. Duff's use of this narrative strategy allows Charlie's thoughts and feelings to be vividly depicted to the reader.

Psychoanalysis has taught us that the environment in which an infant grows up is an important factor in understanding the forces dictating his or her future behaviour. Charlie and Sonny are classic examples of this. Their inadequate childhood and home life has triggered a deep need in them to turn to certain transgressions to protect their vulnerable psychic economy. Charlie's home-life is typical of that of many of Duff's youths. His parents are unloving and emotionally abusive towards him, and the community he grew up in is most likely just another Pine Block, Duff's standard setting for delinquent, hurting youths.

When Charlie describes his parents, we get an insight into the kind of parenting that can cause an intelligent and sensitive child like Charlie to develop into a troubled delinquent. Charlie describes how his mother's "eyes're always sad, and

her mouth droops. Sometimes she's cut up around the face from when Dad gives her a hiding" (Duff, *State Ward* 30). The family violence Charlie describes is not unusual in his community. Charlie goes on to say, "[e]very night [Dad] comes home from the pub, carrying his two flagons, starting off happy and ending up wild, every time" (30). It is clear that Charlie's parents are inattentive and dismissive of him; they are much too concerned with their own commitment to drinking and numbing out what must be their own emotional pain to even begin to comprehend the impact they have on Charlie and his siblings.

During the first few hours in his "cell," Charlie is given the standard nightwear and slippers. He revels in the "unexpected comfort" and luxury of "pajamas and several blankets"; he is so absorbed by these new sensations of comfort and warmth that he almost forgets the seriousness of being a state ward (23). This sincere and innocent moment reveals the contrast between Charlie's "cell" and his home. Furthermore, Charlie also makes contrasts between the superior quality and quantity of food at the boys' home in contrast with the lack of food at his parents' house. He recalls how, at his parents' house, he was forced to fight his older siblings for something as simple as a weet-bix. Insights such as these help to build up a picture of the type of home life and the kind of parents Charlie experienced growing up.

Like all of Duff's troubled youths, Charlie is an intelligent, deep thinking and caring individual; however, these qualities in him are often hidden from the world. Charlie's thoughtfulness and intelligence are portrayed to the reader several times in *State Ward* as Charlie takes the time to reflect on what it is about him—and by extension the other boys in the home—that has caused him to be "thirteen and [...] in a cell" (17). In the chapter entitled "Letter from the Head," Charlie imagines writing openly to his parents. In this "letter," Charlie tells his parents of the horror and abuse

that the other boys in the home have experienced at the hands of bad parents: “I’d say every boy here has a parent, or both of them, who’ve thrashed the hell out of him regularly” (69). During this chapter, as well as at other moments in *State Ward*, Charlie demonstrates his blossoming insight into the importance of unconditional love and strong parental bonding and support: the kind of parental qualities every child needs to experience throughout their early childhood. Unconditional love, bonding and support is something to which he and the other state wards did not have access. At times Charlie’s particularly insightful comments also specifically acknowledge that a neglectful and abusive childhood is the common, most defining factor that links him to the other children in the boys’ home: “Childhoods, Mum and Dad. It’s to do with childhood and it being messed up. (But what to do, what to do?)” (72). Through Charlie’s insights, Duff links the boys’ deep yearning for primary, parental love and attention with their antisocial and transgressive behaviour.

Charlie’s insights demonstrate that Duff is interested in exploring the connection between an inadequate childhood and the self-soothing survival transgressions it promotes in his youths. As I have shown in my discussion of psychoanalytic theory, children like Charlie, who have never known the love of a maternal figure, will constantly harbour a deep-seated sense of shame and unworthiness. Children in this situation spend their lives craving any form of love and attention that seems to soothe them and fill their internal emptiness; an emptiness with which an inadequate childhood has left them. As Winnicott describes, the failure of the child’s environment during the primary stages of life leaves the individual “with certain handicaps” as well as “a hope that never becomes quite extinguished”; a hope that “the environment may acknowledge and make up for the specific failures that did the damage” (*The Maturation Process* 207). Through his emotionally damaged

youths, Duff portrays how “Human beings can apparently endure an amazing amount of misery as long as there is hope” (Horney 180). However, Duff also suggests through his characters’ inner conflicts that “neurotic entanglements invariably generate a measure of hopelessness, and the more severe the entanglements the greater the hopelessness” (Horney 180). Neurotic entanglements create the need for protective antisocial tendencies, or acting out behaviours that we have called transgressions. These transgressions are initially “a manifestation of hope” which later form their own “secondary gains” and develop into habits, compulsions or addictions that bind the individual to the behaviour despite the disappearance of the hope it once held (Winnicott, *The Maturation Process* 208).

Winnicott’s theory of hope attests to why emotionally deprived adolescents will eternally search to find a replacement for the loving mother figure as well as simultaneously try to dispel the painful feelings of shame that being emotionally abandoned creates in them. It is in this way that shame and emotional deprivation in early childhood fuels an individual’s need to partake in transgressions during adolescence and, more often than not, well into adulthood.

For a boy like Charlie, who suffers from the emotional deprivation and shame of being raised in an unloving home, transgressive behaviour seems to offer him hope in a world that is constantly failing him. As McDougall suggests, Charlie’s—and by extension Sonny’s—inability to cope without turning to behavioural transgressions is a result of their “narcissistic fragility.” McDougall explains “narcissistic fragility” by reiterating the importance of the infant/mother relationship at the “dawning of psychic life” (“Narcissus” 301). A good example of psychic fragility in Duff’s youths is explored in *State Ward* in the Chapter entitled “Back to Darkness.” The chapter’s title

reveals several things about Charlie's journey thus far: it reinforces the idea that Charlie has come from a dark and unloving home. The title also suggests that, at the boys' home Charlie has found some form of hope and refuge in the semi-caring environment of the institution. For example, Charlie gets fed and sheltered, but, moreover, for the first time in his life, he has been acknowledged as an individual for something positive. Firstly, the institution's psychologist tells Charlie that "his I.Q. test marks were remarkable and he could be proud of them" and, secondly, Mr Davis told Charlie "he could be proud of himself for being only the second boy to be chosen [to attend] the highly regarded Riverton Boys' High School" (87). However, this all comes crashing down around Charlie when he is expelled from the high school for violence. At this moment, he feels as if he has regressed backward into the "darkness" he knew as a small child, and this regression is scary and hurtful, as well as a great stress on his fragile emotional state.

When Charlie is expelled from Riverton Boys' High, he feels abandoned by those who had shown him what life can feel like when adults acknowledge and care about you. On Charlie's expulsion, Mr Davis suddenly changes from the man who took Charlie to his first musical play to a man who was "coldly furious" and emotionally removed from Charlie. Charlie also feels betrayed by Mr Lay, the headmaster of the school, who "walked out of Charlie Wilson's life as if Charlie had ceased to exist" (81). At this moment, Charlie "felt he had nothing" to cling to anymore (81). For a young boy who has never had a chance to build up a normal supply of love-reserves, self esteem and self worth, this newest rejection by the adults in his life is devastating. This moment can be categorised as yet another traumatic event in Charlie's young life where he is exposed to the despair and loneliness of being unwanted, unloved and abandoned.

Whilst Charlie is in Mr Davis's office being reprimanded for his actions, Charlie recalls the odd sensations of being unstable and potentially self-less: "the world," he recalls, "seemed to have opened up as a large hole and swallowed him" (81). Charlie's experience of feeling "swallowed" by the world can be likened to Sandra McDougall's patient Sabine, a case study I discussed earlier in conjunction with another patient. McDougall's two patients are opposites: while Sabine has protective devices which push other people away to guard her fragile mind from invasion, Sandra needs to cling closely to others in order that she can stabilise her fragile mind and secure in them a solid reflection of her inner self. As a result of Sandra's neuroses and narcissistic fragility, when her current boyfriend leaves the home, in Sandra's mind he has betrayed her by leaving her without a human mirror-object in which to find her self. When her boyfriend is absent, Sandra feels as if she alone cannot continue to exist; she feels as if she is unable to keep her sense of self alive. In his absence, Sandra feels the terrifying sensation that she has stopped living. Put simply, Sandra's boyfriend's failure to be her psychic mirror exposes Sandra to "narcissistic mortification and the threat of psychic death" (McDougall, "Narcissus" 318).

Although Sandra's experience is much more pronounced than Charlie's, Charlie still reacts to the betrayal of the adults around him in a similar way. Because of Charlie's narcissistic fragility, their betrayal has a far greater impact on his psychic balance than it might on a child who has a stronger sense of self (McDougall, "Narcissus" 319). Charlie's fall from grace at the high school and at the boys' home, leaves him feeling high levels of anxiety and the threat of psychic death. For example, Charlie claims that in this moment he felt as if "angrily buzzing insects [were] trying to invade him" (*State Ward* 87). This statement suggests that Charlie is experiencing

the fear of psychic invasion, another sign of a weak and tormented individual. This image of insects invading a person's mind can be aligned with the kinds of neuroses that Sabine experiences when she is in the company of others. Sabine does not feel safe; she "feels constantly threatened by invasion from others" (McDougall, *Narcissus* 306-306). It is at the point of psychic death and torment—when one feels as if he might fall into nothingness or become invaded by others through a lack of stable sense of self—that the weak psyche enlists the support of transgressive defence mechanisms. Although transgressions do relieve the individual for a time, by lifting the burden of psychic trauma off them and giving them a kind of hope, sadly, the hope that addictive and compulsive transgressive behaviour provides for narcissistically fragile people like Charlie is nothing more than a temporary band-aid. Transgressions only cover over the wound; they are an illusion, a fleeting refuge from emotional pain, and, more often than not, those who rely on transgressions to survive end up causing themselves much more pain and hurt in the process.

There are two main types of transgressions that develop, or are enacted by the emotionally deprived child, in order to balance his or her narcissistic equilibrium and keep him or her from feeling the terrifying threat of psychic death; the feeling that one might cease to exist in any given moment. Firstly, transgressions may be of a soothing kind. Self-soothing transgressions are very often of a sexual nature, involving a sexualised human-object attachment that seems to resemble love in some sense or another. Human object attachments are often simply maternal love obsessions which are mistaken for, or disguised as, romantic love. Self-soothing transgressions also include self-love through masturbation and/or self-medication. Self-medication typically involves alcoholism and drug taking, which numb the mind for a time from the pain and of being unloved. As I have shown, self-soothing transgressions are

always put in place by the emotionally deprived individual in an attempt to fill a deep yearning or ache inside for love, a maternal embrace, attention and confirmation of one's significant existence. The second type of transgression is the much more aggressive "masking" transgression: transgressions for the sake of disguise. Masking transgressions typically include some form of extreme "acting out" designed to disavow shame. Through disavowal, the individual bypasses shame and the pain, hurt and humiliation that it inflicts on the psyche.

These two types of transgression deal with different needs in the emotionally deprived individual; however, these two transgressive strategies often overlap and/or manifest together at the same moment in time. When self-soothing and masking transgressions emerge at the same time, the situation becomes much more volatile and dangerous. The merging of these two very different, and often clashing transgressive strategies creates an overload effect full of ambiguity and confusion in the psyche of the individual. For the remainder of this chapter, I will examine both self-soothing and masking transgressive strategies by looking closely at the behaviour, thought processes and situations that Charlie and Sonny display. I will start by exploring the types of transgressive behaviour I class as "self-soothing" in *State Ward* and *One Night out Stealing*.

#### *Self-soothing Transgressions: Self-love, Object-love and Self-medication*

Charlie is only beginning to learn how to turn to self-soothing transgressions as a way of filling the void inside him left by the absence of parental love. We can see the beginning of Charlie's self-soothing behaviour when he becomes emotionally

attached to “broadly smiling” Miss Eccles, a staff member at Riverton Boys’ Home (25). Immediately after meeting “kindly” Miss Eccles, Charlie thinks to himself that maybe his time at the boys’ home will “not be so bad after all” (25). Charlie has identified Miss Eccles as a potential mother figure who may be able to give him the love and attention he desperately needs. In Charlie’s searching, unloved mind Miss Eccles has become an object of love, although still in a fairly innocent way at this stage. Her presence seems to transform Charlie and gives him a sense of hope.

Despite only meeting Miss Eccles a couple of times, Charlie identifies her as “sorta like a mother” to him and the other state wards (55). Such a fast developing and strong attachment to an older woman leaves Charlie in a vulnerable position. Fortunately Miss Eccles—unlike Mr. Dekka, who we find out later has been sexually abusing George, Charlie’s best friend, for his own sexual perversions—is not someone who will take advantage of a child’s vulnerability. However, as we will also see when we look at the soothing transgressions Duff’s other youths use, more often than not, a boy looking for a maternal love object to soothe their inner void will often stumble across a predator like Mr. Dekka—a man keen to prey on their innocence—or someone who has his or her own attachment issues.

As we know, Charlie’s vulnerability originates from his loveless childhood and especially the experience of maternal abandonment as an infant and child. Miss Eccles is, for the time being, fulfilling Charlie’s maternal bonding fantasy. In his “letter” Charlie imagines a moment of maternal embrace with his real mother—a fantasy he pines after and for which he continually searches:

Oh, Mum, sometimes, you know, my heart aches for you. Yes, you. That'll surprise you, I know. But it does. Cos you're my mum even if we both know you ain't the exactly the best mum ever born. But there's times, Mum, when I wish I was back home□long as you were sober□sitting down with you and talking. And, like you and I snuggled up beside each other, you'd like that wouldn't ya? [...] You'd like to know me, wouldn't you? (74)

Miss Eccles, like any other soothing transitional object an unloved child may cling to, is simply providing a missing maternal mirroring role. Miss Eccles makes Charlie and the other boys feel wanted, loved and, most importantly, she reaffirms in them a sense of identity. During the moment in time that she is around, they are worthy, important and are narcissistically stable.

In *One Night Out Stealing*, we meet Sonny Mahia who represents the next stage in the life of an emotionally deprived boy like Charlie. Like the majority of Duff's youths, Sonny is from an unloving home, and his narcissistic fragility is clear. Sonny's story is a very sad one. As a result of his inadequate upbringing, like all of Duff's youths, Sonny has not had the chance to build up reserves of love and self-esteem or a stable internal sense of self, and because of this he is doomed to self-destruct. Sonny's resilience in the face of the ups and downs of life is exceptionally low, meaning that he turns to transgressions to defend his fragile sense of self from the hostile world he lives in. Sonny describes himself and Jube as people who are "part or wholly broken [...] [f]rom our childhood." He goes on to consider why: "[m]aybe it's just that we're weaker than everyone else, or everybody from rotten childhoods'd end up criminals" (*One Night out Stealing* 94).

