# FICTIONS AND THE SCOPE OF THE ARTIST

# IN

# THE NOVELS OF JANET FRAME

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# FICTIONS AND THE SCOPE OF THE ARTIST IN THE NOVELS OF JANET FRAME

## ABSTRACT

Art and the initiation of the artist into the skills of her craft, along with the fiction making habits of all human beings, are identified in this study as major concerns in Janet Frame's novels. Time and change, rituals, regulations, popular music, war and love all have in common the fact that they are fictions created by human beings to order and control their lives.

People construct fictions intentionally and otherwise to give substance to their short, fragmented existence and to try to explain their place in the universe. Janet Frame's novels address themselves to the transience and uncertainty of human life confined as it is by the rigid boundaries of birth and death.

This thesis indicates how the myth-making habits of ancient peoples have been adapted to help modern mankind cope with its precarious situation balanced between the inner abstract world of the mind and the outer physical universe. Added to this uneasy existence, composed of fleeting thoughts and acts which vanish as they are performed, is awareness of life's impermanence, painfully emphasised by our inevitable mortality. Frame's work acknowledges and attempts to moderate these facts.

# CHAPTER ONE

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE NOVELS OF JANET FRAME

## AND

## INTRODUCTION

Many critics of Janet Frame's novels emphasise the difficulty, or even impossibility, of placing her work in any fixed genre or category, declaring that it defies this kind of classification. However, some consensus of opinion is evident in relation to certain works, and a tentative attempt at outlining these patterns may be made.

Amongst the earliest critical articles written about Frame was Bruce Mason's 1957 review of Owls, which he calls "a powerful, disturbing but flawed novel".1 With its focus on the "beautiful portraits of Bob and Amy Withers," which he writes, are "as true as anything that has ever been written about people" living in New Zealand, Mason's review tends towards the social realist approach.

Lawrence Jones 2, Carole Ferrier, 3,4, Peter Alcock, 5,6, and Anna Rutherford 7, all refer at some point to this element of social realism in Frame's work. Noting particularly the compassion with which Frame depicts the Withers family, Jones 8, attributes the materialism of the adult Chicks to a society which conditions its members to the consumer ethic, and confines their aspirations to the ownership of appliances and the cultivation of physical appearance.

Writing in 1976, Carole Ferrier of Australia 9 views Frame's work similarly to Cherry Hankin 10. While noting a realist element, both these critics emphasise the distinctive perspectives which women writers bring to the social and literary scene. As Virginia Woolf's classic comment pointed out years ago, the general view of novels by women, which traditionally deal with family life, has been; "this is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room."11

The point is exemplified by John Gardiner's 1969 review of State of Siege, which he terms "a lady's book, in other words not serious fiction in the first place. . ." He continues to condemn the novel by dismissing it as a thriller worked out "with lady's book facility. The novel is awful," he continues, "in fact just another book for ladies to scare themselves with." He concludes his review by stating, apparently with humorous intent, that although he doesn't necessarily mean that "ladies' books should be outlawed by the Federal Government," he can't understand why "people read them when they could be watching Bullwinkle Moose or Star Trek."12 Hankin sees women writers using "art for life's sake" which suggests a social realist view, but she is aware also of a psychological component in Frame's work for she notes how Amy's personality is destroyed by the "perpetual bereavement of cooking and muddle."

Detecting links between Frame and Robin Hyde, Hankin

sees Frame taking over and further developing the urban tradition in New Zealand writing.

Ferrier believes that institutions cannot be changed until we understand them: therefore her realist approach sees a particular application for "works of literature which crack the shell of the family to reveal what goes on inside it."13

Alcock 14, stresses that Owls is "lyrically affirmative of the potential richness of life," but in a 1977 article he is less positive. Relating what he calls, Frame's "uncompromising reading of New Zealand society," to the lives of Mansfield, Mulgan, Sargeson and Frame herself, he blames the alienation of New Zealand society for the tragedies in these four lives.15

Anna Rutherford,16 writing from Aarhus, Denmark, centres her discussion on the plight of the individual in a conformist society. The judgement of THIS world which is "our" society, she states, is that those who are different "have something wrong with them," for it is to the lowest common denominator that society wants everyone to adapt.

Any attempt at presenting an overview of the literature on Frame's work is complicated by the fact that differing genres are evident, not only between her works, but also in the same work. While recognising the social realism of the family chronicle in Intensive Care, for

example, Jones 17 also finds the concluding section of this work to be in the mythic/symbolist mode. Similarly he contrasts the meditative poeticism of Daphne in Owls, with the satiric social realism of Chicks in the same novel. Other writers who also identify the symbolist elements in Frame's work are H. Winston-Rhodes,18 who refers to her "poetic vision," and Joan Stevens 19, who likens Owls to a new symphonic work which must be heard many times before it is understood and appreciated.

Cherry Hankin 20 writes of Frame as a "polemicist, psychologist, social moralist, and poetic visionary," and like Rhodes, focuses on the psychological, as well as the symbolic aspects of her work. Madness, into which many of Frame's characters retreat, can be a rational act of sanity, she points out, required to preserve one's individual identity in a blinkered, sterile, conformist society.

Alcock 21 and Evans 22 both make the inevitable comparisons between Frame and Katherine Mansfield. Evans comments that by her use of symbolism Frame is "drawing attention to the particular inappropriateness of European values to a New Zealand environment." Describing Frame's work as "a progression from the psychological to the didactic social novel," which is how he classifies Intensive Care, Dupont 23 places it in the genre of counter-utopian fiction. He describes it as "a hair-raising allegory (of) our present civilization of convenience - mechanized, materialistic, dehumanised," in which Huxley's

Brave New World,"24 and Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four,"25 are synthesised. "One of the greatest novelists of our time," is how this critic evaluates Frame.

Stanley Hyman 26,27, Delbaere-Garant 28, and Malterre 29,30, all place Frame's work centrally in the symbolist mode. Hyman's article refers specifically to Scented Gardens, which he describes as "a brilliant and overwhelming tour-de-force," particularly admiring what he calls the "marvellously imagined effort," of the work.

