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Gender and the Politics of Tradition: Alan Duff's Once were warriors

Abstract
In a recent article on the political and economic crisis in New Zealand, Bob Jesson has argued that the Labour governments of the 1980s were crippled by a contradiction between new right economics and liberal social policy. A similar, and indeed related, contradiction bears upon indigenous peoples - not just in Aotearoa but also in other white settler societies such as Australia, Canada, and Hawaii. On one side, indigenous cultures are widely legitimized and celebrated in liberal and consumer culture, but in an idealized form that maps uneasily onto the urbanized and apparently 'acculturated' way of life of most Maori. On the other hand, Maori have suffered disproportionately during the recession and are now unemployed in record numbers; the restructuring of the labour market is likely either to exclude substantial numbers in the longer term, or restrict most to new forms of underpaid casual work; their standard of living, like that of the poor in general, is most directly affected by cutbacks in health, welfare, and education. This article does not describe the social predicament, but is concerned rather with how indigenous cultural producers negotiate the gap between accounts of their identity that emphasize some archaic authenticity, and contemporary circumstances.
In a recent article on the political and economic crisis in New Zealand, Bob Jesson has argued that the Labour governments of the 1980s were crippled by a contradiction between new right economics and liberal social policy. A similar, and indeed related, contradiction bears upon indigenous peoples – not just in Aotearoa but also in other white settler societies such as Australia, Canada, and Hawaii. On one side, indigenous cultures are widely legitimized and celebrated in liberal and consumer culture, but in an idealized form that maps uneasily onto the urbanized and apparently ‘acculturated’ way of life of most Maori. On the other hand, Maori have suffered disproportionately during the recession and are now unemployed in record numbers; the restructuring of the labour market is likely either to exclude substantial numbers in the longer term, or restrict most to new forms of underpaid casual work; their standard of living, like that of the poor in general, is most directly affected by cutbacks in health, welfare, and education. This article does not describe the social predicament, but is concerned rather with how indigenous cultural producers negotiate the gap between accounts of their identity that emphasize some archaic authenticity, and contemporary circumstances.

As New Age and environmental values become progressively established within mainstream political discourses, indigenous cultures are increasingly represented through prestigious museum exhibitions; they are referred to increasingly through cultural diplomacy, in national symbols, and in advertising; they receive greater emphasis and legitimacy in the school curriculum; yet these constructions usually privilege awesome works of traditional art, spirituality, attachment to the land, and tribal rituals, and are usually devoid of references to the oppressive and discriminatory character of colonial policies, and the variety of living conditions of twentieth century native peoples. Identity, in other words, is not historicized, but associated with the stable essences of tapu and mana; if the current wave of global ethnicization and discourse on cultural heritage and identity tends to essentialize all cultures, the trend is especially conspicuous and coercive for indigenous peoples in settler colonies, who are associated, in terms all too reminiscent of ‘noble savage’ imagery, with the past and with Arcadian simplicity. Though this efflorescence of liberal
white primitivism over the last decade or so has no doubt entailed more positive views of indigenous peoples than prevailed formerly, it has also clearly valued the indigenous through its opposition to modernity, and thus rendered indigenous modernity almost as a contradiction in terms. This is of course primarily a discourse of dominant white societies rather than a self-representation on the part of indigenous peoples; yet it is a powerful discourse, one whose terms cannot be entirely avoided, especially by those appropriating or attempting to appropriate the dominant media. Can indigenous writers represent contemporary identities, without conceiving of them as impoverished versions of a nobler tradition?

The novel explored here is concerned with the specific question of the ways in which present circumstances and notions of traditional identity are reconciled — or understood to be disjunct. This essay is a small part of a larger project that deals with cultural politics rather than literary interpretation, but I focus here on the text itself, rather than the political dynamics that it might be subsumed to, or debates around it, that can and certainly should be traced through reviews and correspondence columns. I should however say that the main critique found the sheer negativity of the book to be politically counterproductive, to play into the hands of racist Pakeha who could read it to confirm their view that Maori difficulties were caused by Maori inferiority rather than by the history of discrimination. Certainly, the qualified sense of reconstruction and optimism at the book's ending is overshadowed by the brute detail that is itemized before; given the economic decline and right-wing backlash in New Zealand, the concern that the book could inform a new or a hardened racism cannot be dismissed. As was the case with The Satanic Verses, the controversy, at least in the manifestations that I have seen, tended to collapse into an exchange of slogans that displaced any reading of the text; even Duff's own interventions and responses have projected more categorical views than the book itself sustained. If this impoverishment is to be avoided, the strategy of bracketing off the book's context, which may otherwise be unattractive, seems at least provisionally appropriate.