Sonny provides Duff's readers with an example of how more innocent self-soothing transgressions—such as Charlie's maternal attachment to Miss Eccles—can develop into much more dangerous, sexually driven perversions that often have disastrous outcomes for Duff's youths. Throughout *One Night out Stealing*, Sonny becomes increasingly obsessed with Penelope, a rich white woman whose house he is breaking into with his partner-in-crime, Jules. When Sonny first sees Penelope, she is in a family photograph with her husband and two children. While Jube makes comments about all the members of the family, giving special attention to the young pretty daughter, "it was the woman, the mother, [that] held Sonny the thief's attention" (66). By seeing the way in which Sonny's attention to Penelope-the-woman merges with his sense of Penelope-the-mother, we can begin to see how sexual-soothing and maternal-soothing tend to become conflated in these emotionally deprived characters.

Sonny is clearly attracted to Penelope as a woman, but he cannot seem to differentiate this from his desperate desire for a mother and the maternal love a mother represents. He wishes that Penelope might be a lover *and* a mother to him. An example of the self-soothing object-love "relationship" that Sonny is constructing in his mind can be found during the raid on Penelope's home. There is a moment during the raid in which Jube, being his crude self, begins to play, in a derogatory way, with Penelope's white underwear. In this moment Sonny experiences a mixture of emotions: he stands watching Jube "in disgust, yet feeling himself harden as he imagined Penelope, the woman who wore the garment [...] Sonny wanted to grab the panties off Jube, hold them to himself, whisper to the garment, which'd then become the woman and she was wearing them and only them, that he was sorry" (69). He is at once appalled by Sonny's behaviour, but also sexually aroused by the act.

Sonny's confused attachment to Penelope is evident again when he looks at the stolen photos of Penelope naked that Jube found in her husband's drawers. The moment he looks at her, Sonny feels "his guts heaving with an anguish as well as excitement and then a deep deep wanting. (I want you lady... not to fuck □ *not* to fuck, and yet that too. I'm a Teddy Nathan, lady: I just wanna be loved...)" (98 Duff's emphasis) Sonny looks into Penelope's "open and honest" eyes with a combination of sexual, intimate and maternal longing. He is almost willing her, or the picture he holds of her, to comfort him and love him.

It is clear that Sonny has developed a strong object-attachment towards Penelope and, moreover, that he has formed an idealised fantasy of her. She is simultaneously his love-object and his maternal replacement. Penelope is perceived by Sonny to be a good, kind, warm and loving mother: the kind of mother Sonny has never experienced. Despite his attachment to Penelope as a mother figure, Sonny uses her image, which displays her sexuality as a woman, to self-soothe through masturbation.

Joyce McDougall explains how self soothing masturbation is a "form of an autoerotic recovery of self-feeling" ("Narcissus" 324). McDougall discusses self-soothing, addictive masturbation with reference to a male patient of hers whose sense of self is fragile. Under the pressures of work, McDougall's patient feels as if he is "drowning," and as if his "body was becoming vague and dissolving away" ("Narcissus" 324). In his mind, the threat to the sense of self he is experiencing can only be rectified if he is able to find himself again through masturbation. Masturbation is his form of psychic recovery; a compulsive behaviour no doubt learnt in childhood. When he is threatened with an awareness of emotional abandonment and the threat of psychic death, this man uses masturbation as a solution to emotional

pain and disturbance in adulthood (“Narcissus” 325). This is exactly the same transgressive coping behaviour that Sonny, uses with the help of Penelope’s photograph.

The idealised image of Penelope in Sonny’s mind is that of a lover he has never met as well as a mother he has never experienced. Through the act of compulsive masturbation Sonny achieves two things: he is able momentarily to fill the love-void inside his self that is constantly empty and, by using only Penelope’s image to derive sexual as well as maternal gratification, Sonny safeguards himself against the inevitable maternal rejection he has always received from his real mother. Through masturbation, Sonny’s idealised image of Penelope is kept safe in his mind; he can make her be whoever he wants her to be. As long as Sonny continues to suspend reality by knowing Penelope only through a photograph, she cannot abandon him—however, this is a false economy that is destined to collapse.

Another form of transgressive self-soothing that Sonny indulges in, one that young Charlie had not yet discovered, is the taking of drugs or alcohol for their ability to dull the painful feeling of being unloved and unwanted. As Sonny explains, emotionally deprived individuals turn to alcohol and drugs “[c]os it dulled that constant pain in [their] heart in every crim’s heart” (94), Sonny, however, knows this self-soothing transgression well. He even seems to understand the motives behind indulging in mind-numbing drugs as well as the false hope this kind of transgression promises. For example, when Sonny surveys the scene at “Tavistocks,” the local pub he and Jube frequent, he seems to be trying to understand the reasons why he, and others like him, get stuck in drinking-holes or drinking traps such as Tavistocks, and questions what they are searching for at the bottom of a beer bottle:

[n]ear everyone humming from the state of being drunk, what it did to em that nothing else does, not anything in and of this life; not even love does it to em, gives em that same sense of soaring immortality and hazy happiness; a kind of confidence hard to believe—that wasn't there to start with—and yet sumpin about the confidence that said it wasn't altogether true, or not so that you'd change outta here go start chattering as an equal to some straight strangers, or haul [confidence] out on the morrow like a charm, a qualification of personal quality, an asset to approach life the better with. You, each and every, just felt real good, but yet not so good you felt it was gonna last. So there was the fear, some of it desperate, that the feeling was gonna go. Wear off. And so they gulped, and they tossed back pills and sucked hard on joints, and always the cigarettes. And the talk poured out from near every mouth like pus from a mass social wound. (15-16)

Despite having a deep insight into the fruitlessness of this transgressive drinking behaviour, Sonny himself still continues to buy into the self-soothing trap of trying to numb out his pain and find comfort in alcohol. The “hazy happiness” and “soaring immortality” that Sonny refers to when he describes the effect of alcohol on his troubled mind can be likened to the feeling an infant receives when his mother's breast is put to his mouth to feed (15). The beer, pills, joints and cigarettes that these loveless men “gulp” and “suck” on to soothe their inner trauma, are clearly connected to their maternal need for comfort of a mother's breast (16).

Like the rest of the men at the bar searching for comfort, Sonny must experience the failure of alcohol's illusion. He calls this dawning of reality “a fucking

nightmare” (90). The alcohol, like all transgressions, is only a temporary bandage over the self-wound. Sonny acknowledges, with a mixture of sadness and helplessness and frustration, that “it’s yourself that’s the problem. Not anything but yaself. And there ain’t no escaping yaself, is there?” (90).

*Masking Transgressions: Toughness, Aggression, Violence and the Shame-rage Spiral*

Being unloved and unwanted in childhood creates a major discrepancy between how Duff’s characters, such as Charlie and Sonny, perceive themselves, and how they would ideally want to be. Duff’s emotionally deprived characters perceive themselves as failures. They feel unwanted, unloved, useless and hopeless and they blame themselves for the hurt that they experienced as children. This leads them to develop a deep and ongoing sense of toxic shame. As we have previously discussed, toxic shame is an unbearable and traumatic psychic experience; Duff’s emotionally deprived adolescents, therefore, attempt to alleviate the psychic pain that toxic shame inflicts by masking, bypassing or replacing shame with another, less painful emotion or behaviour.

Psychoanalysts have many different terms with which to name what I categorise as masking transgressions. One example, which I have already touched on, is the idea that an individual who experiences ongoing unbearable shame may end up “evacuating” his or her pain. The evacuation of pain involves pushing the pain away from the self. This may be achieved through what Michael Lewis identifies as “emotional substitution” (*Shame: the Exposed Self* 124). Rage and anger are common

substitutes for shame because of the pain that shame inflicts on the psyche of an individual (*Shame: the Exposed Self* 125). When shame is replaced by a more acceptable and far less painful emotion, such as rage, the initial feeling of shame is dispelled and bypassed for a time. Therefore, the emotional substitution of shame provides relief for the psyche of the individual. More often than not, the anger and pain of shame is directed, via projective identification onto another human, usually a family member, friend or child. This allows the shamed individual to “externalise blame” and, in turn, reduce his or her role in the shame experience or shameful event (*Shame: the Exposed Self* 125) In such circumstances, the individual may seek to evacuate pain through aggression, violence or other forms of physical or mental abuse.

Michael Lewis states that “[s]ubstitution is a form of self-deception: it relieves the pain and discomfort but does not alter the state” of shame (126). In other words, masking transgressions—such as the evacuation of pain through violence or use of others as a stand-in for the sake of emotional substitution—push toxic shame and the psychic pain it inflicts to the side. This enables the individual to bypass shame and temporarily protect him or herself from acknowledging it. However, bypassing shame has other consequences. When masking transgressions convert painful toxic shame into bypassed, unacknowledged shame, the person’s toxic shame does not disappear; it simply sits under the surface of the person’s consciousness manipulating his or her behaviour from where it is hidden, deep inside. Charlie and Sonny both display this pattern of behaviour, using various forms of masking transgressions to disavow shame and temporarily push it to the side.

Perhaps the most commonly used cover-up transgression designed to achieve disavowal is the use of a tough, aggressive and hardened exterior: the “tough-guy”

act. This act is protective in nature because it puts up a barrier between the individual and the outside world. To be successful, a tough exterior must not allow sensitivity, kindness and intelligence to have room to develop, as these qualities are perceived as rendering the individual vulnerable to an external reality that is perceived as being threatening.

Charlie's "tough exterior" is a protection device designed to compensate for his unstable sense of self and the humiliation and shame he feels for being an unloved and unwanted child (*State Ward* 4). However, Charlie also acknowledges that the exterior behaviour of many state wards, including himself, is a façade to cover-up the insecurities and fragility hidden deep in each one's personal makeup. "State wards," Charlie imagines telling his parents, are "meant to be the toughest of the tough, meanest of the mean. And they are. Yet they aren't" (72). Under the surface, Charlie and the other boys are victims of their family circumstances; they are vulnerable, weak and suffer ongoing psychic trauma. During what "the staff" at the boys home call a "break-down," the "tough" state ward falls into an uncontrollable state of emotional agony: "[a] boy'll scream, he'll moan and groan, call out names: and usually it's mum or dad" (71). Such breakdowns attest to the failure of an individual's protective masking devices; they display the raw, uncontrolled reality lying under the surface.

Sonny, who has progressed further down the road of delinquent criminality than Charlie, has also witnessed his "fellow prison inmates, cellmates, exposing their true selves" during his various stints in jail (*One Night out Stealing* 97). He has heard the pain of the hurt child underneath the tough criminal exterior: "when they [are] asleep; teeth grinding and whipping around in their sperm-ridden blankets, groaning and crying out from troubled mind; the child in each and every crim wanting not

vengeance but love” (97). This deep need and desperate searching for love that each criminal constantly harbours is encased in secrecy. Sonny describes Ted as “a big tough dude, a gang member” and kingpin in the jail system, as one such hurt child who secretly “just wanted love” (97). Sonny and Charlie are describing these broken men and boys returning to the helpless and paralysing emotional state aroused by the fear of psychic extinction; a threat that infants experience during the time that their mother is absent.

The outer expression of toughness, aggression and hostility that I have discussed is the most common masking transgression depicted in Duff’s novels. However, as Charlie and Sonny show, acting tough is often the beginning of a series of masking transgressions that make up the shame-rage spiral. In order for a tough exterior to be convincingly maintained, the underlying pain of shame must be replaced or overwritten with rage, hate and blame through emotional substitution. Emotional substitution of shame for rage, hate and/or blame usually results in the evacuation of pain and hurt outwards, onto another. In turn this displacement results in the individual feeling guilt, with this guilt subsequently triggering a new bout of shame drawn from the never-ending reservoir of toxic shame built up in childhood. As psychoanalytic theorists have postulated, disavowal of shame and the pursuit of transgressions as a means of masking the pain and humiliation of shame is a single phase in the psychological syndrome known as the feeling trap, or the shame-rage spiral.

Charlie talks about the connection between the pain and hurt of parental rejection and hate when he remembers back to his trial: “It hurts [...] not really knowing why you couldn’t love me enough to stop drinking for a few days [...] it hurts. Then I hate” (75). In this statement we can see that Charlie recalls how he

replaced the intense pain of shame arising from parental rejection with hate and rage. Charlie's emotional substitution during this traumatic event in his young life signals what will eventually develop into the shame-rage spiral. However, as Charlie is still young, and still has a soft heart not yet emotionally hardened, the shame-rage spiral is manifest only in its primary stage in him. However, from what we know about deprived children, emotional deprivation in the first few years of life can have extremely severe consequences later on in life.

Indeed, Charlie has the potential to become like Sonny. Although we, as readers, are able to see Sonny's softer, internal sensitivity, he is portrayed in *One Night out Stealing* as trapped and doomed to self-destruct as a result of the psychic injuries he has acquired in childhood. At one point, Sonny is watching a home video of Penelope and her daughter playing the piano. The loving interaction between Penelope and her daughter draws Sonny in like a "spell," and he feels "confused" and "Damn near crying" (*One Night out Stealing* 96). Sonny witnesses in the video the maternal bonding and love that he has never experienced, but is continuously searching for. Immediately, Sonny is "ashamed of himself for getting so emotional over a video," and he turns the shame that this mother/daughter scene triggers into anger, hostility and rage. Sonny's anger is turned on like a switch: "mother and snotty daughter, playing their fucking piano. So fucking what?" (97). In this scene, Duff portrays how Sonny evacuates the shame he feels by identifying Penelope and her daughter as objects of hate. By hating them, Sonny can relieve his emotional distress at feeling deprived of what they enjoy; he is thus emotionally substituting shame for rage.