Discussing Intensive Care, Adaptable Man, and Scented Gardens, Delbaere-Garant 31 considers the novel in Frame's hands as an attempt to deal with the "repetitive patterns of history." Her final comment is stark and uncompromising, for she writes, "there is no Daphne left, no Naomi, no Milly to keep the flame alive and pass on the vision." In a second 1975 article Delbaere-Garant discusses at length the recurrent motifs and patterns of symbols and images in Owls, Faces, Edge, and Scented Gardens, and remarks on the composite character of Frame's protagonists, linking them biographically to Janet Frame herself.32

Wrting of Scented Gardens in 1976, Delbaere-Garant finds Frame's characters drawn from "the far side of despair." No longer celebrant or hopeful, they are now outcasts and social rejects who yet possess insights beyond the scope of more attractive conventional heroes.

Through her analysis of State of Siege, in which she detects specific criticism of New Zealand embodied in the character of Malfred Signal, Malterre contends that Frame's work is "a challenge to western civilization as well as a disturbing cry of alarm."33

H. Winston Rhodes 34, Dupont 35, Hankin 36, Jodlowski 37, Ashford 38 and Beston 39, all find aspects of the psychological novel in Frame's work. Pointing out that "reality" is not uni-dimensional, Rhodes emphasises that the novelist's task is to build "bridges between regions of human consciousness, for we are all. . . distanced from the world outside and even more from the inner consciousness of our 'fellow-exiles'."40 Dupont refers to Frame's use of imagery and symbolism,41 Jodlowski whose Ph.D. thesis, completed in France in 1973, is the first on Frame's works, focuses on the themes of identity and reality which are similar to the focus Malterrre applies to Scented Gardens.42

Writing in Canberra, Australia, W.D. Ashcroft 43, like Ferrier, links Frame's work with R.D. Laing's analysis of the schizophrenic journey through madness to an integration of the self.44 Writing of Owls, he notes that the novel examines the "varieties of possibilities open to an indvidual within a specific culture." John Beston of Harvard, names Frame as "the most distinguished woman writer in English presently,"45 a position he believes

she shares only with Doris Lessing. Comparing Frame in a 1979 article with Patrick White, Beston states that they are both alienated by the mindless anti-intellectualism, coupled with suspicion of the artist, present in Australia and New Zealand. He describes the latter as a spiritual wasteland placed in a physical paradise.46

Jones 47, Hyman 48,49 and Malterre 50, all recognise mythic elements in Frame's work, but all three only briefly touch upon this area. Stead 51 calls her work "post-modernist of mixed genre," and Hyman declares it is "unique," and "unclassifiable." Writing in 1972, Lauris Edmond 52 commends the documentary detail Frame employs, finding a hint of biography in her communication of deeply felt experience. Alcock 53, Evans 54 and Dupont 55, all, for varying reasons, find the biographical details of Frame's early years highly significant and relevant to an understanding of her work. Dupont 56 comments that the cheerful disposition and irreverent, mischievous sense of humour, present in her books, show how she has risen above the tragedies of her early life. Taking a totally different position on this, Evans 57 contends that Frame's writing denotes a personal refusal to face up to the tragedies in her life, and that this fact is directly responsible for the concealing devices he finds employed in her work.

Evans who is Frame's biographer, finds her "an extraordinarily egocentric writer" who writes herself into

everything and will "empathise with her environment, only in order to cannibalise it, so that the flesh of others may become the substance of her fiction." He believes that the motivation for her "obsessive self-absorption" is evident in the biographical details of her life.58 Evans also notes a circularity in Frame's work which he defines as "movement without progress." Making comparisons between Frame and Patrick White, Evans complains that Frame "uses a smoke screen of hollow rhetoric and authorial sleight of hand to conceal her failure to communicate the vision which she alone can see."59

In his later 1981 article Evans attempts to be deliberately provocative by contending that Frame's work encourages "elitism," because it trades on literary snobbery dependent on knowledge of a specialised body of literary knowledge and tradition. While opting not to categorise Frame's work, he comments on a very personal note, that the works of Frame and Patrick White which deal frequently with lost, lonely, inadequate visionaries, are in a sense attempts to rationalise their own personal inadequacies - their own inability "to get along with the bloke next door."60

The experimental nature of much of Frame's writing is noted by Rhodes 61 Delbaere-Garant 62,63 and Stead 64. Rhodes is aware of the difficulty Frame faces in "saying what is to be said in any other way,"65 Delbaere-Garant

refers to her composite characters, thematic unity and patterns and parallels of events.66 Stead, praising her "extraordinary powers of invention," comments that critics who tend to censure her for her inability to conform to the traditional elements of the novel fail to understand that she is moving beyond them. What must be understood, he writes, is that Frame constantly forces her fiction to "challenge its own genre, question its own reality."67

This study points up the thematic continuity inherent in Janet Frame's novels and demonstrates how her first ten works unite to form a coherent pattern. These novels, according to the interpretation put forward in this thesis, are all centred on the functioning of the human mind and the fiction-building activities which are essential to it. When crafted by the artist, these fictions become the foundations on which works of art are created. But human beings are also voluntarily and involuntarily engaged in endless fiction making to help them cope with their dichotomous existence. Poised as they are between THIS outer, collective phenomenological world and THAT inner, private, abstract, domain, people can be forgiven for their insatiable need to reassess their position in relation to these inner and outer dimensions of being. Owls, Faces, and Edge, all address themselves to these problems.

Uncovering the fictions which attempt to deny mortality, and learning to accept death as an integral

aspect of our humanity, are issues central to Yellow Flowers, and Daughter Buffalo, while the unreliability of the perceptual tools on which all interpretations of reality are based is explored in Scented Gardens.

The search for personal harmony and wholeness, both as an individual and as an artist, is the major focus of State of Siege. This novel dramatises the experiences of Malfred Signal as she confronts her long-denied shadow. Constructing fictions to justify adapting themselves either into or out of the age they physically inhabit is a significant preoccupation for all the characters in Adaptable Man, while the fictions called up to rationalise human behaviour in love and war are examined in Intensive Care.