Once were warriors, Alan Duff's first novel, appeared in 1990. Critics and readers were 'blown away', as one put it, by the book's powerful idiom and uncompromising, unromanticized depiction of Maori life: 'These guvmint cunts take away ya dignity, they do. Fuckem. Man even had to go into the office in town every week Thursday to collect his dole cheque because he didn't have no address to giv em to send it to. And the way they look at you when you're gettin your cheque, y'd think it was their own fuckin bread they were givin away' (OWW, 171). The force of Duff's appropriation and reaccentuation of the language is marked by the fact that, when I presented this paper at a conference, I felt unable to read quotations from the book aloud: not because I was concerned about some impropriety in enunciating a language that has such a pronounced ethnic signature, but simply because my own unavoidable reaccentuation would
The title is, in a sense, the whole book. What has become of those who once were warriors? Are they now not-warriors rather than people who can be characterized in any more positive way? What does not-warriorhood look like? Can this negation be negated, can the condition be transcended? These are the novel’s questions; the point I seek to make is that its working through them turns above all upon familial and gender differences, upon ways men and women, children, adolescents, and adults are differently located and empowered with respect to traditions and contemporary circumstances.

‘Once were’ constructs the present as a residue, as a diminished or degenerate condition that remains, once something has been subtracted from something else, once a thing or a people is not what it was before. There are several ways in which Duff’s Heke family exemplify this imperfection or degeneracy, and, for the most part, evade representation in more positive terms. The book is one, it should be noted, that deals in exemplification: the typical nature of the family is emphasized at the beginning, as Beth Heke, resident of a government housing estate surveys the ‘going-nowhere nobodies’ of Pine Block; and Pine Block is not a particular housing estate but every housing estate. The opening sentences register her resentment at the view out the back window, beyond the fringe of the estate and over pasture toward the big trees and substantial home of a wealthy white man, and despair at the view in the other direction, or what is ‘A mile-long picture of the same thing: all the same, just two-story, side-by-side misery boxes’ (OWW, 7-8). The constitutive relation, at this point in the history, is not that the wealthy white man lives on land earlier appropriated from Maori, but that the ‘brown nobodies’ are state-housed and mostly state-fed on land purchased by the government from his estate. While a past understood as dispossession can be redressed through a struggle for land, the condition of welfare-recipient marks the failure of a modernist project of social provisioning, not the departure point for a narrative. Or so it seems in the opening chapters of Once were warriors.

Beth had dreams, we’re told, of advancement toward the large, comfortable and peaceful house of Mr Trambert, but these have long evaporated; the Pine Block estate is scarred by neglect: abandoned cars and broken pavements are the material expressions of incomplete or fractured domesticities, domestic violence, alcoholism, and drug use.

The Heke family is marked as a non-family by father Jake’s interest in fighting and drinking, Beth’s own alcoholism and consequent neglect of the kids, and the children’s own difficulties in communicating with their parents and adjusting to wider circumstances. The failure is manifest in the fact that both parents miss one son’s day in court, when Boogie is made a ward of the state and removed to a Boys’ Home; both have been up late drinking, though Beth is also recovering from having been beaten
up. In the book’s opening sentences, that I referred to earlier, Beth juxtaposes not white and Maori, but the white man’s good luck in being born into his sweet world, and Beth’s bad luck ‘for being married to an arse-hole’; yet, as she says, she can’t help loving the ‘black, fist-happy bastard’. Jake is thus the author not only of Beth’s bruises, but of the wider predicament; Duff finds the type he exemplifies, not the ‘guvmint’ nor successful whites such as Trambert, responsible for the directionless unhappiness of Pine Block; this culpability is marked in the fact that Jake is unemployed more by inclination than lack of opportunity. Kinship locations and gender encode different relations to this situation: if the husband is charged with a degree of agency, the mother is a victim, yet a knowing and complicit one; she perceives the scene as hopeless and destructive, and possesses a vision that he does not. The younger children are innocent victims degraded by the circumstances that surround them; the adolescent daughter is a knowing victim in a paradigmatic sense, which I’ll discuss later, while the oldest son recapitulates the father’s faults in a more extreme form.