Moreover, Sonny's need to turn to emotional substitution and the evacuation of psychic pain and shame is apparent when he, "Sonny the burglar," sees the "New

Zealand Law Society” certificate that belongs to Gerald (Penelope’s husband) hanging on the wall of his office. At this moment, suddenly Sonny sees the contrast between himself and Gerald, and all he represents:

Society. The word belted Sonny in the gut: this guy belongs to a society. What society do I belong to? I’m nobody’s child, as the song goes. All of us are nobodies’ children, every thief, every lowlife tattoo-marked hopeless case of prison time and so-called free time holed up the days and sordid nights in Tavistocks bar and bars like it. (74)

In this moment, Sonny glimpses himself reflected in the window and, like the fleeting and unstable reflection that his mother gave him as an infant and child, his reflection seems to him to be unworthy, unlovable and out of place amongst all the richness of Penelope’s house. In the same pattern as before, Sonny is overcome with the shame of his own “total inadequacy,” and he turns to substituting anger for his shame, becoming “good and angry in his inadequacy” (74,75). For Sonny and others like him the disavowal of toxic shame seems to be a necessity, not a choice: I “have to, or I’ll curl up and die” (75). In a lighter moment, Sonny concludes that hate and anger are “the condition, brother. Part of being the condition, hahaha” (99). In order to protect his fragile state of mind and survive the threat of psychic death, the only option Sonny feels he has is to turn to masking his hurt with emotional substitution in order to disavow his shame.

Yet another part of the “condition,” as Sonny calls it, is a transgressive compulsion to direct feelings of anger and rage—which, through emotional substitution, the youths have used as replacements for shame—with the act of stealing

from those who seem to possess what the youths are searching for. Both Sonny and Charlie are drawn into the compulsion to steal in the course of the respective novels. For Duff's youths, stealing is a form of voyeurism, a form of possessing something that is somehow connected to, or a symbol of, their desire. Charlie describes his own transgressive thieving as something that makes him feel "so different" (*State Ward* 108). When Charlie steals from those he is deeply jealous of his emotional state is altered momentarily by the act: Charlie describes stealing as "[t]errifying and yet so exciting"; trouble, he states "makes me feel good" (108). Later on in the novel, Charlie uncovers the reason why stealing has such a positive hold over him: stealing feels "sorta like feeling wanted, you know? [...] As if you'r making up for all the bad things, the rotten things't went wrong in your life" (114). By stealing, Charlie feels as if he is taking back something with which he has been deprived; something for which he has been searching.

Charlie's description of how the transgressive act makes him feel clearly indicates this transgressive act's masking element. Stealing is used by Duff's troubled youths in an attempt to acquire or take back something they feel they are owed. In this sense, stealing is a highly symbolic transgression, as one cannot steal love or affection from taking another's wealth or possessions. For example, Sonny targets affluent households, such as Penelope's house, not only because of the value of the items they can take, but because the homes themselves, and the people that own them, seem to possess a certain sense of stability and the promise of the homely love and warmth for which Duff's youths are searching.

## Chapter Three

## Duff's Evolving Vision: the Hopefulness Apparent in Duff's Most Recent Adolescent Male Characters

In chapter two I directed attention to some of Duff's early male characters to explore the hopelessness they face because of a loveless childhood. I also explored in depth some of the transgressive strategies Duff's early male characters adopt in order to try to ease the pain and shame they feel for being "unworthy" of their parents' love. In this chapter I will move on to focus on several of Duff's more hopeful male characters, who are portrayed in two of his later novels: Jimmy from *Both Sides of the Moon*, and Mark and Chud from *Dreamboat Dad*. I will study these three characters in order to show the similarities and differences between them and Duff's earlier fictional youths.

*Both Sides of the Moon* (1998) can be differentiated from *State Ward* and *One Night out Stealing* because (although the characters share many similarities with those already discussed) *Both Sides of the Moon* marks the beginning of a shift in Duff's vision for his fictional youths. The shift is reflected in two main changes in Duff's characterisation. Firstly, from *Both Sides of the Moon* onwards, Duff's characters and setting have increasing variation. Although Duff's subject matter is still deeply terrifying and shocking, he seems to have stepped away from associating the terrible and shocking events his characters go through with Maoridom. For example, Duff moves away from portraying the idea that bad parenting is inherent in the Maori

genome and that emotional deprivation and abandonment are exclusively a Maori issue.

One indication of the progression in Duff's thoughts is that the setting and character profiles in his later novels become much less structured around the typical Duffian formula to which Sonny and Charlie conform. I am not suggesting that transgressive elements of Charlie and Sonny's behaviour are not apparent in Duff's later characters. There is no doubt that all of Duff's characters struggle with the same feelings of shame. They all act out in strikingly similar ways to try and protect themselves from mental pain, they all project their pain outwards and convert shame into rage, and they all distract themselves from the pain of being unloved with various transgressive behaviours. However, Duff's later characters become much more varied in terms of their race, background, current situation and setting. For example, in *Dreamboat Dad* (2008), we are introduced to Mark, or "Yank" as he is nicknamed. Mark is half Maori and half Pakeha, like Jimmy, but the difference between Jimmy and Mark is that Mark's Maori mother is an extremely loving and caring mother who has, in many ways, succeeded in compensating for the abuse her son has suffered at the hands of his step-father as well as the absence and abandonment of his real father.

Duff's seventh novel, *Szabad* (2001) – a novel I will not be exploring in this study – foreshadows Duff's increasing interest in exploring new and more diverse settings for his novels and characters. Interestingly, *Szabad* is set in Hungary, not small town New Zealand, during a period of war: a very different setting to the rest of Duff's novels. *Szabad* seems to indicate Duff's willingness to explore new directions. I believe Duff's most recent novel – which I will discuss in detail in chapter four – continues down this path of exploration: it is set in Sydney, and moreover, the

main protagonist's ethnicity is not revealed to the reader, nor is it given any importance in the novel.

The second, and more important, shift that *Both Sides of the Moon* and *Dreamboat Dad* display is Duff's move towards a more optimistic view of future possibilities for his troubled delinquent characters. As I have shown in the previous chapter, Duff's earlier characters, such as Charlie and Sonny, are portrayed as doomed to disappear into institutions, succumb to alcoholism and self-destruct as a result of dysfunctional behaviour arising out of a disturbed childhood. Even though Duff's more recent youths, Jimmy, Mark and Chud, display severe deviance and suffer with self-destructive tendencies in adolescence, they seem to be able to use their experience to cultivate a sense of hope and true fulfilment. It is with this new hopefulness that Duff's later characters attempt to build a life instead of sinking into an endless cycle of crime, violence and self-destruction.

Significant changes in characterisation and setting make it clear that Duff's scope has evolved to be able to include elements such as Mark's loving Maori mother and Lu's location and ambiguous ethnicity. For Duff, an author who, up until this time, had been primarily interested in depicting Maori or half-Maori characters with horribly dysfunctional parents living in small-town New Zealand, this is a significant shift in focus. These shifts differentiate Duff's earlier novels from his later ones and point towards significant changes—namely, his inclusion of hopefulness and his more elaborate portrayal of the effects of a loveless family.

*A Child's Attempts to Maintain Hope in a World that Fails Him.*

Although Jimmy Burgess shares a strikingly similar background to Charlie and, like Sonny, engages in transgressive behaviour as a response to emotional disturbance, at the end of the novel there is not the same sense that Jimmy is portrayed by Duff as doomed because of his upbringing. Jimmy is the typical result of an inadequate childhood. He becomes caught up in a deviant life of transgressions that only result in magnifying the feelings of loveless misery and his sense of unworthiness. As with all Duff's troubled youths, transgressions initially seem to offer Jimmy hope; transgressions distract him from the pain he feels by directing attention away from the self outward onto others or by temporarily fulfilling his desperate need to find love. The possibility of continuing down the path of transgressive behaviour is most definitely portrayed by Duff as an *option* for Jimmy; however, near the end of the novel, Duff also portrays Jimmy as having a choice; Jimmy's future is not pre-destined and unchanging like Sonny's.

In *Both Sides of the Moon*, Jimmy, like Sonny and Charlie before him, narrates his own story. However, Jimmy narrates his childhood and adolescence from the point of view of an adult who is looking back on his upbringing. As a narrator, the older Jimmy reproduces the perspective of his younger self when recounting episodes from his childhood. Adult Jimmy recalls how his youthful self is deeply ashamed of Hete, his Maori mother, "a violent, drunken slut who doesn't care one stuff for her children" (*Both Sides* 139). It becomes increasingly clear that Jimmy's shame primarily stems from witnessing his mother's transgressions and her ongoing display of loveless behaviour towards her children. Jimmy is highly ashamed of how his mother puts her own vices in front of her love for him: "lust claims [...] my mother's

mothering capacity,” he states, “she is indifferent to us. And if it isn’t lust it’s drinking, and playing poker for money, that claim her” (10). For example, Jimmy has witnessed his mother brawling with another woman in public; he has witnessed her illicit sexual infidelity; he has felt the burning shame of hearing others talk about her: and he has watched her being arrested in the front yard, in front of the whole neighbourhood. Moreover, Jimmy has been present when his drunk and unruly mother has beaten, scratched and sworn at his father. As a result of the graphic, violent and hurtful behaviour Jimmy has watched Hete indulge in, he is deeply ashamed of his Maori side: “[my] mother is a physical existence of Maori going back a thousand years” (10).

Jimmy is also ashamed of his Pakeha father, but for very different reasons. He is ashamed of his father’s inability to protect his children from Hete’s violent, shaming and emotionally damaging behaviour. Jimmy sees his father’s inaction and commitment to passive resistance as a betrayal of his “fatherly, manly duty” to the children: “he should have smashed her to a pulp and thrown her out [...] But he didn’t [...] His kids, I’m sorry to be telling him not so many years later, they lost” (75). Despite the failure of his mother and father, Jimmy is, more than anything, deeply ashamed of himself. His upbringing has failed to give him the basic needs every child relies on to maintain a sense of being loved and worthy in the world and, therefore, Jimmy’s sense of worthlessness has become embedded as a deep conviction in his mind. Jimmy’s adult voice states, quite simply, “love wasn’t a concept in our house. A mother is the origin of all love. [If a mother’s love is absent] you have to make a monumental effort to find it for yourself” (74). Jimmy feels empty inside: “empty,” he states, “in much and dire need of filling” (141). For the majority of the novel, Jimmy’s story depicts his “monumental effort” to find love and, like all

emotionally deprived adolescents, he begins his journey by looking in all the wrong places (74). He talks of how he takes his “empty gourd to public parks, [...] the library, [...] to pine forest on the outskirts of town” looking for love or even just something to fill his emptiness (141). However, Jimmy feels that what he desires “is never going to be” (141).

Like Sonny and Charlie, Jimmy delves into all the same transgressive behaviours in order to search for the love he is missing. He employs transgressive behaviour in the hope that he may discover a way to repair his damaged psyche and heal his heart, but to no avail. At the beginning of *Both Sides of the Moon*, we learn how Jimmy has discovered how to soothe the pain of being unloved for himself by using transformational objects such as the thermal hot pools—a natural feature of his home town Waiwera. By submerging himself in what he calls “the motherlike comfort of warm thermal bath,” Jimmy’s emotional torment is soothed for a time (10). Jimmy “love[s] the embrace of [the] warm thermal waters; they give physical as well as emotional succour” (10).

Although the comfort gained from the hot pools seems harmless, Jimmy’s association of his mother with the thermal springs has a much more sinister, sexualised twist. For example, when Jimmy watches the eruptions of steam and mud from the geysers—natural blowholes which eliminated steam and hot mud from deep underground—he starts to connect these eruptions to the male orgasms he has witnessed while spying on his mother during her numerous affairs. Early in the morning he goes down to the thermal pools to watch a “charged eruption breaking the black, becoming the cleavage between those hilly breasts” (19). He hears the “geyser roar and choked stranglings (He’s coming! The man is coming!) from ground fissures,

of heated pressure squeezing through cracks, and tourists make much the same fuss of an exit from a ground hole as a man in private makes of sperm exit from his cock-hole” (19). Jimmy’s fascination with what he perceives as the natural enactment of the male orgasm is sought to “capture the elusive,” to “claim back a lost sight,” to “confirm, or answer, a question” (19). In other words, the hot pools and the geyser displays are sought to soothe and comfort him and to give him a sense of love he is missing. This, in turn, alleviates the trauma of shame, but only for a short time as the thermal pools are not an adequate replacement for love.

The sexualised element to Jimmy’s self-soothing through his object-relationship with the thermal pools is highly ambiguous and fraught with complex and conflicting emotions. Jimmy is at once fascinated and drawn into the baths as well as feeling disgusted; he feels warm and comforted by his thermal mother-substitute at the same time as being reminded of his mother’s shortfalls. Later, Jimmy’s search for an adequate sexualised, self-soothing mother-object is transferred from the thermal pools to Edith, a woman who becomes Jimmy’s first transgressive human love-object.

Edith is an older, married woman who, in searching for someone to satisfy her own emotional needs, finds Jimmy and uses him to play “mother and lover at once” (115). Her attention and touch evokes in the loveless boy a maternal-love feeling that he describes as “similar to the feeling of entering a Waiwera thermal bath” (115). Jimmy’s sexual relationship with Edith is deeply transgressive, echoing Sonny’s attraction to Penelope in *One Night out Stealing*. While Jimmy is with Edith he is fraught with a complex array of feelings. Jimmy initially experiences the pull of an unloved child’s desire for the touch and attention of a maternal figure. When he receives her maternal love through sex he immediately feels at peace, as if the love he has never had is suddenly filling him up. Sex with Edith resembles the womb-like

warmth, safety and comfort that Jimmy experiences in the thermal springs: “in the first instance of entry it felt so similar to the feeling of entering a Waiwera thermal bath. So warm. So right” (115).

However, it is not long before Jimmy’s relationship with Edith mutates into a negative and transgressive experience. Although, with Edith, Jimmy feels as if he has discovered the mother substitute he has always yearned for, he is eventually overwhelmed with a sense of shame-induced hate and rage towards her: “beginning as my lover, she finished as my unforgiven mother” (117). When Jimmy is apart from Edith’s presence he is overwhelmed by shame. His shame takes over his being and is clearly apparent in his dreams. Jimmy dreams that everyone, including Edith, is laughing at him. He describes how, in his dream his “face [is] coloured scarlet red, with shame” for everyone to see (116). Jimmy’s psyche cannot cope with the amount of shame that builds up around his transgressive relationship with Edith, and therefore he seeks emotional refuge by projecting his inner feelings of shame onto her, and by making her the object of anger and hate. Edith becomes a reminder and symbol of Hete’s infidelity, and Jimmy views her now with “disgust” (117). By focusing on hating Edith for her willingness to betray her husband, Jimmy is able to suppress this awareness of the real issue: his own shame about his mother and his ongoing internal desire to obtain the motherly love that she will never give to him.