The tenth and final novel in this group of works, Living in the Maniototo, which has fiction-writing as its main concern, is a synthesis of the whole cluster of themes and motifs which are present in earlier books. Maniototo, details the series of relationships which exist between life, which is the original fact, thought, which reinterprets the act, language, which attempts to capture thought, memory, which further eases and readjusts, and art, which embraces all these, identifying, defining, reproducing, interpreting, and, finally, going beyond them to comment upon and react to the initiating act.

# CHAPTER TWO

## OWLS DO CRY

According to the analysis of Janet Frame's novels put foward in this thesis, Owls is the first book in a series which is centred on explorations of the human mind and its relationship to artistic development. This set of works ends with Living in the Maniototo, in which the themes of intentional and unintentional fiction making inherent in the above are the major focus.

Human beings are continuously engaged in the construction of fictions. Some are voluntarily arrived at, such as those associated with reveries, small fantasies and the waking hopes and dreams of people who maintain themselves autonomously in the physical world. People taken over by the uncontrolled psyche are caught in inner world fictions, not of their own choosing, such individuals are unable to function alone in the outer world and are considered to be psychiatrically disturbed. Fiction making in the outer world, as well as being voluntary and involuntary, can also be conscious or unconscious. The initiator is often aware of such fictions as hopes, wishes, daydreams and fantasies. Habits, customs, rules, rituals, beliefs and ideologies, along with faulty interpretations of people and events, however, are often adopted unwittingly. If the individual acts upon these as though they were real, or does not acknowledge their insubstantiality, then they may be regarded as unconscious

fictions.

Because human beings are endowed with the powers of abstract thought, all human fiction making is superimposed on a pre-existing conceptual framework. Fundamental to human life is the fact that it is lived, not in one, but in many dimensions simultaneously. "We live in the mind,"1 writes Wallace Stevens, reiterating a point made earlier by Yeats,2 but the issue cannot be left at that, for we also physically inhabit a three-dimensional material universe where we act and interact, as we conduct our physical lives.

Human fictions, then, are all superimposed on the conceptual framework of not one, but two worlds, the inner and the outer. These two dimensions of being are, however, highly complex in themselves, for many variables are continually in play which colour our shifting perspectives. Some of the most important of these, for the interpretation of Janet Frame's novels, are the patterns of interaction between the inner and outer modes of being, and their relationship to personal identity, and to the apprehending of reality.

Reality, of course, does not exist "in and by itself,"3 but their apprehensions of apparent reality are all that human beings have to work with. Four of these combinations are significant in relation to Frame's work, for a balance must be achieved before personal wholeness

leading to autonomous functioning in the universe is finally possible.

First is the totally inner apprehension, when one perceives both identity and reality only from an inner perspective. This is the state which Daphne becomes trapped into, after the trauma of Francie's death. Total immersion in the outer world is also limiting and undesirable. In this second mode of being, Chicks is a case in point, for, moulding herself on the fictions of the outer world, she finds that she has no inner identity or reality left.

The third mode of being occurs when the inner reality is linked to, or becomes dependent upon, the outer identity conferred by others. This state of mind is also highly undesirable, because it makes an individual subservient to other people's interpretations of them, which are of course only fictional, and denies the validity of one's own concept of self.

The final and most appropriate mode of being is when the concept of one's identity is combined with a sense of the shared outer world, so that one's personal identity is related to, but not entirely dependent upon, one's perceptions of the outer, communal world. When this state is reached, a necessary balance is achieved between the inner and outer modes of being which is fundamental to mature adulthood.

It is because the attainment of this final balance between outer and inner reality and identity is so difficult to achieve that the children in Owls are unable to make the transition. They are all described as they attempt to pass from the almost totally inner oriented world of childhood which only sporadically impinges on the outer world, into the balanced state which forms the mature personally integrated adult. The effective adult can relate to other people in the shared outer world from which reference points are taken, but also has a clearly defined sense of self, related to, but not entirely dependent upon, the outer world.

Owls is centrally concerned with the dichotomy between the fictions of childhood and the fictive world of adults. What the novel points out is that children know they are making things up and accept their make believe. Adults are neither aware of their fictions, nor do they admit even to themselves, that they base their lives on such insubstantial foundations.

The novel examines these adult fictions and explores the period of transition between childhood and the adult world. The children in Owls maintain themselves by the fictions they build in THAT world, the inner world of the mind and imagination. The fictions adults construct attempt to concentrate them almost entirely in the outer, physical world. This is effectively shown at the time of

Francie's death. At that time, Amy comforts herself with the thoughts expressed in the banal sympathy cards she receives, which tell her that "Francie is not really dead, only sleeping."4 This denial of painful events is a feature of adult fiction building, for distressing thoughts such as these, along with adult anxieties, encourage people to avoid the inner world of the mind, where all the hidden fears they attempt to deny must be confronted.

"The normal state of affairs," writes R.D. Laing, is that we know little of either our outer or inner worlds and "are alienated from both, but we know perhaps a little more of the outer than the inner."5 Most characters in the novel, like most human beings, live physically in THIS outer world, but mentally in THAT inner psychological one. The degree of inner and outer orientation is constantly changing, but the novel implies that modern life, and the social sanctions which it enforces, persuades people to focus themselves more substantially in the outer world than in the inner one.

The transition which has to be accomplished between the worlds of childhood and maturity seems to require a shift in perspectives from the innocent and ideal, to the material and pragmatic. True maturity, however, requires the individual to maintain a balance between the two worlds and to develop a reliable system of communication between the two states of being. What the novel points up is that adult fictions are no more rational than those of

children; but adults, because they invest more of themselves in their fictions and have less time ahead of them, can seldom afford to examine too closely the fantasies they have built. The children still live in the present and have no need to be concerned with the function of their fictions beyond the immediate. For that reason, the fictions of childhood differ from the fictions of adults. The children in the novel value things for themselves, such as the fairy tale book and the ledger with "neat writing and figures. . . like the handwriting of a pioneer or governor."6 Daphne sits and strokes the books because they are valuable. Here Daphne is imaged conferring her own value on an object, just as adults arbitrarily place values on objects or aspects of life. But adults then rationalise systems and hierarchies to support and justify their chosen treasures, viewing the effects of objects and events specifically in relation to their own lives.