The problem of Maori people, Maori society, is thus allegorized by, or perhaps simply equated with, a familial problem, and the question of the scope for the expression of familial affection is one that is made to work hard at several points in the narrative. It is interwoven, however, with the theme of not-warriorhood, which I referred to earlier. Warriorhood is emblematic of the Maori past, and the effect of this past in the present is the locus of the problem of what being Maori means. I referred a moment ago to Beth being beaten up; what provokes this beating is an ‘insult’ to a group of Jake’s friends, a denunciation of their Maori toughness as mere perversion. Upstairs, daughter Grace overhears one of the drinkers asking her to fry some eggs to accompany their boiled feed, which Beth is not prepared to do:

What I serve up is what you get... This ain’t a fuckin restaurant... Someone saying something, Grace couldn’t quite make out, but her mother clear enough: The hell you mean, Maori way? You call yourselves Maoris? Then Jake telling her to shud-dup, woman... And she telling him to go to hell... Maoris, eh? Can any of us in this room speak the language? No reply. What do we know of our culture?... Men’s voices, a chorus of em, telling her to shuddup and siddown... but Beth went right on at them. She told them the Maori of old had a culture, and he had pride, and he had warriorhood, not this bullying, man-hitting-woman shit, you call that manhood? It’s not manhood, and it sure as hell ain’t Maori warriorhood. (OWW, 28)

The next day, as Beth ruminates while drinking beer, Duff elaborates this through her stream of consciousness, that, without much subtlety, is made to work like a film’s voiceover or a tragedy’s chorus, telling us the moral of the tale.

we used to war all the time... We were savages. But warriors, eh. It’s very important to remember that. Warriors. Because, you see, it was what we lost when you,
the white audience out there, defeated us, conquered us, took our mana, left us with nothing. But the warrior thing got handed down, see. Well, sort of handed down; in a mixed-up sense it did. It was more toughness that got handed down from generation to generation. Toughness, eh. Us Maoris might be every bad thing in this world but you can't take away from us our toughness. But this toughness, Pakeha audience of mine, it started to mean less and less as the world got older ... even before computers, it all made toughness redundant. Now thassa a good word for a Maori, eh, redundant? (OWW, 47-48)

A reader might feel at this point that the prose exhibits a reprehensible toughness of the kind attributed to Maori: what's said seems to leave little scope for survival, let alone redemption. This negative reading is reinforced by the fact that Jake, in his own stream of expression, reiterates this characterization of himself, at least in so far as it dissociates his 'toughness' from any Maori origin or tradition. He fantasizes that others in the pub see him as a chief, 'a Maori warrior chief - no, not a Maori, I can't speak the language and people'll know I can't, and it'll spoil it - an Indian chief, a real Injun, not one of them black thievin bastards own half the fuckin shops round town, a real Indian from comics and TV and America ... Like Sitting Bull...'; he imagines his strong features and mentally commands his cronies in the bar: 'Look at me' (OWW, 65-66). A cultural context or history in which this vanity and violence might be legitimized indeed seems elusive, and in that respect Beth's denigration of her husband is sustained. But this paradigm, this stasis of female quiescence and resilience in the face of unproductive male aggression, isn't the whole book: both not-warriorhood and warriorhood have further modalities, which have different relations to the past and different future prospects.

In the novel's opening chapter, the reader has been alerted to Beth's fear that her oldest son Nig is attempting to join the Brown Fists, the youth gang that operates in the area, presided over by an intimidating thug named Jimmy Bad Horse (the American Indian allusion thus again marking a fake, imported warriorhood). Halfway through the book he is allowed in, having fought it out with another prospective member, and is drawn into 'The house of angry belonging', to quote Duff's chapter title. The sheer aggression of gang culture is disturbing, and the group displays the destructive habits of the community in a more pronounced form, yet paradoxically also seems closer to Maori warriorhood, in their values of staunchness and belonging, and the emulation of moko designs in facial tattoos. For Duff, however, the fact that moko were etched and not tattooed is a difference rather than a mere discrimination: Nig has a nightmare in which he meets his ancestors, real warriors with exquisite, deeply carved faces, who dissociate themselves from him and declare him a coward, as they bash to death a figure he recognizes as himself (OWW, 181-182, 188-89). The 'lightly marked' character of imitation moko stands for the hollowness of the gang's 'belonging', that is all too manifest as they take on repossession and debt collection work, dealing brutally with
members of their own community unable to keep up TV repayments, in the interests of 'some white prick with a business in town.' The gang, then, marks a more extreme form of the degeneracy with which Jake has already been charged: while he takes the name of warriorhood in vain through his wife-beating, the Brown Fists are rendered as head-kicking mercenaries against their own people. Their perversion of any legitimate meaning of 'belonging' is exemplified by the fact that Nig joins the gang on the day of his sister Grace's tangi (the customary funeral), but is refused permission by Jimmy Bad Horse to attend, on the grounds that he is now among his real 'bruthas' and sisters: 'This is your fuckin family. From now on, this is where you're at' (OWW, 140). Just as the gang absolutely rejects familial affection, and is rejected absolutely in the novel's moral scheme, Jake's corruption is epitomized by his inability to attend the tangi either, though his reasons include both his unwillingness to weep and his alienation from Maori culture.