Jimmy’s transgressive sexual encounter with Edith, his human love-object, quickly mutates from her to a homosexual attraction towards the manipulative Dan, or “Juice” from the park. Juice is described as one of the many “grown men of the park world howling, [for love]” and looking for vulnerable children like Jimmy “with enough beauty or innocence to take” (120). Whilst Jimmy is with Juice he is enveloped in a type of transgressive love that he knows, deep in his heart, “cannot be

love” (146). During his time with Juice, Jimmy feels as if he is something other than himself; he feels “submerged by [his] own need, cornered in [his] own vulnerability,” and he also get the distinct impression that he is “being gobbled up,” by “that cavernous sweet-giving mouth of his, the beast’s” (146).

During this encounter with Juice, Jimmy identifies Juice with his father and, in turn, he also begins to identify himself with his mother. In a sense, Jimmy becomes his mother: “I could be a woman,” he observes, “my mother to my father,”(149). The connection Jimmy draws between himself as Hete receiving his father’s love facilitates this transgressive encounter’s self-soothing qualities: Jimmy feels loved by a father figure: “oh, good morning, Dad! Do it again” (147). However, just as we see in the progression of Jimmy’s transgressive object-relationship with Edith, as well as his need to be submerged in the thermal springs, the ambiguous quality of Jimmy’s self-soothing encounter with Juice means that his emotions soon turn sour.

Once the direct physical contact with Juice is over, and the hope that sexual transgression seems to provide has disappeared, Jimmy begins to hate himself: “how I hate him, and myself worse, what have I done to myself? I’ve got to go, get out of here” (147). The self-loathing and shame Jimmy experiences when, in his mind’s eye, he witnesses himself re-enacting the worst aspects of his mother overwhelms him. Just as we saw in Jimmy’s encounter with Edith, the self-soothing object relationship with Juice is so shameful that, in order to protect himself, Jimmy must disavowal his shame. He does this by substituting shame for self-loathing whilst, at the same time, directing hate and shame-rage at Juice.

Although Jimmy partakes in many self-destructive transgressions, he is the first well-developed character created by Duff to present us with a glimmer of hope for the future. Jimmy’s saving grace comes in the form of a boys’ home for

delinquent adolescents, much like the one to which Charlie was sent. In the weeks leading up to being sent to borstal, Jimmy is stalked and preyed on by Juice. He is helpless and angry, and he considers murdering Juice in order to escape the older man's threatening, predatory behaviour. As an adult, Jimmy says, at this time in my life "[a] magistrate saves me from Dan [Juice], from myself even though I don't know it at the time" (288). Jimmy does not experience an epiphany; he is simply removed from certain transgressive opportunities that freedom holds. Once removed from society, Jimmy has the time to step back and "get a different wonder at what went wrong" in his emotional makeup (295).

When Jimmy emerges from Borstal, he is struck by how differently he perceives his family and friends around him. Jimmy recites to us what his brothers are doing with their lives: there is Brian, the youngest, who is "running wild" and who, Jimmy predicts, will murder someone one day (300). Jimmy describes Warren, another of his brothers, as facing "inevitable doom" (301). Jimmy's prediction foreshadows Warren's suicide, which is depicted shortly after in the novel. Finally, there is Ian, who is set apart from the other brothers because he is attending university: "I don't know what's saved him," Jimmy says, "that didn't save the others" (300-301). In reciting the fate of his three brothers, it seems as if Jimmy can see that he is at a crossroads in his own life: he can choose to continue down the road of self destruction and transgression like Brian and Warren, or he can choose to stop chasing the illusion of hope that transgressions seem to offer, and instead, direct his energy towards something truly positive by following his brother Ian's example. For Jimmy, there is a window of opportunity in education that both his father and Ian demonstrate to him.

*The Historical Plot: Te Aranui Kapi's Parallel Journey.*

Duff's vision towards a more optimistic view of future possibilities for his later fictional youths is framed in *Both Sides of the Moon* with the motif of choice for both Jimmy and his ancestor Te Aranui Kapi. Kapi is a character we have not touched upon so far in this discussion, but who holds significant meaning for Jimmy. He is the main protagonist of *Both Sides of the Moon's* subplot, a plot I am going to call the historical plot as it is set in pre-colonised New Zealand and tells the story of day-to-day tribal Maori life. The possibilities, or choices, that Jimmy discovers are available to him after leaving borstal are foreshadowed and paralleled by Duff in the pattern of experience of Te Aranui Kapi.

Kapi is depicted by Duff as a vicious, ruthless and often revolting tribal warrior who takes pleasure in murder, rape and gorging on the flesh of enemy tribes. One particularly disturbing scene in Duff's historical subplot describes the invasion and slaughter of an enemy tribe. In this scene, Kapi and his warriors mercilessly dispose of the enemy warriors, have no mercy for the enemy children, rape and kill the women and "enjoy [watching] the boy warriors who put up [a] fight" only to be met by the more advanced fighting techniques of Kapi and his men who take pleasure in ruthlessly "slicing their little throats [and] cutting off their screaming untattooed heads" (*Both Sides* 58). In another horrifying scene, Duff goes one step further to show how ingrained violence against others is in Kapi's tribe. This time Duff is not depicting violence against an enemy, but Kapi's dispassionate murder of his own brother, Tamatea. Kapi condemns Tamatea to death because he slept with his favourite woman, Tangiwai. For this act, Kapi ruthlessly tortures Tamatea. Kapi

skewers his brother alive, a “swinging live weight on a stake,” and humiliates him for hours, parading him for all to see “from village to village” until, finally, Tamatea dies (63).

Through these horrifying scenes in the historical plot, Duff is exploring how a loveless upbringing results from Kapi-like unthinkingness. Duff makes it clear that an inability to think is the root of violence and destruction. For the warrior tribe, deep thinking and analytical questioning is suppressed and taboo. Duff emphasises that in this environment “sensibilities [...] do not and cannot exist” and that the concept of love not only does not exist, but is it also understood to be a threat; dangerous to the survival of the tribe (56). Kapi explains the dangers of experiencing love as a warrior: he states, “to carry love of a child into battle is to carry a weight,” it weakens the warrior and leaves him vulnerable (56).

The lovelessness and unthinkingness, which is essential for the survival of the warrior tribe, is apparent from a young age in the behaviour of the tribal children. For example, Duff describes the young children’s nonchalant attitude towards violence and death with a shocking description of them playing with the bodies of some freshly murdered slaves: the “[c]hildren rolled enemy heads in the dust and squealed with joy and just a little fear at the sight of a face rolling over and over in the dust propelled by their hardened little feet” (109). Duff’s description of the children’s hardened feet is highly symbolic of their hardened little hearts.

Through this portrayal of the tribal children, Duff is suggesting that hardened hearts are an inevitable product of the community they live in. The lovelessness the tribal culture insists on for its survival in a harsh environment leaves the children emotionally deprived. Hardened hearts or desensitisation and a learnt unthinkingness, is portrayed by Duff to allow for guilt and shame-free violence and destruction. Or in

other words, the lovelessness of the tribal environment creates people who are desensitised towards violence and carry no (sense of) conscience. Elements of this lack of thought are likewise apparent in the modern youths Duff writes about.

Duff connects the tribal children with his modern, unloved youths in terms of their thoughtlessness and willing participation in violent behaviour. For example, the behaviour of some bored adolescent children in *Once Were Warriors* can be likened to the passage in *Both Sides of the Moon* that describes the tribal children's attitude towards the dead slave. Beth, the main narrator in *Once Were Warriors*, looks out of her bedroom window and watches the unloved, neglected and "mindless kids" of Pine Block discover that they can "pick away at a crack [in the sidewalk] and soon [they'd] have a section of footpath" to bash on the ground (8). She notes how they seem to enjoy the feeling of being able to "smashem to smithereens" (8). Beth connects the Pine Block children's lack of love and attention at home to their violent and mindless behaviour. She admits to herself that it is not surprising that Pine Block children will often grow up to "do battle, often fatal, with their Pine Block brothers and cousins and childhood friends" (*Once Were Warriors* 15).

Jimmy is proud that he is descended from a warrior like Kapi, but in comparison to Kapi's strength, Jimmy feels inadequate. Jimmy compares himself to his ancestor, believing they have little in common: "I've run" he states, I've run "from her [Hete], from them, from the house supposed to be my home" (*Both Sides* 52). I've run "in fear. But more in hurt." (68) Jimmy believes Kapi would never run away, Kapi "would not have even allowed thought of running" (52). However, as the two plots proceed, Duff begins to demonstrate the similarities between Jimmy and Kapi.

Kapi experiences a mind-altering epiphany one day on the banks of a swollen river when he witnesses a small enemy child drown. The first thoughts to enter Kapi's

mind are typical of his warrior training: “Die, little enemy child, before you grow up” into an enemy warrior (132). However, when Kapi turns and looks again at the floundering child again, he begins to feel empathy and compassion for the child: “it was then he got the thought[,] is this what fear means [...] what then does a person do? What does he think?” (132). Not only does Kapi experience empathy for the child, but he also “advances the question further” (132) He asks himself, “is it right that an innocent child should not only suffer so but gaze into the maws of death itself long, long before his time?” (132). Although this question troubles Kapi, in the final moments of the child’s life Kapi forces himself to push aside these new and confusing thoughts to focus on willing the boy to drown: “Kapi forced a smile to himself. Of course. Drown, enemy child, drown. But the thought lacked passion” (133). The child casts a haunting smile back at Kapi before he goes under the water for the last time. This final impression consolidates the new way of thinking and insight that Kapi experienced that day. Kapi’s epiphany forces him to question the unthinking, shameless and brutal way of tribal life. He is almost unwillingly reborn, and his mind is expanded to be able to access sensitivity and unleash the capacity to think much more in depth about the power of love. Kapi eventually chooses to relinquish the transgressive pitfall of thoughtlessness and embrace the rewards of deep thinking and love. Although it is not spelled out which road Jimmy will take, it is clear that by portraying Jimmy and Kapi as having a clear choice, Duff has come to realise that one’s future is not always determined by one’s past.

*Mark: Searching for a Father*

The second male character I want to explore in this chapter is Mark from *Dreamboat Dad*. Mark is another of Duff's more recent troubled youths who not only chooses to pursue education, but also to work towards cultivating his finer instincts and capacities—his musical ability, and his ability to sing, in particular. Mark differs from the rest of Duff's youths with whom I am concerned in this study because, although he has felt the pain of being emotionally deprived, he has also been lucky enough to have experienced the “all-embracing love” of Winnicott's “good-enough mother” (*Playing and Reality* 141). Mark's childhood would have been perfectly acceptable and healthy, if Henry, Mark's stepfather and only male role model, had shown him some love and attention.

Henry resents Mark because, although the boy lives in his house and carries his surname, Mark is not Henry's biological son. While Henry was away at war, Lena, Mark's mother, had an affair with an American soldier and Mark, or “Yank,” as he was later nicknamed, was the shameful product. Whilst Henry showers love and affection upon Mark's three other siblings, he has completely ignored Mark since he was a baby. One particularly heart-wrenching moment in the novel is when Mark reveals that, as a child, he never saw Henry's teeth “revealed to [him] in a smile” (*Dreamboat Dad* 10).

Henry's purposeful emotional abandonment and psychological abuse of the boy has clearly had a negative impact on Mark's developing sense of self: “until I was five and started school, I thought he was my real father who just happened not to like me” (9-10). Mark remembers back to the confusion of these early childhood

memories saying, “five is already too old not to know the reason why [I was unloved]. I mean, kids hurt more because they lack understanding” (10). As a child, Mark could not understand the reasons behind Henry’s unloving behaviour and he automatically assumed that Henry ignored him was because he was not worthy of Henry’s love. Mark’s naturally egocentric child-mind has worked against his development in this situation—as it does with all emotionally deprived individuals. The idea that he is unworthy of Henry’s love is deeply embedded in Mark’s psychic makeup and it detrimentally affects his adolescence, despite his mother’s unconditional love.

Not only has Mark suffered from Henry’s neglect and emotional abandonment, but Mark also feels as if Henry places much of the blame for Lena’s infidelity upon him. Mark is blamed and punished by Henry through emotional neglect for Lena’s past actions. Henry’s treatment of Mark put a lot of psychological pressure on the boy from an early age and has impacted on his psyche and narcissistic balance. In Mark’s eyes, he is the “reason” why his mother is abused by Henry, and he feels responsible for the beatings Lena receives: “I got guilty that when he [Henry] beat Mum it was my fault. I’d cry in private [...] weeping with guilt that my very existence was a permanent reason for harm done to my mother” (29). These thoughts, just like his sense of unworthiness, were developed early in childhood and are the product of Mark’s child-like egocentric view of his position in the family.

As I have mentioned, Lena, being a good and attentive mother, has a sense of what this type of emotional abuse and deprivation can do to a child and she works hard to “counterbalance Henry’s ignoring of [Mark] to raise a self-confident young man with a bright future” (89). Chud, Mark’s best friend, and another of Duff’s unloved youths, identifies how Lena has helped Mark avoid some of the difficulties

through her unconditional maternal love—difficulties Chud himself struggles with on a far greater scale:

Henry doesn't care if you fall into a hot pool and die. You don't exist as far as he's concerned. So your old lady, what does she do? Loves you ten times more to make up. And what does that do? Makes you strong, lucky boy, on your mummy's love. Where you get your confidence from. An old lady who tells you over and over, *you're my special boy*.  
(Duff's emphasis 75)

Lena's motherly attention and love towards Mark has provided him with a shield against some of the more traumatic psychic disturbances with which some of Duff's other youths struggle. Mark even admits that his "life was a joy compared with [his] best pal Chud's" (30). "Chud was right," he states, "I just felt so loved" (75). However, despite his mother's love and the comparatively less severe nature of the emotional deprivation Mark goes through, he is not entirely free from the shame of being unloved by a father in childhood. For example, if we compare Mark, Jimmy and Sonny we can see striking similarities between the two boys in terms of their sexual development and relationships. As I have discussed, the relationships that these emotionally deprived characters enter into in the early stages of their sexual exploration are formed primarily through their need to find the love and admiration that they deeply yearn for through transgressive object attachments. Transgressive object relationships, as we know, promise hope, and for the time being soothe the inner self by seeming to fill an absent need that continuously haunts the individual.