The fictions of childhood are not more "real," or more valid, than the fictions of adults, for the children are clearly deceived by their fictions just as adults are. The children's perceptions however are more direct, because they are less distorted by the build-up of layers of connotation, symbol and prejudice, which the adult world has accumulated. For this reason, they are able to see more simply and incisively into the effects of things. The mill girls, for example, are not physically marked as Daphne and Francie and Toby imagine; but working in the

mill does mark them in a figurative and psychological way, a point which the children react to and the adult world wants to ignore.

What the novel demonstrates in its manipulation of these two states of being is that although childhood values can be as erroneous and mistaken as adult ones, they recognise an intrinsic merit in objects and ideas, instead of assessing them only according to their use, or exterior, monetary value. This function is what the artist is relied upon to provide in the outer adult world. It is the artist's task to move between THIS world and THAT, without becoming entirely enmeshed in either. What is shown in the novel is the difficulty inherent in the transition from childhood to maturity. "A child," write Henderson, "possesses a sense of completeness, but only before the initial emergence of his ego-consciousness."7 Owls describes the progress of the four Withers children as they lose this sense of completeness and their ego-consciousness emerges. Because they are attracted by the more limiting and surface aspects of the adult world, none of the children in Owls is able to make the move from the more inner-oriented childhood world, to reach a maturity which encompasses both. Francie, for example, is seduced by the adult world of appearance, romance and the idea of being "grown up." In adulthood Toby exchanges his appreciation of the treasures found in the rubbish dump, which stimulate the imagination, for the worship of money, and

Chicks stifles her inner life in the press to acquire consumer goods and social status. Only Daphne negotiates these rites de passage without succumbing to the temptations of the adult world.

However, Daphne does not escape unscathed, for the anguish she experiences after Francie's death pushes her entirely out of THIS world, where such suffering is common, into THAT world where the subconscious mind is in control. Daphne thus loses the senses of balance and proportion which are essential attributes of the artist. So great is Daphne's trauma after the burning of Francie, that she is unable to make the transition to maturity on THIS world's terms. She manages to retain her artist's powers of seeing, but in doing so, loses her ability to live in THIS world. Although her intuitive understanding of people and of social issues is profound, she fails to develop the means to communicate her vision in THIS world's language, and there is no one to translate for her.

When Amy dies, Daphne responds to the news of her mother's death with a dance which is at once a mourning for her loss and a celebration of what Amy was for her. This original reaction is not part of Flora Norris's repertoire of death, and she does not understand it. One of Flora's fantasies is fear of patient-violence and this is how she interprets Daphne's behaviour, seeing it as a threat to her which must be removed and punished.

Each child in the novel, is an incipient artist, as all children are, with an effectively functioning third eye. Through the lives of the Withers children, Owls indicates that human beings often ignorantly discard their capacity for wonder, and by neglecting their imaginative potential, allow their mental assets to wither from disuse. The sense of completeness inherent in childhood, which is lost with the emergence of ego-consciousness, can only be reached by adults "through the union of the consciousness with the unconscious contents of the mind."8 When this union, or transcendence of the psyche, is achieved, human beings are motivated to attain "the full realization of their potential," as complete individual selves.9 Just as none of the children in Owls is able to make the transition from childhood to a mature adulthood, so also none of the adults in the novel is able to achieve that state of harmony between the outer and inner world, which will allow the full development of their self-hood. The book indicates how the trivialising fictions of modern life submerge the symbols of transcendence, by which the contents of the subconscious may be liberated.

The novel traces the lives of the Withers family up until Francie is old enough to leave school and begin work, when a tragic accident occurs and she is burned to death in a fire. The second part of the novel begins twenty years later and outlines the transition of each child, to adulthood. Owls is an assertion of the spon-

taneity of childhood, set against the more rigid outlook of the adult world. The effect of celebration is achieved by contrasting the world of Francie, Daphne, Toby and Chicks with that of their parents. Bob and Amy Withers are as dried up imaginatively and emotionally as their name suggests. The novel is at once an affirmation of innocence and imagination, and a lament for their loss.

Although the world of childhood is not perfect, it is an imaginary realm which adults can no longer enter. The treasures children enjoy are objects thrown out by adults as rubbish. Clearly these objects signify the imaginative and intellectual treasures of the mind discarded by adults, which, like the fairy tale books and Ernest Dowson's poems, "are of no use" to adults and "not worth anything any more," but are still magical finds to the children. The rubbish dump symbolises these cast-off treasures of the mind which lurk there on the outskirts of the urban environment, festering into fears and anxieties which adults, like Chicks, try to pretend are only rubbish. Both are tragic worlds, for both are based on unacknowledged fictions. Adults can see the limitations of the children's world, but they are unable to detect similar limitations in their own, for the valuable insights of childhood fade as adulthood is reached. The essential differences between the two worlds are clearly shown in the comments made by Bob and Daphne. Bob grumbles that the children "can't tell what's rubbish from what

isn't rubbish,"10 while Daphne grieves that grown-ups can't tell "what is treasure and not treasure."11 The social role that Bob has adopted fosters a grudging attitude to life, making him view the world negatively, Daphne's approach however is open and affirmative. This attitude is still evident in Daphne twenty years later, for walking with a nurse on a hospital outing she thinks a similar thought.

> if I travel a hundred miles to find treasure, I will find treaure. If I travel a hundred miles to find nothing, I will find, even if I bring money with me, to lay it down in exchange, I will find nothing.12

As Laing comments, the tragedy of the modern world is the split between the inner and outer states of being and the absence of effective systems of communication to unite them. Adults construct their fictions to control and comfort themselves, and their modern fictions, which are based on advertising, the media and acquisition of material possessions, are concentrated on the outer world, attempting almost to deny that an inner sphere exists.