By this point, however, the novel is not presenting a desolate stasis, but a triangular dynamism between the Brown Fists, seemingly wholly absorbed in self-destruction, the men who are positioned more ambiguously, if only because they're placed at some remove from the extreme degeneracy of the gang, and the women who are on the point of translating their perception of right and wrong into action toward the reconstruction of the community. Conscience and consciousness intervenes, for instance, when Jake is upbraided for failing to make it to the funeral.

I don't like all that speeches and singing fuckin hymns stuff, thas why I wasn't there, Jake hearing himself explain without consciously deciding he would. Adding, all that bawlin, howlin stuff... Mista, that's what they have a blimmin funeral for – so ya c'n cry. What, ya can't cry, ya can't show ya not tough at your own kid's tangi? (OWW, 146)

Jake is tempted to hit the woman but sits down and drinks: something she says gets to him. This moment of perception indicates that Jake isn't immutably himself, but he must be distanced further from moral legitimacy and sociality before he can be redeemed. Grace, the daughter whose funeral is referred to, had committed suicide, hanging herself from a tree on the Tramberts' land; she was prompted to do this not so much by the generalized despair that led her to glue-sniffing, but because she was raped at night in her own bed. She thinks her father did it, and leaves a note to this effect; when Jake is confronted with this, as he brings a group of friends home for another party, he is swiftly ostracized, and finds himself homeless on the street. What I take to be crucial here, is not that his kind of not-warriorhood is marked by the total negation of familial affection that incest signifies, but that Grace is clearly mistaken. Although Duff has opted to make the issue obscure, to the extent that many readers assume that Jake is in fact the perpetrator, the doubt needs to be there
because it's in his own mind: the effect of alcohol is such that he simply
doesn't know what he might have done or not done. In response to the
charge that he overemphasized incest, Duff responded in a debate in the
Listener that ‘the father didn’t do it, and I should know, I wrote the bloody
thing’, but it isn’t necessary to depend upon his declared intentions to
clarify the issue; the reference in the text preceding the description of the
rape to a visitor who says ‘Come and giz your Uncle Bully a hug, girl’ is
telling, especially since the man is described as Grace’s ‘false uncle’. The
adjective here suggests that the relationship, like the siblingship of the
gang, amounts to a lie rather than a classificatory fiction.

The novel proceeds through crude but powerful juxtapositions. As Jake
is banished, even by his old drinking mates, the experience of the tangi
renews Beth’s engagement with Maori culture; initially alienated and sus­
picious of official initiatives such as the kohanga reo language program,
she is won over by the sheer power of the elders’ oratory and movement,
the force of emotion at the tangi, and the sense of belonging engendered
through collective grief. At the same time as her son Nig is being inducted
into the gang, she is acquiring a new sense of racial pride, which is trans­
lated later into a recuperative mission. Her household, shorn of its patri­
arch and his eldest son, becomes first a drop-in centre where street kids
can always get a feed, and then, with the help of her home village, a
centre for projects, for teaching skills, and for raising money to do more.
As the elders and chief from her group come to speak and perform haka,
the practical activities are augmented with a sense of history and pride
that is articulated with the warrior spirit of the past yet dissociated from
its contemporary distortions. As Beth had promised herself, she would
give her kids their ‘rightful warrior inheritance... Not attacking, violent
pride but heart pride’ (OWW, 167). The chief alternately thrills those who
come to listen to him about tales of ancient struggles and the noble past,
but he also berates them about their cowardly beer-drinking, and encour­
gages them to uplift themselves:

And boy was he laying it on the line toem: tellin em to jack their ideas up. Ta stop
being lazy. Ta stop blamin the Pakeha for their woes even if it was the Pakeha much
to blame. So what? he asked them in his booming voice that didn’t need no
microphone. Do I accuse the storm that destroys my crops? ...No! No, I don’t accuse
the storm. I clean up. THEN I PLANT AGAIN! (OWW, 182)

Though associated with the strength and authority of male elders, the
fashioning of an authentic and legitimate warriorhood is thus presented
as an effort of women: of saintly Beth, of her friend Mavis, who rallies
people with her singing, and of her female kin. The symmetries persist to
the book’s ending as the elevation and reconstruction of Pine Block is
proportionate with a heightening savagery among the gangs, which is
consummated in Nig’s death. The brief concluding chapter surveys the
funeral, attended both by his comrades and the community of the righteous, and Beth is composed in her grief, as if this death, unlike the others, has a certain necessity; as if its tragedy illuminates the opposed path that must be taken. In the meantime, homeless Jake has made a kind of friendship with a street kid, that seems to have provided him with a paternal emotional bond of the kind he never sustained with his own kids, and he is hidden away at the fringe of the funeral, with this boy, weeping as he was unable to do before, because his toughness and not-warriorhood excluded it. What appears as his disgrace is thus in fact a path away from his reputation as a tough chief, and toward some recovered childlike innocence.

The fact that the book only hints at the form of Jake’s rehabilitation marks something of a fissure, that disrupts the neat progress and sentimentality of the book’s conclusion. It’s explained that Jake’s dissociation from Maori tradition derives partly from the fact that he comes from a family descended from a prisoner of war; they were therefore slaves who were constantly abused and oppressed. Beth is taken by surprise when Jake suddenly reveals this, after many years of marriage, and wonders, had she known, if she perhaps might have helped him or understood him better (OWW, 102-3). Hence, while the warrior past is ennobled at the novel’s recuperative moment, and is shown to be something that needs only to be translated into the present in the appropriate way, as redemptive spiritual struggle rather than toughness, this earlier passage deprives Maori sociality of its privileged status. There seems, at one point, to be reason and resistant ebullience in the pub culture and Jake’s fighting: his renown as a Pine Block rumbler negates the social exclusion he suffered as a child, and locates discrimination and oppression as much in his own background and tradition as in his relation to Pakeha. This displacement can be compared to that at the book’s beginning, which occludes the question of land and dispossession that is pivotal for many indigenous narratives, by situating the characters in a state-owned space abstracted from a white man’s estate. If this evocation of a site of welfare, licenses both the negative imagery and the reconstruction that redresses it, Jake’s history rationalizes his non-nativist, non-traditionalist construction of self by treating his constitutive oppression as one internal to Maori society rather than a product of the colonial encounter.

As I observed earlier, liberal public discourses concerning indigenous peoples in Australia and New Zealand are structured largely by a primitivism that has been reaccentuated in environmentalist and New Age terms, but which conforms logically with a much deeper primitivist tradition in western thought. Just as the eighteenth century native American’s uncorrupted happiness was proportionate with the absence of commerce and luxury in his unpolished societies, the spirituality and pervasive relatedness constitutive of Maori and Aboriginal cultures can be juxtaposed with the wastelands of industrial modernism or the depthless simulacra
of postmodernist consumerism. The burden that these appreciative yet appropriative discourses foist upon indigenous peoples is one of archaism: the truth of their cultures inheres in their radical opposition to modernity, and indigenous modernity can thus only be a contradictory and inauthentic location.

This is all widely attested to. It’s also apparent that some indigenous cultural producers – artists, novelists, photographers, performers – have capitalized effectively on the dominant society’s primitivism, and re-appropriated and manipulated its terms through nativist and traditionalist discourses that have frequently enhanced their prestige and legitimacy. Let me consider what options are available to those who choose not to do this, who resist the restrictive elements of the idealization. What they have aimed to do, in effect, is ask the dominant culture to understand them and appreciate them as they are, rather than as they might be imagined to have been once.

Some exciting contemporary Aboriginal work can be seen to effect this by presenting an Aboriginality – and particular Aboriginal lives that resist subsumption to a generic ethnicity – that is profoundly historicized. I am thinking particularly of Ian Abdulla’s engaging simulations of children’s art, that narrate aspects of his youthful experience on a mission station, and Robert Campbell’s less personal and more historical paintings, that depict the Aboriginal tent embassy and other markers in black history, and remind us that apartheid practices, such as roping off sections for Aborigines in cinemas, were part of Australian life up until very recent times. Maori artists doing similar things include Para Matchitt, whose work commemorates the early twentieth century prophetic movement of Rua Kenana, and Emily Karaka, whose thick and tortured oil compositions index rather than signify the suffering of the colonized.