As we saw in both Sonny and Jimmy, Mark's early sexual experiences reveal some of the issues hidden in the deeper regions of his psyche with which he is struggling. Mark's strong maternal attachment to Lena, alongside her identity as a "slut" in the small-town community, becomes increasingly connected in Mark's mind to the early sexual relationship he develops in his adolescence. Just like Jimmy, Mark becomes sexually involved with a married and much older woman, Isobel. This is portrayed as a typical love-object relationship—a relationship that, as we saw in Edith, is also an answer to a psychological need in the older woman—in that it instantaneously elicits in Mark "a surging feeling of belonging" filling an absence that, despite Lena's best efforts, still exists in Mark's emotional and psychological make up (95).

The transgressive dimension to this sexual encounter with Isobel is further developed when Mark seems to adopt Lena's shame and feel the weight of it putting pressure upon his emotional balance. As a child, Mark slowly learnt why Henry and other members of the small-town community refer to Lena as a "slut." Over time, Mark pieces together enough information to discover that this derogatory term was bestowed upon her because of her relationship with his father. Her identity as a slut elicits a shame response in Mark: "When they're saying this about your mother," Mark exclaims, "you want to die, or kill, or a hole to open up in the steaming thermal ground and boil you and your shame away" (10). In this passage, Duff depicts the trauma Mark feels as a young child when he is burdened unduly with the shame cast upon his mother by Henry and the wider community. Mark's shame is manifest later during his adolescence, especially during his encounter with Isobel, when he feels as if he is:

re-enacting [his] mother's life: she the naive, unknowing young

Waiwera inhabitant, seduced by Jess and the broader world he came

from. Me seduced by a Married older woman's sophistication and womanly wiles. Yet who was the seducer? Lena or Jess? Me or Isobel? (92).

Later, Mark meets the much younger Giselle and she captivates him at first sight. During his time with Giselle, Mark continues to identify himself with the negative rumours and accusations towards his mother that he has grown up hearing. He feels that "there is something flawed" in his inner being: "I'm hers dangling on a string. Just like my mum" (155).

In Mark's relationship with both of these women, Duff depicts the young character's struggle to maintain his narcissistic integrity. Mark's identity is often threatened during these encounters by his overwhelming connection to the shameful identity of "slut" which he has been burdened with as a child. For example, Mark's emerging sexuality has been tainted with a sense of negativity and shame that he experiences on behalf of his mother. "I'm just a slut like my mother" Mark states (155). The connection Mark has made between himself and his mother displays how each sexual experience reactivates the shame he feels over the circumstances of his conception, arousing deep feelings of unworthiness in him.

The nickname "Yank" is an important element in exploring how, from a young and unknowing age, Mark has been forced to take on his mother's shame. Mark states that the nickname "*Yank* [,] did isolate me. Without my knowing it had pointed me, my life, in a different direction" (Duff's italics, 75). On the surface, the nickname "Yank" refers to Mark's American father, Jess. However, deeper down in the boy's imagination his nickname is also associated with Lena's infidelity and shame. Mark feels as if he is "Mrs Sinner's living piece of damning evidence resident in the

victim's [Henry's] home" (28). By referring to Mark in this way, Henry is able to displace the shame and pain he feels over Lena's betrayal onto the child. Moreover, the nickname serves to distance Henry from Mark, and therefore, Henry is able to dismiss him as a human being and use him as a constant reminder and symbol of Lena's betrayal as well as an ongoing punishment towards her. This shows how something as simple as a loaded nickname has the potential to overwrite a child's developing sense of personal identity.

Mark's overwritten sexual identity is one of the major concerns of Henry's lovelessness towards him. The nickname "Yank" unbalances Mark's narcissistic equilibrium and undermines his sense of self, in particular, in term of his sexual identity and development. If Mark continues to identify himself by his nickname, he will never break free from the psychic burden and emotional consequences of his mother's past, and, therefore, his psychic equilibrium will inevitably remain compromised and vulnerable.

Mark's tendency to fall into the trap of searching out self-soothing sexual encounters is not the only transgressive coping technique Duff sheds light on in *Dreamboat Dad*. Mark's deviant sexual transgressions are matched by an accompanying tendency to engage in escapist projections. One of the most obvious of these escapist fantasies is Mark's insistence that his real American father must resemble Elvis Presley or John Wayne. When Elvis Presley mania sweeps through New Zealand, Mark feels that if he were to meet his father he would resemble Elvis. Elvis's music and persona are incorporated into Mark's father fantasy and the star's presence in the consciousness of the young Mark's mind feels like a personal letter addressed to him, the lost, but beloved son: "*Dear Yank, I, Elvis Presley, give you permission to rise far above Henry's ignoring of you and become a big star like me.*"

*Just go out and do it, son. Get yourself all shook up, turn yourself loose. Then watch big Henry reduce to a tiny little man of no consequence*” (Duff’s emphasis 67).

Mark is so convinced by his own fantasy that he believes he already knows what his father looks like: “a tall, lean man, very handsome, thick dark hair like his son’s, musical and probably rich, looks like Elvis” (70). When Mata, Mark’s sister questions him on this description, asking, “[w]hat if he’s not rich and doesn’t look like Elvis?” he simply replies “that’s not possible” (70). Elvis, the typical white American star, along with the cowboy image of John Wayne, have become Mark’s imaginary father substitutes. He uses their image to mirror his own self-image and identity. Mark’s father fantasy helps him to protect his psyche from the pain and shame of Henry’s rejection.

When Lena shows Mark a picture of his father, an African American man called Jess, Mark is confronted with a reality that does not match his transgressive fantasy. The real image of his father throws Mark into a state of identity turmoil. The fatherly image Mark created of Jess is shattered by this unexpected revelation and his narcissistic balance immediately feels threatened. “*This can’t be,*” Mark exclaims, “[m]y father is *white*. With uncanny resemblances to Elvis. Or the ruggedly handsome features of John Wayne” (114 Duff’s emphasis). Mark describes how, after seeing the photo of Jess, he suddenly looks at his “arm with quite a different eye” (113). Mark sees the “same brown but now [he] discern a certain duskiness” (113). The psychic image on which Mark has modelled his sense of self; the image he has used as a narcissistic mirror has proved itself to be untrue. The picture shakes Mark’s identity construction. He feels a sudden urge to “rush to a mirror and reconsider [his] face” (113). We can link this reaction, Mark’s need to check that he is still reflected back in the mirror, to the trauma of experiencing the threat of psychic death. However, Mark’s

experience of a threat to his psychic equilibrium is not as severe as some other instances we have previously discussed. This is because Mark's narcissistic equilibrium is much more stable as a result of Lena's love.

Near the end of the novel, Mark goes to America to "meet [his] father in the flesh" (175). During his visit, Mark satisfies the love-void inside him which has needed the love of a father since childhood. Mark is able to use the experience of knowing a loving father to satisfy his "emotional need" and further stabilise his psychic economy (175). Unlike Henry, Mark's real father does not call Mark "Yank." By refusing to use Mark's nickname, Jess starts a process of unbinding him from the internal toxic shame that has been installed into his psychic make-up by Henry's unloving and negative attitude towards him throughout childhood. For example, when Mark meets Jess for the first time he feels as if he has arrived home: "[f]ather oh father, I was told you died, that you were killed in the war. You were the unmentionable in the house I grew up in; I had to invent you in my mind" (194). In his mind, Mark continually refers to Jess as "daddy" (195) This affectionate, child-like name attests to the underlying need for a father figure Mark has harboured, and to the process of healing the inner child who has never had a father to call daddy.

While Yank is visiting Jess in America, he experiences the discrimination that his father, as an African American, is subjected to. The story comes to a head when, to protect his son from angry redneck racists, Jess murders two white men in a car shootout. Jess immediately sends Mark home to the safety of New Zealand and goes on the run. Back in New Zealand, Mark receives the news that his father has been caught and lynched by white Americans determined to murder the black man who was brash enough to value his life over that of a white man. Although Jess's death is a blow to Mark, he has nevertheless experienced the love of a father during his visit

and, moreover, he has witnessed and received the greatest act of love: giving one's own freedom and life to protect a child. Jess "lives on in me," Yank says: "I'll have children, name the first after his grandfather. A girl I'll name her Jessie" (247). Mark feels as if he carries in him a part of his father. Receiving a father's love, attention and touch is something Mark has always wanted; his time with Jess has restored his identity.

In the final chapter of *Dreamboat Dad*, the hopefulness that has been developed throughout Duff's later writing is evident. Mark has found a real love in Giselle, but more importantly, he has secured a much more stable identity of his own, apart from his mother, through his newfound connection with Jess. By extension, other characters in the novel are also able to look towards a positive future. For example, Mark describes how Henry has changed. Henry lives, Mark attests, "by a higher code of conduct these days" (246). Although Henry and Mark are not emotionally close, the change of attitude Henry has gone through does allow them to communicate with each other. Moreover, Lena has carved out a new life with a man who loves her as much as Jess did, and, finally, Chud, Mark's childhood friend, has also discovered hope by finding the real love he was deprived of as a child in the love of Wiki, Mark's half sister.

### *Chud*

Of all Duff's later, more hopeful characters Chud has experienced a childhood situation that bears the greatest resemblance to that of Duff's earlier protagonists. Chud can be compared to Charlie in the fact that he has suffered at the hands of not

one, but two unloving parents. Chud is the ultimate victim of bad parents; he has been shown no mercy in early childhood and adolescence. His emerging adult behaviour—full of transgressions, untrusting behaviour and shame—is a direct reflection of the pain, hurt and shame Chud absorbed as a child. For example, Chud has learnt, from a very early age, that the only solution for dealing with the mental trauma, the shame and the pain it inflicts on his inner self, is to disavow it by turning to transgressive acts of anger, rage and toughness.

At a school dance, Mark watches this process unfold. Throughout the dance, Chud is rendered helpless from shame because of his inability to relate to others, especially girls. Chud is “flattened against the wall,” his “feet turn leaden” and his heart is “heavy with despair” (99). He “wants to be out there” with Yank, he “wants to show he can dance, but something inside holds him back” (99). Watching Yank and the other dancers spin around him, Chud senses he has been left behind: “[t]he whole ill direction of his life, his bad upbringing, becomes known now” and Chud feels the burning shame and reacts violently to this realisation (99). As he stands stranded against the wall “[w]aves of self-loathing wash over him [and] a dark sense of lovelessness grips him” (99).

As I have shown, when an individual encounters painful and debilitating toxic shame, he or she works hard to ease the pain and protect the psyche. Chud uses the disavowal of shame, replacing shame with anger, rage and violence. This process is indicative of the shame-rage spiral, a deadly emotional whirlpool that has the power to trap an individual into a transgressive lifestyle through the power of unacknowledged and repressed shame.

Yank describes Chud’s transformation from the victim, stunted and stuck to the wall, to his “other self” his dangerous self: [h]is anger requires a victim. Chud

moves around like a wild beast prowling for the kill” (101). During disavowal and the unleashing of violence Chud experiences a release of shame and pain. At this moment he is “flooded with his other self” and in this state Chud feels as if he is someone worthwhile:

[n]ow he feels as close to being loved as he’ll ever feel. The boy alone no more, he has company of his other self. Look after me, boy. I will, Chuddy. I will. And over the both of them go, two Chud’s one in their hatred. (101)

This incident at the dance foreshadows the beginning of Chud’s downward spiral, ending with Chud being locked up in a cell, his first experience as a juvenile criminal.

Chud’s incarceration after the dance is not the only time he will be sent to prison. Later in the novel, it is made clear that Chud has since been sentenced to a much longer sentence because of his violent transgressions in early adulthood. It is significant that Chud seems to discover a sense of belonging and a sense of self in prison. In jail, Chud plays “Mister Tough Guy” and relies on his violence to survive. Chud’s transgressions help him to gain respect from other inmates. In this sense, it is possible that Chud enjoys the security of jail and the social interaction it offers him. For example, if Chud were to compare jail with his home life—like Charlie did in *State Ward*—it is not surprising that jail is in fact preferable. Once Chud establishes himself as the kingpin, the respect other inmates give him establishes in Chud’s mind a warped sense of self-worth and the illusion of being admired, looked up to and even loved. In other words, during his time in jail Chud finds himself a kind of “home,” something he has desired and searched for all his life. However, when he is released

he reverts back to the lost child again. Chud, “the kid Lena Takahe called Boyboy,” “the kingpin, [the] formidable man of iron fists” is once more “alone, in an isolated place” (159). Prison offers only a temporary respite; prison does not last, just like the transgressive strategies that sent Chud there in the first place.

James Gilligan’s study on the theory of violence, which I touched on in chapter one, can shed light on why Chud’s experience of the jail system seemed so positive in his loveless mind. Gilligan is extremely well qualified to speak with regard to how inmates and violent offenders come to be, and why—as Duff has demonstrated in his portrayal of Chud—jail can often become a home substitute for them. Gilligan has worked closely with the most violent criminals in America and attests to the fact that they are not evil men, despite their terrible crimes, but that they share a common factor: a horribly abusive, emotionally deprived and unloving childhood. As Gilligan himself puts it, “the degree of violence and cruelty to which these men have been subjected in childhood is so extreme and unusual that it gives a whole new meaning to the term ‘child abuse’ ” (43).

When we look at Chud’s reliance on toughness and violence against others in jail we can clearly see how his toxic shame “is the primary or ultimate cause of all violence” in the criminal mind (110). Gilligan suggests that, “the purpose of violence is to diminish the intensity of shame and replace it as far as possible with its opposite, pride” (111). He goes on to say that, in replacing shame with pride, the individual is prevented from becoming overwhelmed by his or her feelings of shame (Gilligan 111). When Chud emerges from jail, he clearly displays this shame-masking pride. To Lena and Mark he appears to be a tattoo-covered brute, ridiculous looking, “like a child trying to impress” Lena observes; “[w]e all know he graduated to prison for violence” (*Dream* 145).