Each adult in the novel is linked to a separate set of adult fictions. Bob and Amy Withers are depicted as imaginatively and mentally-limited adults, whose lives are patterned on stereotypes. Amy's fictive inspirations are evident in her cliché-ridden conversation, which is shaped by radio, advertising, religious platitudes and sterile phrases from cheap greetings cards. These are the influences around which Amy constructs her life, while

Bob's fictions are modelled on what he believes is the appropriate role for a husband, father and head of the family. Tyrannising over his wife and children, thumping the table for quiet when he wants to speak, he is unaware that his role is a fiction adopted simply to bolster his confidence. Amy is afraid of him, for she subscribes to the same fiction, but Chicks sees through it. Looking back she images her father as a "little hopping man of cruelty, tyranny and childlike dependence."13

Bob's other emotional props are the news on the radio and newspapers, which are like drugs to him. At one point in their male wrangling Toby even makes an issue of reading the paper first as a small revenge on Bob.14 As Bob and Amy age, their fictions, like their children's, become more limited and derivative. Once he has retired, the news and the weather forecast are Bob's main crutches but occasionally, through his memories, it is possible to glimpse a time when his imagination was more active. He remembers himself in his prime, driving the train at night across the plains, in control of himself and his life, at least in the fiction that is his memory.

Amy's fictions are created mostly around Bob and later Toby. Like Chicks, she occasionally questions things, and like Daphne she is conscious of life's inadequacies. Christmas, for example, never measures up to her fantasies of it, based as these are on the promises of advertising and commercially-sponsored radio broadcasts.

The hollowness of adult fiction-making is effectively pointed up in the description of Christmas time at the Withers' home. The whole charade which everyone subscribes to leaves Amy finally overwhelmed with the emptiness of it all.

> the family waking on Christmas morning with
> pretence of surprise at their presents.
> -Socks, socks, Bob had said, Now how on earth
> did Santa know I needed socks?
> And he had bought them himself, of course,
> and the other presents. The three of them
> knew there was no surprise and the morning
> was really old and frayed, like a purse
> ransacked of wonder.15

This scene epitomises the way in which adult fictions are constructed and acted out just like the make-believe games of children. It also shows how an elaborate façade of pretence and denial can be maintained by adults through the fictions they inadvertently, or intentionally adopt. In middle age Amy re-examines the promises offered to her in the words of the song which Bob used to sing, and wonders why they didn't come true.16 The familiar mask of brightness 17 which she has worn for so long has become more a part of her than her inner self. Seldom does she confront that self behind the fictions, reaching at the hollowness which "will never be filled."18

As she spends a day at home before starting work, Francie looks back on her time at school. Her friends will be having assembly with a new hymn for the new term and the headmistress will be "opening her mouth like singing." Intuitively conscious of the fictions involved in this

contrived show of concern, Francie reflects that the words of the sad hymns will bring tears to the eyes of the girls, "even the ones with two-storied homes and cars, and caravans." She also notes the discrepancy between the surface appearance and the underlying fictiveness of the assembly ritual. "When it is finished," she thinks to herself, "everything is school again and the headmistress not any nearer to God; as if there had been no Bible or Jesus going up to the mountain."19

Francie's own fictions develop around her preoccupation with growing up. She is afraid of going to work at the woollen mills, but the dream she builds of owning a bicycle tempers her fears. One fiction is used to rationalise away the unpleasantness of another, which is a basic human response. From that time, she becomes "secret" to Daphne, wearing lipstick and slacks and aping the voices and behaviour of women in films. On her last visit to the rubbish dump, she rejects this symbol of the childhood fantasy world. "What did we come here for anyway?" she comments, separating herself from her siblings, "I'm sure I'm not going to sit here all day in a dirty old rubbish dump."20 The adult world has already enticed her away from her dedication to the fictions of childhood, and her perspectives are crystallising around the fictions that are luring her into the adult world.

Behind Francie, as behind all the characters in this

novel, stands the anonymous persona of the narrator, directing and shaping the reader's response to people and their circumstances. Because she is the controlling presence in the work, it is important to note the unacknowledged fictions of her own which she also uses to manipulate the reader. These fictions are offered in tones simulating the characters' voices, rather than openly delivered as her own opinion with which she wants us to agree. An example of this narrative technique occurs on Francie's last day at school, when the end of term festivities in the hall are described through Francie's eyes, followed by a list of the sad little collection of educational fictions with which she faces the world. At this point the narrator intrudes, with her own, also subjective, point of view, telling the reader the conclusions she wants to be drawn about Francie's future, equipped as she is for life, with such a small array of skills. According to the narrator,

> people are like marbles in the fun alley at the show, (where) a gaudy circumstance will squeeze payment from their cringing and poverty-striken fate, to give him the privilege of rolling them into the bright or dark box, till they drop into one of the little painted holes, their niche, it is called, and there roll their lives round and round in a frustrating circle.21

Here we are given the narrator's view that adult life oppresses and controls people, and it is delivered in the conventional manner of narrators as a given, rather than as a conclusion, which others may accept, reject or argue about. Since it is the artist as manipulator which is the theme and focus of most of Frame's works, it is just as

important to be aware of narrative manipulation in her novels, when she is using the technique intentionally but surreptiously to shape the reader's responses, as when she is openly calling the reader's attention to it. The artist/narrator as shaper and manipulator is an integral part of this novel and the fictions with which she directs and controls the work must be approached with the same awareness Frame insists readers bring to her other works. Daphne begins the major middle section of Owls, which is set twenty years later in time than the opening sequence, by singing of Toby from her dead room in the hospital.

> I will say you lived in a half-world, a microscopic place of bitten oranges like the blighted sunfall, where neither the wind blowing the way foward nor the way back, articulate with ripe fruit of night could feed or make you whole.22

Daphne thus describes Toby's position poised on the edge of THIS world and THAT, belonging fully to neither. Although he retains some of the insights of his childhood fictions, yet he is seduced by the fictions of adult materialism, "he's married to money," they say, trading his childhood treasures of mind for the equally fictional adult belief that money is treasure.

Toby has learned from his father another of the fictions he lives by as an adult. He scolds his mother in the way he has copied from Bob, "haven't I told you before to leave the egg till its wrinkled on top and hard, that I don't like them runny?"23 He also uses Bob's formerly domineering manner to assert the fiction that he is now,

head of the family, complaining that his father is a lazy heap. He enjoys threatening his parents that he will be forced to sell out if his father doesn't help him fulfil his demolition contract. This of course is only another fiction, as he has no intention of carrying out the threat.