In the domain of performance rather than painting, and in a comic rather than a tragic register, this historicization of identity is also effected in Bran nue dae, a very funny and very sexy musical written by Jimmy Chi of the Aboriginal community of Broome, in northwestern Australia. In a range of parodic and amusing but sometimes also haunting songs, the story works through mission station experiences, presided over by terrifyingly orderly German Lutherans, and presents a series of people coming back together in their country. Tadpole has been in and out of gaol; young Willie has been brought up on the mission and knows little of bush life. They meet up with an urban dropout, Marijuana Annie, and her German hippy boyfriend Slippery, both of whom discover that they are in fact part-Aborigines who had been fostered into white society during the notorious period of assimilation in the 1950s and 1960s. Slippery, in turns out, is the son of the German missionary: ‘Ich bin Ine Aborigine!!’ he proclaims, mimicking to ambiguous effect Kennedy’s famous assertion in Berlin. Bran nue dae defines Aboriginality through the experience of assimilation and its rejection, as something that can be recovered through
self-identification, rather than a quantity that ‘authentic’ Aborigines possess more of than others. Through its north Australian kriol, the performance had an unmistakable cultural location, but appealed to commonalities and shared predicaments, some of which (to do with drugs and drink) are associated through the character of Marijuana Annie with urban youth rather than one ‘race’ or the other. As Tadpole says, ‘He’s a Christian, I’m a Christian, she’s a Christian, We all bloody Christian’. Against the humourlessness of colonialist and nativist codifications of identity alike, Chi’s work conveys truths of biography and identity that stabilized cultures cannot.

Compared with these works, Once were warriors does not come across as a work that finds a new language of identity. Its shortcoming as a political intervention arises from what I would see as a literary shortcoming, that is, the equivocation and weakness of the ending. Duff imagines many Pine Blockers seeing the light, rallying around Beth, turning their fists into willing hands, turning from glue sniffing or whatever to renovating the local community hall; ‘Chief was giving his usual oral history lesson as men and youths of both sexes hammered and sawed on the latest community project, a changing room and shower block on the donated Trambert land for the newly ploughed and sown rugby field’ (OWW, 194). Like the dutiful inhabitants of the missionary technical school, these rehabilitated people seem just too pure, too much like Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. It’s not that I would dispute Duff’s view that the Pine Block youth are better off playing rugby, but that the future that is imagined is too bland and wholesome to go any way toward overpowering and superseding the horror of the present. While some of the other work I referred to, displaced the noble savage with an oppressed and scarred but also a cheeky, ebullient, and empowered figure, Duff’s ‘once were’ logic inverts the idealization and — despite the novel’s dynamic tensions — remains caught within this moment of reaction. Duff is clearly especially concerned to contradict the Maori propensity to blame the Pakeha, and the rugby field is at the end made on land that virtually the only named white man in the book has donated. Mr Trambert is a benign and benevolent observer, and one who responds with help when Maori show that they can help themselves. As an allegory of race relations, this really won’t do; but if Once were warriors has limitations both as a cultural intervention and a literary work, I would affirm at the same time that its dispersal of the meanings of not-warriorhood implies identities and futures beyond its neat story of redemption and advancement. Moreover, the sheer force of the book’s negativity makes the operation of anti-idealization visible, and thus potentially redundant. Duff has certainly given us a text that needs to be read and argued about; he may well also have shown the necessity of a step beyond negation, a step that was not available to the novel itself.
NOTES

2. See for example the *Listener and TV Times*, June 10, July 11, July 29, August 19, August 26, September 16, 1991; and Peter Beatson's review in *Landfall* 179 (1991), 365-368.
3. Alan Duff, *Once were warriors* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1991; orig. Tandem Press, New Zealand, 1990); hereafter cited in the text as OWW.
5. Some of their work is reproduced in the Australian National Gallery’s catalogue, *Flash pictures* (Canberra: ANG, 1992).
7. The script and lyrics were published as *Bran nue dae* by Jimmy Chi and Kuckles (Sydney/Broome: Currency Press and Magabala Books, 1991); see also Tom Zubrycki’s film of the same title, released by Ronin, Canberra.