Gilligan presents his readers with the case study of Randolph, a violent inmate who “has much to teach us about violence” (Gilligan 118). Randolph’s life has consisted of repeated violence and repeated jail sentences. Randolph’s life pattern of repetitive violent behaviour leading to jail, Gilligan suggests, “makes complete sense if we understand it as a way of getting himself sent to prison, where his wish to be taken care of (if not loved) could finally be gratified by the prison” (118). However, as Gilligan points out, violent crimes are not necessary if one simply wants to be sentenced. What purpose do acts of violence serve in Randolph’s psyche? Randolph’s choice to carry out violent crimes doubles as a masking transgression to hide his deepest desires for which he feels ashamed. The hidden need Randolph masks with his violent tendencies and demeanour is his desire “to be loved and cared for by others” (118). By committing a violent crime, Randolph is able to mask this “shameful” desire; violence is love’s complete opposite. By inflicting violence on others, Randolph is outwardly expressing his wish to appear invulnerable. He needs to conceal the truth of “the vulnerability of [his] wish to be loved by others” (119). Randolph’s pattern of behaviour can be linked to Chud’s behaviour and experience of prison. Chud’s reliance on transgressive toughness and violence, like that of many other Duff delinquents, is a “face-saving way of obtaining care” from a prison-like institution; it is the closest form of love that they believe they can attain and/or deserve (Gilligan 119).

In *Dreamboat Dad*, Chud, unlike Jimmy in *Both Sides of the Moon*, is not helped by his incarceration. Chud emerges from prison much more hardened against the world around him. In Chud’s case, hope is suggested by Duff through the effect of genuine love and touch of a partner upon Chud’s troubled mind. Wiki, Jimmy’s half sister, is the source of this genuine love. Wiki is the only person to whom Chud has

been able to get emotionally close as an adult. Something as simple as her touch seems to heal the hurt and shame he feels and fills the void inside him from which his parents failed to protect him. When Wiki “[j]oins her mouth with his” she “[j]oins up his broken life. Mends his heart. Saves his soul” (*Dreamboat Dad* 163). The idea that simply the power of love can heal the psychic trauma of childhood may come across as idealistic if we consider it on its own, but Duff takes steps towards addressing this issue. For example, Mark admits that, although “Chud is different” now, (he is) a man who, “if he tries hard enough, [...] might make it,” Mark expresses a lingering doubt that Chud may not be able to “overcome his parents” (246). Despite the hint of doubt over Chud’s future, Chud’s first steps towards mending his brokenness through the love of a spouse contributes towards the notion hope with which Duff is presenting us.

In the characters of Jimmy, Yank and Chud, Duff presents us with three different characters who come from three different situations, but who are all dealing with the effect of a loveless childhood in some form or another. Just like Duff’s earlier male characters, all three characters seek hope and love in transgressions that contain both masking and self-soothing characteristics. However, there is a new dimension to Duff’s vision for the unloved child that these characters showcase: the introduction of real hope and redemption. Duff never conclusively states that his characters succeed, however, hope for their future is strongly suggested in these more recent male characters. The potential to overcome the adversity of an inadequate childhood is found through the pursuit of education for Jimmy from *Both Sides of the Moon*. For Yank and Chud from *Dreamboat Dad* it is found in discovering the healing quality of genuine and sincere love and touch of a partner or a long lost father. The suggestion of a possibility of redemption and hope means that Duff’s recent

adolescent male youths are not necessarily doomed to act out the life of an unloved child: they seem to have found a way to access a life beyond the fruitless search for hope and love in transgressions and find a way forward for the future.

## Chapter Four

Duff's Hopeful and Redemptive Vision for a Delinquent Female Adolescent: *Who Sings for Lu?* (2009)

Lu O'Brien, from *Who Sings for Lu?* is Duff's first substantial female protagonist since Grace from *Once Were Warriors*. Just like all of Duff's other unloved adolescents, Lu becomes somewhat trapped by the allure of certain transgressions that seem to offer her hope. However, in reality, the transgressive behaviours in which Lu indulges to try and protect her narcissistic equilibrium eventually start to compound, magnifying the hurt and toxic shame she has felt since childhood. Despite the emotional deprivation and abuse she experienced, Lu, as is typical of Duff's most recent delinquent adolescent characters like Jimmy, Mark and Chud from the previous chapter, is depicted as someone with a lot of potential.

In this chapter, I will outline Lu's background and show how Duff portrays her transgressive behaviour and attitudes in adolescence as arising out of the toxic shame and psychic pain of loveless parenting. I will closely examine specifically the shame-rage spiral Lu falls into, and I will compare the pattern of Lu's shame-rage spiral to that of Duff's male youths to see whether Lu is simply one of the boys dressed up as a girl, or whether Duff is really trying to present a female version of a childhood involving emotional deprivation. Finally, I will explore how Duff portrays Lu as hopeful in the closing chapters of *Who Sings for Lu?*, in order to understand how her potential, and Duff's overall vision for his deprived characters' futures, can be explored in relation to that of Jimmy, Mark and Chud.

Like Charlie, Sonny, Jimmy and Chud, Lu suffers from the hurt of having two unloving and/or inadequate parents. Her life story is strikingly similar to Grace Heke's from *Once Were Warriors*. For example, Lu's father, Brett O'Brien resembles Grace's father Jake. Both Brett and Jake are inadequate fathers who spend their time "down the street every night drinking with mirrors of himself, broken down men—supposed men—who [have] never made an effort, not at anything except bending the drinking elbow" (*Who Sings for Lu?* 38). Likewise, Lu's mother is similar to Beth in that she has the potential to be a good mother, but her potential is lost due to mental illness and gambling. Lu tells us how, "[i]n her better moments, Mum was like any other good mother, made you feel warm all over, said things that get a trickle going like golden syrup over your insides, you went all gooey, felt like doing baby talk to her, like you were starting again, the past was wiped, like the ever-ending gambling losses had never happened" (37). Despite the potential that Lu's mother has to be an adequate maternal influence, these small moments of love Lu describes are few and far between.

The reality is that Lu's mother is suffering from mental illness and a serious addiction to gambling. Moreover, the extra benefit money Lu's family get for her mother being ill is wasted by her father. Extra money means "the old man [can] drink more and the old lady [can] gamble when her head was straight enough to hear the bingo caller," or, Lu suggests, "more likely watch her money get swallowed by a machine" (36). But it is her mother's emotional deprivation and neglect that has damaged Lu in a far more substantial way than her gambling. By being emotionally absent, Lu's mother has failed to show her daughter a sufficient amount of love. "If only," Lu thinks, "mum could rid her face of the scowl, send her bitterness packing" (38) Like any love-starved child, Lu yearns for "[a] bit of love, maybe more than a

bit,” and she continually hopes for “some words of encouragement and kindness, some parental facial expressions not twisted by anger and poison in the soul” (38). Lu desperately wants her mother’s inadequacies to be “wiped clean like the class blackboard” so that she can have a chance at a normal life, however this is not to be, and Lu knows it (38).

The emotional deprivation Lu suffers because of the inadequacies of her parents is depicted by Duff as being like a “hole they widened in your heart” (38). Lu explains this concept, saying, “by the time you O’Brien kids reached a certain age they could drive a Bondi bus right through you all” (38). Lu especially resents her father. At one point Lu confronts him with the damage his neglect has on her. She accuses him of not being there as a father: “[y]ou, mate. Never went for one kid’s walk with us [...] not one fuckin’ swim at the beach [...] You just weren’t into taking care of your own kids” (177).

Lu’s shame-filled feelings of being eternally unworthy of her parents’ love and attention is only heightened when, from a very young age, she is subjected to the unthinkable trauma of being repeatedly sexually abused by her Uncle Rick. Tragically for Lu, Rick is not her only abuser. Lu suggests that other males in the community, as she puts it, “knew vulnerability when [they] saw it” and “picked up on her parents being hardly ever around, always out drinking and gambling” (31).

Emotional deprivation in childhood, and the continuous sense of feeling unloved and unwanted, creates in Lu the basis for her shame-based transgressive behaviour later in life. Lu’s low levels of self-worth leave her ill-equipped to deal with shame. As a result of her inadequate amount of self-confidence, Lu is unsuccessful at stabilising her narcissistic equilibrium and, therefore, she becomes a

victim of her shame. In other words, Lu's vulnerability allows shame to take hold of her mind, forcing her to seek out transgressions to ease her emotional pain.

Lu has become so accustomed to pain and abuse that she is willing to accept that they are simply an unavoidable part of her life. Grace from *Once Were Warriors* is in a similar position to Lu and can be compared with her on several levels. At one point, Grace articulates how the emotional deprivation arising from an inadequate childhood, which both Lu and Grace have endured, will severely destabilise a child's emotional makeup. As she puts it, emotional deprivation and lovelessness in childhood leave the individual with a sense that "something, someone had done this to [them]; this sense of having been not deprived but robbed of a life" (117). Lu also expresses the feeling that she is "soiled goods" (307). Lu feels as if her life, comprised of "thirteen years sexually abused, twenty-and-a-bit years unloved," is a reflection of her lack of worth (307). Lu, like Grace, is a highly sensitive, smart and beautiful young woman, but she does not see this potential in herself.

Lu's uncle Rick's relentless sexual abuse has the effect of heightening Lu's sense of toxic shame. "[I]t felt like everyone in the world knew her shame," Lu recalls, "and [they] whispered among themselves how she stank of semen" (58). Moreover, Lu's shame also becomes intertwined with a deep sense of guilt. Like many of Duff's hurting delinquents who suffer traumatic and damaging emotions, Lu's emotional torment becomes apparent in Duff's description of her dreams:

[g]uilt did walk beside her like an unwanted pal, and it themed her dreaming at night. Every night. In dreams punished for being just an ordinary Woollo girl and exposed to the whole high school, or her

street, for ‘SLEEPING WITH YOUR UNCLE!!’ the nightly chorus bellowed. (47)

Lu feels as if she is prevented from processing Rick’s abuse because of the hostile and loveless environment in which she has been raised. As a child, Lu felt as if she had nobody to turn to for help; nobody who cared enough to protect her. As a young adult, Lu remembers how she was “denied of voice to speak about it. Even to herself” (32). She explains that, in her home, “to talk about pain meant you could no longer endure it so you might as well be dead” (32). Through these two passages, we can see why Lu developed a desperate need to disavow the reality of being unloved and abused. Her inability to acknowledge the abuse fully, even to herself, results in her dependence on the psychic relief of certain transgressive coping behaviours.

I have mentioned in previous chapters that transgressive coping behaviours—such as the disavowal of shame, the shame-rage spiral and self-soothing—are so attractive to the chaotic mind of the unloved individual because they initially offer hope (Winnicott, *The Maturation Process* 208). Transgressive coping techniques offer hope to the victim of shame: a hope that a specific pattern of behaviour, a certain act or a relationship with another person might hold the key to filling the internal void of love-longing left by unloving parents. However, the hope that transgressions seem to promise to the love-starved individual quickly dissipates, leaving more pain, rejection and shame. For example, the behaviours which were intended to heal often develop into ongoing compulsions, addictions or habits as the fleeting feeling of relief from psychic pain and the threat of psychic death can only be achieved by the individual at the beginning of each transgressive act (Winnicott, *The Maturation Process* 208).

The illusion of hope is why Lu's whole being is devoted to employing and acting out various coping techniques. These coping techniques are specific behaviours that also serve to protect her psyche from the unbearable shame that being unloved and sexually abused elicits. The first of the dysfunctional behaviours I will discuss is Lu's need to maintain a safe distance from others. Lu feels as if she must push others away in order to try to avoid the "inevitable" rejection and abuse she believes she deserves. Secondly, I will show how Lu, like the majority of Duff's unloved delinquents, attempts to disavow the pain of toxic shame. Lu's disavowal involves substituting for shame a more manageable emotion, such as rage and violence, and then directing it inwards, in the form of self-punishment, towards herself.

### *Pushing Others Away From the Self*

Lu's distrust of others, and her need to secure independence from others, are not only a form of self-protection, but can also be interpreted as a form of self-punishment. Lu's self-punishment stems from the suppressed guilt and shame of being unloved and abused in childhood. Lu does not feel worthy of friendships and relationships with others: she "felt she didn't deserve the love of anyone, soiled goods" (22). This is manifested in her overriding distrust of Rocky. Every move he makes is interpreted by Lu to be an indicator that he is about to harm her. For example, when they first start spending time together, Rocky takes Lu to a house he is renovating for some cash. Lu wrongly senses that his motive for inviting her to the deserted house is to get her alone and sleep with her. Despite her fears, Lu follows Rocky into the house, adamant that this would be the moment that Rocky would

“show his true self” (17). When he suggests she take a look at the place, Lu is sure “he meant he was going to take a look at her, her private part down there, followed by take a look at [his]” (17). These assumptions Lu is continuously making are derived from her past experiences and are perfectly understandable. It is Lu’s low sense of self worth and feelings of being undeserving of love that are interesting here. Lu does not believe anyone would find her interesting unless they had sex on the brain. For this reason, Lu cannot feel safe around others.

In order to maintain her separateness from others, Lu enlists the protection of a tough independent exterior. By living an autonomous life and being suspicious and paranoid of every person she happens to meet, Lu is attempting to protect herself from the dangers of sexual advances from men as well as the danger of being rejected and the toxic shame this causes. She calls this state of being her “self-protect mode” a state Lu says she relies on “even with nothing left to protect” (19). The catalyst that sparks Lu’s development of her “self-protect mode,” is depicted by Duff in his portrayal of an event from her childhood, when Lu attempts to find a loving mother substitute in a school friend’s mother.

During her high school years, the difference between Lu and more privileged children becomes apparent. Lu describes how at her school there is a clear segregation between children from wealthy, more loving families and children like her. Lu gets a first hand “glimpse of how the other half live[s]” when Sarah invites her over to her house after school (36). At first, Lu is hopeful as well as nervous about how her presence might be received by Sarah’s mother. Deep down, the unloved child in Lu hopes she might win Sarah’s mother’s approval and possibly love. However, the exchange does not go well for Lu. Sarah’s mother, Mrs Crichton, corners Lu and asks her a series of questions “like a cop” would about Lu’s family (35). She vindictively

tries to trap Lu into admitting that she comes from a poor family and that her parents are a pair of drunks and gamblers.

This cruel game Mrs Crichton plays forces Lu to mask her shame by lying; however, this façade is quickly broken down. By lying to cover over the aspects of her life she was most ashamed by, Lu was attempting to make herself more appealing to Sarah's mother. Lu is devastated by this latest experience of shameful rejection; instead of finding a mother figure who could assist her in healing some of the hurt caused in childhood, Lu learns to fear vulnerability and rejection and to embrace distrust and independence. In short, Lu learns that the safest way to survive is to shut herself away from others and "not to let it [pain] take her over" (36).