Although Toby seems to be attracted by the more materialistic of adult fictions, he is finally unable to move completely into the outer world like Chicks, and as Francie, had she lived, would have done. When he thinks of marrying Fay Chalklin, he considers the benefits of being "in with people again," and not having to sit alone at the cinema on Saturday nights. But the sacrifices he would have to make ultimately seem more significant to him. Although marriage might offer him some place to be, in the outer world, it would deprive him, he feels, of a place to be alone in both outer and inner states of being. Marriage would consume him, forcing him to pay instalments of himself to the factory till he became "bankrupt and a whirling spiritless machine that makes the same speech day after day till its life ends."24

Toby's insights are instinctive and limited, but, like Daphne's, they are not childhood insights, but a capacity to see with the uncluttered clarity of childhood, now translated and combined with a maturity of judgement that belongs to adults, who have access to their inner

worlds. The novel is not stating that the adult world is totally without hope or merit and that the childhood world is entirely superior, but that a combination of childhood perceptions and adult intelligence, allied to the imaginative gifts of both worlds, is what is required. This synthesis is far from common but not impossible to achieve. Toby has it intuitively in small measure, and Daphne is even more endowed, but neither combine it with the skills of a language which enables them to communicate their insights to others.

This point is made when Toby visits Chicks and reads her diary. He can see immediately that she is destroying her inner self and therefore all that part of her which makes life rich and meaningful. "I found her dead and I don't know what to do," is his response.25 Daphne also responds to Chicks, become Teresa, in the same way. Instuitively conscious of the assault Chicks' materialistic way of life is making on her inner world, she returns Chicks' empty little letter with the words "Help help help,"26 written at the end of it.

Although Chicks is aware that Daphne's letter suggests she, not Daphne, "has to be rescued from a terrible doom,"27 her almost impregnable fictions prevent her from really attending to Daphne's attempts to rescue her. Chicks has consciously chosen to live in THIS outer material world of the adults who surround her. But she is

unaware that the price extracted for making this choice is the sacrifice of her inner world. In spite of her apparently unequivocal rejection of her childhood outlook and values, "what we used to think of as treasure wasn't really treasure at all,"28 and her positive acceptance of the material advantages of adult life, "ours was a childish outlook not allowable in an adult who has to adjust . . . to fit in," all is not well with Chicks. Through the diary in which she begins to record her inner life, she soon discovers that she has no inner life to record. Her creeds are now that money and social status are the two most important things in life; these fictions do not make Chicks an overdrawn character, as some critics, like Bruce Mason (1957), believe. They simply emphasise the poverty of the value system which she has absorbed from her environment and which she has so faithfully embraced. The values conveyed by the fictions of advertising and television programmes indicate that Chicks is an accurate characterisation of the modern consumer-moulded woman advocated by the media of her time. Chicks, become Teresa, is clearly Amy's daughter, in terms of her fictions, blindly accepting collectively generated, synthetic images as appropriate models for her social behaviour and neglecting her inner world, just as it is neglected and ignored by the more popular and accessible forms of mass media.

Chicks, like many of Frame's characters who have succumbed to the fictions of the outer adult world, still

has an active shadow self which continues to disturb her. It surfaces in the nightmares which trouble her sleep and in the flashes of imagination which occasionally break through her well-maintained fictional facade. The slick, social climbing woman visible in the outer world is delicately balanced against the confused, foolishly innocent child Chicks remains in what is left of her inner self. At night, her suppressed subconscious mind manifests itself in terrible dreams that exhaust and frighten her. Chicks has learned the fictions of the consumer age, which are to acquire material objects and to be concerned about her appearance. It has not taught her to develop her mind and value her intelligence, or even to be aware that either are assets for which she is responsible.

Daphne's warning comes too late for Chicks, and is not understood by her. Telling her children that the rubbish dump is a "nasty sort of place where all kinds of nasty things are put that nobody wants,"29 she sees it now as symbolic of the inner world she used to be in touch with and is now afraid to countenance. As Chicks demonstrates, adults cannot afford to face their fictions in case looking too closely shows up the insignificance of the lives they have built around them. The rubbish dump is a symbol of all that the urban adult culture discards as no longer worth anything. Through Chicks, it is shown to be a symbol of the inner world which people are close to in childhood and youth, but often move away from in

later life. It is a fearful thing for an adult, in middle-age, to be confronted by the discarded dreams and ideal fictions of youth and find them unfulfilled. For this reason the rubbish dump and the imagination which it symbolises, is a place of wonder to the children, but a place to be feared and both literally and figuratively buried as an adult. The fact that Chick's new house in Waimaru is built on top of the rubbish dump, metaphorically indicates her attempts to bury her inner world as deep within her mind as the rubbish dump is buried deep below the ground.

"The ideas of Sigmund Freud," writes Jung, "confirmed for most people the existing contempt for the psyche. Before him, it had been merely overlooked and neglected; it has now become a dump for moral refuse."30 What the novel indicates is that neither adults nor children are very accurate in identifying what it is appropriate to discard as moral refuse and what is valuable and essential for mature life. What adults accumulate in the carefully-buried psyche are all their discarded dreams and unacknowledgeable fears, for the psyche, like the rubbish dump, is something to deny and avoid, rather than a place where treasures may be found amongst the cast-out refuse.

Daphne, in contrast to her siblings, retains all her imaginative faculties, developing and expanding them with the years. But her complete immersion in THAT world of the mind makes her an unfit inhabitant of THIS outer,

shared world according to those who live with and care for her. Although Daphne sees beyond the empty fictions on which most human beings base their lives and is so crushed by the hypocrisy, she has no language to communicate her insights. The involuntary fictions generated by her intransigent psyche trap her in her inner world, in much the same way as Chicks has locked herself into her outer one. No one in this novel possesses the array of skills required by the artist to make her message meaningful to others. How to acquire these skills, is a task with which Janet Frame's subsequent novels are often concerned.