Duff depicts Lu's psychic need to shut others out of her life and be detached and independent in the first chapters of the novel. For example, when Lu meets Rocky—a man who will go on to be her lifeline and father of her baby—she immediately perceives him as a sexual threat. To protect herself, Lu attempts to push him away and scare him off by giving him her "shut-down look" (11). It takes Rocky a long time to convince Lu he is trustworthy. Lu's behaviour is very similar to the self-imposed isolation of Sabine, McDougall's psychoanalytic patient—a patient I have discussed several times previously in this study ("Narcissus" 309). Both Sabine and Lu make use of a projected "tough" exterior and rely on their independence from others to secure their psychic balance and narcissistic equilibrium. While Sabine feels invaded by the mere presence of others, Lu feels invaded by the potential threat of others.

Karen Horney, who published a book entitled *Our Inner Conflicts*, sheds light on the self-alienation-punishment Lu inflicts upon herself for not being worthy of her parents' love in childhood. Horney outlines how emotionally deprived individuals

faced with psychic trauma and emotional deprivation—a state she calls “the basic conflict”—express, through their behaviour, “the need for detachment” and for “moving away from” others (Horney 73). Lu’s impulse to move away from others is apparent throughout *Who Sings for Lu?*. Lu is constantly fearful of others. She is afraid of both rejection, stemming from the primal rejection, lovelessness and abandonment she felt from her parents while growing up, as well as Sarah’s mother’s rejection of her later in life, and she is afraid of the threat of sexual abuse or advances from men.

Lu’s uneasiness in the presence of others is a result of her deep-seated fear that every male will, if he has the chance, morph into another Rick: “she was aware at an early age in coming across any male in any close situation that sooner, rather than later or never, his cock would spring out” (32). Lu feels as if she is destined to be “the object of erect, desperately wanting snakes” forever (32). By constantly predicting the worst in others, and by taking steps to counteract the imminent hurt she anticipates, Lu feels more in control. Subconsciously, she has decided that if she can prevent herself from being caught off guard or lured into a false sense of security she will have more chance to avoid being betrayed or rejected.

Despite her inner need to be independent from possible predators, Lu does have a gang-like circle of male friends that she trusts. As Lu puts it, she has “made a few good boy mates here and there, though no girls she could call a real mate [...] Felt as if girls could sense she was soiled goods. Felt their judging her [...] as if she was the guilty party” (47). Having a select few trusted male friends seems to contradict Lu’s need to keep separated from others, but I believe her gang-like group adds another layer of protection for Lu. Like any gang-like group, these selected delinquent friends become her second family. They are a family who are much more

loving and attentive towards Lu; a family who stand up to Rick for her; a family who do listen to her pain and care about her.

*Duff's Depiction of a Specifically Female Shame-rage Spiral.*

In previous chapters, I have shown that Duff's male protagonists often react to toxic shame by letting their emotions spiral out of control into rage and hate. By submitting to transgressive, and often violent behaviour, Duff's male youths are able to distract themselves from their loveless reality as well as provide themselves with a temporary release from the pain of toxic shame. I have previously referred to this transgressive, downward spiral as the feeling trap, or the shame-rage spiral.

Both Lu and Grace fall into the shame-rage spiral to evacuate their shame and divert their attention away from the pain they are feeling. However, for Lu and Grace, the shame-rage spiral is manifest in a slightly different way than what we have discussed so far. In Duff's portrayal of Grace's behaviour, and in much of Lu's behaviour, we can see his attempt to distinguish a male's reaction to the pain of toxic shame from a female's reaction to toxic shame. As I have discussed, Duff's male youths typically engage in shame-rage transgressions in order to evacuate the pain and shame they feel outwards. Duff's female protagonists, in contradistinction, typically direct shame-rage inwards, towards the self.

Specific self-defence and dysfunctional behaviours—self-hate and self-punishment or suicide, for example—are much more evident in Lu and Grace than they are in the males explored so far. As previously mentioned, Grace, like Lu, is a female child-victim of sexual abuse. Grace's abuser who is unseen by Grace, a family friend

nicknamed “Uncle Bully” or perhaps even her own father, attacks Grace in her bedroom while her mother is downstairs in her usual state of drunken oblivion. During the rape, Grace cries out to her mother for help in her mind, “thinking of mental telepathy, communication between mothers and daughters in trouble without screams or words. Just come, Mum. Oh please come” (*Once Were Warriors* 90). When Beth fails to come to her rescue Grace’s toxic shame and feelings of being unloved are magnified to overwhelming proportions.

To cope with the shame of being unloved as well as sexually abused, Grace turns to the transgressive relief of shame-rage. By substituting rage for shame, Grace is able to direct all the hurt and pain of her toxic shame onto herself in the form of self-loathing and hate. However, this transgressive emotional substitution ends up hurting Grace much more. By replacing the pain of shame for rage against herself, Grace is trying to disavow her shame through emotional substitution. However, it is too much for her to cope with, and her coping technique ultimately results in the thirteen-year-old committing suicide.

In a chapter entitled “Loveless, She Stumbled,” Duff depicts the night leading up to Grace’s suicide. Grace decides to hang herself from a large tree that is situated on the Tramberts’ property, just up from her Pine Block house. The Tramberts are a wealthy white family whom Grace describes as resembling “another species” (116). Grace feels so separated from their loving home and functional family life that, as she watches them eat dinner from “her perch” in the tree, she feels as if “they were a film” or “a TV show” she was watching; highly desirable, but, for Grace, elusive and undeserved (116).

One particularly significant moment is when Grace focuses on the young girl child in the family who is similar in age to her. Watching the Trambert girl “kissing

[...] her mother, her father, goodnight” brings the lovelessness Grace has experienced from her parents to the forefront of her mind (118). The girl’s simple act of love, which her parents casually accept, “consumed a girl [Grace] with jealousy” (118). Just before Grace jumps, she describes her feeling of being so unworthy and unimportant in the world that she wants her death to “be quiet. So quiet they won’t know I exist” (116). This wish to become nonexistent is a clear indication of the influence toxic shame has had on Grace. When an individual experiences ongoing toxic shame, he or she desires nothing more than to disappear into a hole, sink away, or become invisible and unnoticed by others.

This shame-induced need to disappear or become invisible is accompanied by bodily manifestations such as head bowing, closed eyes as well as a “flood” of sensations such as blushing and sweating (H. Lewis, Introduction 18). Lewis refers to R.D Laing’s idea of an “implosion of the self” where by the individual attempts to make herself as small as possible (H. Lewis, Introduction 18). For those like Grace, who suffer from the ongoing experience of shame, the need to disappear is so strong that it can lead to self-harm and suicide.

A recent scientific study on young girls, conducted in 2004, shows that “maltreatment,” and “particularly sexual abuse,” is “related to several types of activities that fall under the rubric of self-injurious and risky behaviour” (Wright et al. 640). This study explores the connection between abuse and delinquent behaviour and it states that “a surprisingly high percentage of sexually abused teenage females who have already been subjected to psychological and/or psychical harm,” such as both Lu and Grace, “engage in behaviours that put them at further risk to be harmed anew” (Wright et al. 640). Although Lu does not go so far as to attempt suicide like Grace does, she does have suicidal thoughts: “What was the point in living like this? Why

didn't a girl—little girl, little guilty girl—just end it? Maybe she would" (*Who Sings For Lu?* 148). Even as young adult, Lu views herself as a "little guilty girl," a girl who deserves nothing more than to live in a constant state of victimhood and self-loathing (148). Her self-loathing and self-destructive tendencies along with her acceptance of ongoing abuse echo the study's findings that abused and unloved girls will often engage in patterns of behaviour that continue to put them at risk. In the case of people who cannot defend themselves, such as an abused child like Lu, when "the whole of the individual's being cannot be defended," that person will retract and adopt "inner defence manoeuvres" (Laing 80-81). Tragically, however, this defence behaviour becomes self-destructive because the external attacks become far less harmful than the "devastation caused by the inner defence manoeuvres themselves" (Laing 81).

From a very young developmental age—at an age when she can only view her world through the egocentric eyes of a child—Lu has interpreted her parents' failure to rescue her from uncle Rick to be a deliberate and deserved punishment. Moreover, since she was a small child, Rick has impressed upon Lu the idea that *she* alone is the cause of her own pain and suffering: that *she* has led men on since she was a small child and, therefore, that *she* has chosen her own fate. To further manipulate Lu, Rick has told her over and over that she is ugly. Lu recalls how Rick insisted to her "what they [are] doing together was helping her become better looking. If he'd promised beautiful," Lu thinks to herself, she "would have done whatever he wanted, with, if not gladness, at least hope that one day [she]'d benefit by being blessed with good looks" (33).

The negative perceptions Lu has about her own role in encouraging the sexual abuse and her ugliness is, of course, a lie that Rick has created in the mind of his

victim in order to protect himself or even excuse himself from the act. As we see in Lu's case, this lie is exponentially more powerful and manipulative when it is impressed upon someone who already possesses a severe and debilitating deficit of self-worth and self-esteem as a result of her upbringing. Rick has such a powerful hold over Lu that, for much of the text, Lu continues to put up with and hide uncle Rick's abuse well into adolescence. By the time Lu is old enough to stand up for herself, it is too late. By this stage she has "acquired an acceptance, a resignation this was her lot in life" and the shame that she feels is chronic and continuous (32).

Lu's acceptance of terrible events in her life is, in part, a continuation of her self-blaming coping mechanism in childhood. As a child Lu was forced to disavow any shame she felt during the abuse in order to protect herself from the unbearable pain it inflicted. At this young age, Lu was unable to stand up to Rick psychically or emotionally. This meant that she had to find other ways of disengaging herself from the reality of the situation.

Lu's parents' failure to identify the abuse and intervene on behalf of their vulnerable daughter is interpreted by young Lu as proof that she is unworthy of their love. Lu father's inaction during the abuse was just as damaging and hurtful as his emotional neglect of her as a child. Years later, Lu asks him "where were you when I might've needed your fists to protect me?" (177). Lu explains how she imagines "cops and teachers, nuns and maybe a priest or preacher accusing her of being bad, grossly sinful, even evil. As if it was her fault. *As if the sinned against is the sinner*" (Duff's emphasis 33). These imagined figures of power, figures a child believes are faultless and all powerful, much as he or she views his or her parents, are accusing Lu of being at fault. Lu's own imagination is working to solidify her negative perception of herself, binding her in a thick rope of shame.

As a result of Lu's deeply ingrained feelings of toxic shame, she cannot break away from the child inside her who has been brainwashed into believing that she deserves to be punished. The power of Lu's inner hurting child is especially evident when she is in direct contact with Rick. Lu goes to Rick's hospital bedside, a place from which he is unable to attack her, to try and establish some sense of revenge or payback. Lu starts out strong, she feels as if she must "find the right retort" to rebut Rick's manipulative comments or else she would crumble. Lu feels "as if a fail would take her right back under his spell," and this is exactly what happens (131).

Rick's power to transform Lu into a cowering, scared little girl is depicted in this encounter when Lu repeatedly reacts to Rick's comments with almost involuntary steps backward and away from him. For example, each verbal hit Rick lands on Lu forces her to take "several more steps back." Moreover, when Rick reiterates his old lies, telling Lu: "you were born a slut," Lu's mind responds like that of a child: "[d]on't say that Uncle. Not fair on a little girl who's already suffered at your hands" (132 Duff's emphasis). This encounter between Lu and her abuser shows that Lu's hurting inner child can weaken her in the present time. Lu's learnt egocentric, childlike tendencies and patterns of interpretation that she uses to analyse various events in her life continually connect her present self to the pain and shame of her childhood.

Lu's coping techniques, involving punishing, hating and blaming herself, may seem absurd, but, by diverting her attention away from Rick, a person against whom she was powerless, and onto herself, young Lu is able to manage the pain of toxic shame by converting it into rage and hate directed against herself. As a child, young Lu learns that it is easier to hate and punish herself than it is to stand up to uncle Rick. We can see examples of her self-hate and self-punishment in her often-negative

attitude towards herself, which is depicted throughout the novel. For example, Lu often has thoughts such as “*I’m as filthy as a sewer*” (Duff’s emphasis 35). Rage against herself has the effect of temporarily diminishing the shame she feels at being unloved. Being a victim of unloving parents and the sexual abuse she goes through makes more sense in Lu’s mind if there is a reason for it.

Once Rick is out of the picture, Lu’s shame-rage against herself continues and is manifest in her acceptance of sleazy and perverted men like Detective Sergeant Kevin Ahern. Kevin comes into contact with Lu whilst investigating the vicious attack that Lu’s delinquent friends inflicted on Rick—when Lu admits to her friends that her uncle has abused her for many years, the boys’ decide that it is fitting that Rick’s genitals be cut off. Whilst interviewing Lu about this crime, Kevin, a corrupt policeman, quickly senses Lu’s vulnerability and uses his position of power and authority to rape her. Because of Lu’s self-loathing she does not grasp the gravity of the situation and, more importantly, she does not see Kevin as being in the wrong.

Lu’s acquiescence of Rick’s behaviour springs from her inner conviction that she somehow deserves this type of unwanted male sexual attention. Her acceptance that she is to blame for the sexual abuse reflects the absence of a sense of self-worth, which, in turn, is a consequence of parental neglect and emotional deprivation. Anna Chadwick, a character I will discuss in more depth later in this chapter, picks up on Lu’s underlying sense of worthlessness by observing her body language. Anna observes how Lu’s “eyes [and her] facial expressions [...] went from tense, guarded, to so spontaneous it shifted her into a person of extraordinary beauty” (307). When Kevin’s intentions become clear, Lu thinks to herself, “[y]ou’ve attracted another one, Lu....*Ugly little precocious miss, luring men on from a young age and into adulthood even when you didn’t think you meant to*” (146-47). As Rick taught her, Lu

allows Kevin to do what he wants with her with no protest. Moreover, Lu believes that *she* is the one to blame; she has been taught to only see ugliness, stupidity and worthlessness in the inner reflection of her self.