The journey from childhood to maturity as this novel indicates, is perilous indeed. Francie is lured into the fictions of the adult world and destroyed on the brink of succumbing to what she imagines will be its attractions. Chicks attempts to submerge her inner life beneath the veneer of materialism for which she has been persuaded to trade it, while Toby becomes so confused by the partial fictions he absorbs from both inner and outer worlds that he loses his autonomy for a time and is arrested for vagrancy. Only Daphne retains her allegiance to the inner world familiar in childhood, but from which many adults have become estranged. However she does this at the expense of her exclusion altogether from the outer world. Because her imagination undermines the sustaining fictions of those around her, they misunderstand and fear her. For this reason she must be operated on to remove these

threatening ideas and make her conform. "Human beings," writes Laing,

> seem to have an almost unlimited capacity to deceive themselves, and to deceive themselves into taking their own lies for truth. By such mystification, we achieve our adjustment, adaptation, and socialisation.31

Laing, in fact, holds that modern "Man" is already "a half-crazed creature in a mad world," cut off equally from his own mind and from his own body.32

Daphne finds "the good life" subscribed to by those in charge of her, inadequate, and seeing beyond it, she tries to enlarge the scope of human vision. Because this function is not understood, those in authority decree that her critical voice must be silenced forever. Daphne's operation transforms her into a mindless automaton, which is equated with being "normal" in the modern world. Laing considers that modern society may have already become biologically dysfunctional 33 for, he writes," the schizophrenic is often someone who has not been successfully lobotomised as the normal person has been: he may therefore be felt to require a chemical or physical lobotomy to make him 'one of us'."34 Society, the novel implies, has many means of achieving the required conformity, not least of these are the fictions consciously and unconsciously generated by human beings to comfort and control each other. Annis Pratt contends that many writers are, as it were, filing reports from the frontiers of battle. The works of women like Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and also

Janet Frame, can be regarded as

> a message from the frontiers of a more fully human space than we have yet to comprehend. . . Sometimes it is a cry from prison or a shout from the barred windows of the insane asylum which is a concentration camp for interning women who protest too loudly, who are too radical in their dreams and recommendations.35

In Owls, Daphne, and later Istina in Faces both send notes from the battlefield where they engage in struggles played out on the bloody plain of the mind. Frame, like other writers who happen to be women, dramatises through literature the concerns about modern society expressed in the works of Laing, McConnell and Goffman. All these writers indicate that it is only by discarding the fictions which control and limit our lives and risking the journey through the "wild lonely places of the mind,"36 to become daring explorers of ideas and feelings, that the disjunction between inner and outer, the split between mind and body can be healed.

# CHAPTER THREE

## FACES IN THE WATER

The fictions which structure our concepts of identity and reality, and our apprehensions of the inner and outer dimensions of both, are focal points in Janet Frame's second novel, Faces in Water. The novel also moves on to examine the fictions which determine and control the allocations of power in society. Owls describes the artist figure during childhood and early adolescence, when her imaginative powers are unrestrained by the adult world. Faces commences with Istina Mavet, the initiate artist, as a young woman already equipped with a powerful, but undisciplined imagination, openness to emotional nuances, and responsiveness to atmosphere. When the novel commences, she is still a reactor to her heightened perceptive powers, and the novel is an account of how she will learn to harness and control these creative gifts. Her talents have as yet found no focus, and she has been channelled into the acceptable career of school teaching. The fictions which accompany her unsuccessful debut in this profession become progressively uncontrolled as her unhappiness increases and lead finally to her confinement in a psychiatric hospital.

During the nine years of her incarceration, Istina is subjected to varying degrees of sensory deprivation. The novel explores the effects of this dismantling of her personality, describing how the inner world responds to

shifts in dominant aspects of the outer environment.

Istina describes some of the alternative fictions used by her fellow patients to interpret their lives. These take them on to planes of reality and into modes of consciousness totally different from those collectively shared in the outer world.

Implicit in this novel is a clearly defined outline of the hierarchical power structures on which the hospital operates, and within which the anarchic patient society is enclosed. Conceived in terms of the narrowly conformist social system of the outer world, the hospital organisation also contains within it the variable and entirely individual fictions of the patients. While the hospital physically contains them, it can hardly be said to control or confine them in any but a limited physical sense, for they operate in modes of reality totally different from those which control the authority culture of the hospital.

By placing Istina in a series of situations which undermine her outer world reference points, the novel attempts to identify the elements on which the human fictions of reality are structured.

Frame's concerns in this work are similar to those in Barbara Hanrahan's novel, The Albatross Muff,1 Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea 2 and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper.3 All four writers centre these novels

in the area of personality disintegration. The protagonists in the first two works are subjected to experiences at least partly contrived by other characters to lead them intentionally, if not to actual breakdown, at least to serious trauma. What is shocking about the Gilman work, and more so with reference to Faces, is that those who bring about the deviant behaviour of the protagonists are, in the first instance, the husband and brother of the central character, who also happen to be medical men and, in Frame's work, staff members in a hospital specifically charged with the care and healing of the psychiatrically disturbed.

What the novel seems to be saying is that those who administer and control the power structures in society are not prepared to face up to and accept the comments and criticisms of the artist, whose dissonant voice seems to threaten and undermine the values and beliefs they wish to promote. Neither are they far-sighted enough to foster the growth of artistic talent by providing supportive conditions in which it may be nurtured. Dissent is dangerous; it is deviant and therefore "madness". Conformity is safe, therefore it is valued and promoted as normal.

The novel opens with Istina struggling to tame her exuberant imagination. Noting the extensive social preoccupation with exhortations related to defensive and safety measures, she is aware that procedures for protecting people from internal dangers such as those already threa-

tening her are absent from all these precautionary fictions.

Figuratively envisaging the physical constants of the universe disappearing, the sun melting and the seas evaporating, she discovers that no strategies exist to preserve human beings from the dangers emerging from the subconscious in day or night-time dreams.