To hate the self is a “safer” emotional state than to feel toxic shame about the self. Lu chooses to substitute hate and self-loathing for shame just as Grace did. Moreover, Lu’s only parental reflection as an infant and small child was one of indifference or drunken anger. A prime necessity of human existence—a necessity that Lu, and the other Duff adolescents we have studied, lack—is to see the self reflected in the eyes of the mother during infancy and childhood. The reflection a child should see in the eyes of the mother will ideally be one of admiration, appreciation and love. If this is the case, the child is free to develop internal self-confidence and self-esteem. No reflection, or a lack of positive emotion in the reflection, translates in the mind of the child into a deep sense of worthlessness and unworthiness, traits that Duff depicts in adolescent Lu.

During incidents where Lu is accepting of the multiple sexual encounters with Kevin, the destructive nature of Lu’s self-punishing behaviour becomes apparent. Lu does not stand up for herself or run away from danger. Instead, she allows herself to become the passive victim in situations where she will be “punished.” Lu uses these unwanted sexual encounters to diminish or mask the more unbearable pain of her guilt and shame: unwanted sex with Kevin is “a way [for Lu] to keep from being eaten alive by guilt” (163). The transgressive behaviour in which Lu is engaging when she allows her sexual abusers to take what they want with no fight can be likened to the self-harm in which those suffering with psychic pain indulge.

In the medical world, it is not uncommon to hear of instances where an individual secretly and purposefully cuts himself or herself. For a psychoanalyst,

behaviour such as “cutting” is simply an outward manifestation of inner pain. In cutting oneself, an individual seeks to distract himself or herself from the more intense psychic pain by allowing real physical pain to take over. Likewise, by cutting oneself, an individual may also be gaining reassurance that he or she is still in existence and has not yet succumbed to the frightening possibility of psychic death. Through self-punishing patterns of behaviour, Lu is continuously and subconsciously punishing her inner child, for both the shame of unknowingly enticing sexual abuse in childhood and for not being good enough to deserve the love and protection of her parents.

*Duff's Depiction of a More Male-like Reaction to the Shame-rage Spiral in Lu.*

For much of the novel, Lu's response to the pain of toxic shame is what I have deemed to be a specifically female reaction. However, Duff's depiction of Lu's use of the transgressive shame-rage behaviour is not as black and white as it seems in the beginning. Lu's shame-rage transgressions are further developed when Duff introduces a character called Anna Chadwick. Anna's very existence brings out the worst in Lu.

Anna is similar to Lu in age and beauty; however, in Lu's eyes she is glaringly the opposite. From a distance Lu picks out the stunning Anna and she cannot help but compare her life with Anna's, a girl whose home, Lu imagines, is filled with wealth, happiness love and privilege. From a distance, it is clear to Lu that Anna comes from a family who cares about her, and, moreover, Lu can see that Anna's father adores her; they have a relationship she no doubt desperately desires from her father.

Although the two girls have never met or spoken to one another, when Lu first sets eyes on Anna she is immediately overcome by anger, jealousy and rage.

“Daddykins and dawter” she thinks to herself “wearing money the three of them could have dined on for a year” (61). It is clear that Lu is “compar[ing] herself [to Anna], the different worlds, lives lived” (60). To Lu, Anna has access to resources which will help to fulfil her potential, something Lu feels maybe she could have had if she had had access to a loving, good enough childhood.

After Duff introduces Anna, Lu’s shame-rage transgressions begin to reflect characteristics that are far more reminiscent of male shame-rage behaviour. For example, the hate and rage Lu has previously inflicted upon herself in the form of self-imposed isolation and the acceptance of sexual abuse is now transferred onto Anna. Lu’s rage towards Anna comes from deep within her soul. On her initial sighting of Anna, Lu viciously and relentlessly attacks Anna and her father under her breath. Lu’s friends witness “the sneer growing like an instant cancer on her pretty features” (59). While she is watching Anna, “Lu’s looks were gone, replaced by this glistening stare shot with envy” (59). Lu is especially envious of the love and admiration Anna’s father has for his daughter: “any closer [...] it’d be incest,” Lu spits out in spite.

Anna bears the brunt of Lu’s toxic shame later in the novel. Lu’s hatred towards Anna is sparked by her need to disavow her own toxic shame. By hating Anna, Lu is able to disengage and distract herself from the reasons why she is so unhappy and ashamed. By blaming Anna Lu feels justified in her anger. Lu hatches a plan to show Anna, and by extension other girls like her, what it is like to be treated as less than human. Wanting to convey to Anna some sense of what it is like to be abused and uncared for, Lu organises for herself and her delinquent friends to lure

Anna into a trap to “grab her bag and likely cop a nice sum of cash” (163). After studying Anna’s daily routine, they decide that, with Lu as the bait, they can lead Anna into the bushes on her walk home. Anna takes the bait and, once she is hidden from view, the boys viciously attack her. Lu watches from afar as her plan starts to deteriorate. She realises that the boys had a different plan in mind. They take over and gang rape Anna.

Lu is horrified; however, she does not attempt to rescue Anna. Later, Lu thinks to herself, maybe “a part of me wanted for that girl—for Anna Chadwick—to get a taste of what others suffer” (164). Lu’s need to evacuate her pain by inflicting it on another is very male-like. Although Lu did not engage in any violent act, we can compare her shame-rage reaction to Anna with the fighting and violence in which Chud engages at the school dance. Both Chud and Lu feel as if they have missed out on something that other children have. The toxic shame that builds up in these two characters’ minds over this discrepancy between their lives and that of their peers eventually erupts into shame-rage. By evacuating this pain and shame-rage outwards, Chud and Lu momentarily experience some psychic relief and sense of hope. However, as I have shown previously, this kind of transgressive behaviour is not a solution; transgressive behaviour is deceptive and the hope it provides is short lived.

### *Lu’s Hope and Transformation Towards Happiness*

Duff depicts a transformation in Lu in the final chapters of *Who Sings for Lu?*, despite the downwards spiral into delinquency, crime, violence and self-punishment with which she has struggled throughout the novel. Duff shows how Lu is able

gradually to move away from the transgressive coping mechanisms she learnt in childhood, which offers her only a temporary, false hope. Lu is not alone in her transformation. A major player in Lu's transformation towards a more positive and hopeful future is Rocky.

The hopeful ending of *Who Sings for Lu?* is foreshadowed by Duff several times throughout the novel itself. Hints of Lu's inner hope for her future are dotted throughout the text. For example, despite Rick's choke-hold on Lu's perception about her self, Lu still senses that underneath her situation, underneath all the horrors in her life there was a glimmer inside her which still fought for her happiness: "she never quite accepted Uncle Rick's assessment, not fully. It was like *something* beautiful glowed deep inside her like a little ember underneath all the ashes of her burnt being" (33). A little later in the novel, Lu divulges a dream for her future: she dreams "of a life far away from her siblings, in case they recontaminated her," and she desperately hopes she can "clean herself up one day" (38). As this dream shows, Lu sees her unloving family as a contaminant—a negative influence that has poisoned her through their lovelessness and damaged her potential. It is not until Rocky takes an interest in Lu's development, and helps to fan these inner sparks of hope, that Lu is able to tap into her potential and face the inner demons which have held her back all her life.

Rocky is a "thinking guy, sensitive [and] considerate" and he nurtures Lu with the kind of patience and care that a parent might. Lu describes him as having an "aura"; and after being cautious initially, Lu realises Rocky has "integrity" and respect for her:

When they got to hang out, Rocky became one of those rare creatures: a boy who never tried to stick his dick or finger or tongue in one of her

orifices [...] In fact Lu came to see Rocky had a heart of gold, for the street kids at least: gave them money or tough-love advice, a hug, one of his shoulder squeezes where he managed to convey love like some kind of fighting Jesus. (15)

Rocky's genuine love and care for Lu, much like the kind of love Chud discovers in Wiki, heals, to some extent, the wound created by lovelessness from which Lu has suffered for so many years. Lu describes Rocky as "a superhero" who has "chang[ed] her life perspective" (47). Much later in the novel, Lu discovers she is expectant with his baby. This revelation compounds her determination to be a better mother to her child than her parents were to her.

The ending of *Who Sings for Lu?*, involving love and the promise of new hope in a baby, seems very romantic and far-fetched if we look at it from only this angle. However, Duff has moved on from the more superficial ending we saw in *Dreamboat Dad*, and the story of Chud which suggests love conquers all. Lu endures an intensive deep-thinking program: a program Rocky enforces with tough love. During this program, Rocky allows Lu to confront the real issues underlying not only her crime against Anna, but also her self-punishment in the form of allowing abusers, such as Rick and Kevin, to have their way with her. Rocky forces Lu to abandon her long held protection device of pushing others away by insisting that she make contact and meet with Anna's mother, and eventually with Anna herself. It is only through Lu's rejection of her habit of "moving away from people" as a strategy of self-protection that she finds hope for the future.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have shown that Alan Duff is highly interested in exploring the negative psychological effect that an inadequate and abusive childhood can have on the developing psyche. In Duff's writing he portrays how a love-starved childhood often manifests itself through the transgressive behaviour of his adolescent protagonists. Duff's characters constantly feel the need to fill their desperate desire for love with unhealthy sexual encounters and object relationships based on a deep longing for maternal love. Many of Duff's youths turn to watching or stealing from those whom they perceive as having everything they feel is unattainable.

Transgressions such as stealing seem to offer the youths hope that they might be able to glean a little privilege and belonging for themselves. Many of Duff's delinquents, especially his male youths, turn to anger, rage and violence in order to disavow the painful feelings of shame they carry with them. All of the characters Duff portrays become trapped, in some sense, by their psychic turmoil. The deeply entrenched psychological issues they struggle with eventually become self-perpetuating and, therefore, Duff's victims of emotional deprivation in childhood are frequently portrayed as trapped in a seemingly endless cycle of love-longing, shame, rage and guilt.

From this analysis of Duff's writing, certain questions arise. As I stated in my introduction, despite all the attention Duff's novels have received in response to his national popularity, it is surprising that the majority of the reviews and criticism on his writing have been negative and overly (or overtly) critical in tone. Up until very recently, the prevalent theme of the unloved child in Duff's fiction has been overlooked. The only exception to this pattern can be found in the recently published

short studies of Alistair Fox and Otto Heim. Therefore, my thesis, which expands on what Heim and Fox argue, is one of the only in-depth studies using a psychoanalytic approach to uncover truths about Duff's vision for his delinquent youths.

My reading of Duff is far more sympathetic to Duff than most of the critical analyses of his writing to date. This is because my thesis focuses on the strategy behind Duff's often-criticised depiction of violent themes; I offer an explanation as to why Duff is so heavy handed in his portrayal of violence, and so gritty in his descriptions of the dirty underbelly of poverty. I believe that my psychoanalytic reading of Duff has provided a substantial foundation for further study.

Through undertaking a psychoanalytical approach to studying Duff's writing, and by tracing his whole progression from *Once Were Warriors* right up until his most recent novel (*Who Sings for Lu?*), it has become clear to me that Duff is not the "Maori basher" he has been accused of being. Initially, Duff's focus was on the depiction of down-trodden and often disgraceful Maori parents and their troubled children. However, over the course of his writing career—and especially after the shift in *Both Sides of the Moon*—Duff's focus on specifically Maori characters has gradually changed. Since *Both Sides of the Moon*, Duff's characterisation has become far more varied and inclusive of a greater scope of circumstances. Mark, from *Dreamboat Dad*, for example, is half Maori. In Mark's case it is his Maori mother who is the good and loving parent. This is the opposite to Jimmy, from *Both Sides of the Moon*, whose Maori mother is a monstrous and violent woman, and whose Pakeha father, although he is kind and loving, fails to show that love to his children adequately. Furthermore, in the case of *Who sings for Lu,?* which is set in Australia, we are not told what ethnicity Lu belongs to. These small shifts in characterisation, from the fictional youth with two unloving and uncaring Maori parents living in small

town New Zealand, to a more varied mix of parentage and location—indicate a movement towards a far more balanced depiction by Duff of the inadequate childhood experience.

My thesis also focuses on how, as Duff's vision progresses and develops, he displays an increasing emphasis on the role of social class, poverty and a lack of education. Economic deprivation is portrayed by Duff as being the primary element in creating the kind of loveless homes in which his delinquent youths grow up. Economic deprivation is portrayed as going hand in hand with lifestyle choices such as alcoholism and gambling; behaviours that only aggravate the problems of down-trodden and poverty-stricken communities at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. The earlier accusations Duff levelled at Maori, suggesting that they, as a race, have created their own misfortune, is replaced by a much more general critique of wider society. Duff resents the existence of human cesspools, such as his fictional setting, Pine Block—places where poverty can be hidden away from the rest of society and forgotten about.

This brings me to the next question regarding the larger implications of what this thesis has shown. Duff's writing—in line with studies such as James Gilligan's *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic*—places particular emphasis on the link between lovelessness and abuse in childhood, and criminality and violent offences later in life. Duff's writing could be used to illuminate the underlying psychological processes involved in criminal behaviour. Duff's writing adds a new dimension to understanding of criminality and, potentially, this could play a part in assisting the judicial system and government with an issue with which they often struggle. Duff offers insights into how criminals typically develop, and about the childhood

psychology underlying these developments, which could help to prevent the formation of potential criminals in their youth, as an alternative to dealing with the aftermath in their adulthood.

The thoughts of those who work in jail systems with violent criminals echo the message in Duff's writing. As I have previously discussed, Duff's description of Charlie' and Chud's affinity with criminal and delinquent institutions can be linked to Gilligan's hypothesis that criminals re-offend to gain access back into the only "home" they know, prison. This type of self-destructive and transgressive coping behaviour can be compared to the transgressive shame-rage spiral that Duff frequently depicts in his young characters. Therefore, Duff's young protagonists seem to be headed down the transgressive road which signals the beginning of a life filled with crime imprisonment and eventually a lonely and/or untimely death.

But, it is not all doom and gloom. My thesis also explores the positive side to Duff's depiction of the troubled lives of his fictional youths. Particularly in his later writing, we get a sense of how many of his characters are on the brink of turning their future around to move in a far more positive direction. As the layout of my thesis shows, Duff's progression from his first novels to the most recent ones reveals an increasingly hopeful and redemptive vision for his delinquent protagonists. These moments of hope are often sparked by an insight into the importance of choice; for example, the choice of education; the choice to be open to receiving true love from a partner; or, the most convincing of all, Lu's choice to look deep inside herself to pinpoint the reasons why she has committed crimes against others. Duff expresses his belief that all people have a choice. It is left up to the reader to take responsibility for this choice and act on it, despite the disadvantages they may have experienced previously in their life.

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