On one level the novel describes the growing alienation experienced by a sensitive, intelligent, young woman, beginning a new career, without support, in an unfamiliar town. On another level the artist figure is imaged as an outsider, already set apart from society. What is unusual and significant about the role of the artist in this work is that the image presented here inverts the now traditional, post-Romantic fiction of the artist, who voluntarily becomes an outsider, and consciously maintains her/himself in god-like isolation. Istina's outsider status is involuntarily enforced upon her, and the systematic dismantling of her personality which occurs as the book progresses is a process through which the outer world invades, distorts, and almost destroys, her inner centre of self. This theme is later paralleled in State of Siege where the situation is reversed, for there Malfred intentionally detaches herself from all contacts with the world, and determinedly sets herself up in the splendid isolation of the post-Romantic mode, outside, and apart

from, others. Conformity is the price to be extracted for approval and safety in the outer world, but the compromises this would entail in terms of Istina's inner world self cause conflict so severe that she is finally admitted to hospital. "I was put in hospital," she explains, "because a great gap opened in the ice floe between myself and the other people whom I watched, with their world drifting away through a violet-coloured sea. . . I was alone on the ice."4 These are the fictions Istina uses to translate the reality that cannot be faced. Here she describes how her hold on the outer world seems to be loosening, for coping with her interpretations of the apparent reality which surrounds her has become too difficult. Attempting to withdraw into her inner world, she finds that sanctuary too is under siege from chaotic involuntary images. Aware now that the fantasies for which she has traded her safety amount to no more than outwardly attractive "glass beads," Istina attempts suicide as the final act of rebellion 5 against an existence which her imagination now interprets as insupportable.

At this point the novel is initially indicating how the planes of reality, the mooring posts or corner stones which people refer to as they interpret their life spaces, may be defined. Because she is alone, alienated and unhappy, Istina's ability to relate to these reference points becomes blurred. She begins to confuse inner and outer reality, which also leads to confusion between her

inner concept of herself and the outer identity which others bestow on her.

Parallels may be drawn between Istina and Daphne Withers in Owls. Istina, in spite of these shifting apprehensions about her life, retains a very faint grasp of her selfhood, deeply buried though this may be, which Daphne is unable to keep hold of. Istina, of course, is the retrospective narrator of her own experiences, reconstructing what was for her the apparent reality of her perceptions. The totality of Daphne's withdrawal is emphasized by the third person narrative of that novel, which limits the reader's entry into her inner world, while Istina, in contrast, makes available her shifting perspectives as she recounts her story.

Correspondences between the two characters emerge, however, in their ability to recognise limitations in the social structure and value system which most people subscribe to and accept without question. As she visualises the world and all of its people drifting away from her, Istina is also aware that she is making a choice not to dive "into the violet sea. . . to catch up with them," for she is "not willing to risk the danger of poverty."6 The poverty of values which Istina detects in those around her is symbolised by their "bare and frozen feet," which she can see, but of which they are not aware. This ability to see beyond and behind the conditions which most people in her milieu adhere to is also a quality which Daphne

exhibits. Both Daphne and Istina are presences which threaten the established order, because doubting the validity of what is accepted as unquestionably valuable undermines beliefs and objects which are held in such high regard. To find the discordant voices deviant is more comforting to those who have invested themselves in the status quo, than to examine the aspects of society which are questioned.

Istina's sense of self, her inner identity, is seriously undermined by her experience as a beginning teacher. Although she craves approval, no one befriends her: the headmaster offers advice which she can't relate to, and her landlady is a further source of disquiet. Beleaguered on all fronts by these fictions with which she interprets her outer world, her own psyche also betrays her, assailing her with chaotic hallucinatory images which threaten her inner sanity.

Following an unsuccessful attempt at suicide, Istina enters Cliffhaven psychiatric unit with her mind actively receptive to levels of consciousness of which most people seldom become aware. Writing at the beginning of the century, William James points out that

> our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different.7

James describes here in theoretical terms the essential

ideas to which Frame gives form and life by dramatising them in her novels. Potential forms of consciousness are given substance as Istina describes them, filtered through the filmy screen of her perceptions.

Istina's sensitivity to nuances in both inner and outer dimensions of apparent reality is already acute. Touching upon issues which are explored in depth in Sartre's Nausee',8 Faces describes Istina's confusion as the stabilisers which customarily anchor the universe seem to disintegrate.

In the hospital environment itself, however, really serious inroads are made into the dismantling of Istina's personal integration. There she discovers that the compulsions which motivate the outside world are equally potent in this microcosmic and derivative social system. "Orders are to be obeyed and floors are to be polished," and weeping is now a crime, for at Cliffhaven indulging in feelings is a punishable offence.

Istina records that she must, like a thief, use stealth and guile to nurture her emotional life. "I would have to wear gloves, to leave no trace," she writes, "when I burgled the crammed house of feeling and took for my own use exuberance depression, suspicion, terror."9 The effects of this suppression of emotion are almost intolerable, for Istina lives daily in terrible apprehension of the Electric Shock Therapy prescribed for her. Having to

conceal her fear and terror adds to the burden of stress she has to endure, for it is only the support she generates for herself through her emotions which enables her to survive.

As the novitiate artist, however, Istina must learn the discipline of expressing emotions only in intellectually creative ways, remaining detached from physical and psychological involvement with the forces which motivate them. Analysis of the fictions which structure the artist's understanding of apparent reality is continued, when, several years later, Istina is placed in Lawn Lodge Ward in Treecroft hospital. In this environment further attacks are made on the private fictions with which she tries to nurture her feelings. These intrusions are not healing approaches, which might moderate the excesses of her hallucinatory fancies, for through them all the constants which underpin her emotional life are removed. Istina feels as if she has been emotionally blindfolded, and reacts with acute confusion. The social and intellectual deprivation 10 which she suffers as she is plunged into "a room full of raging, screaming, fighting people . . . " performing what seems like "an orchestration of unreason,"11 becomes more than intolerable.

The novel is dealing with many ideas here, one of which, as von Franz phrases it, is that "outer reality exists only in so far as we perceive it consciously, and

that we cannot prove that it exists 'in and by itself.'"12 This point must be remembered as Istina continues to be exposed to increasingly severe degrees of sensory deprivation. It emphasises that the human mind's grasp on what is apparently happening in the material world is so shaky that it is easily undermined.

Verification of the psychological accuracy of Istina's behaviour, as it is recorded and dramatised during her experiences, may be found in McConnell's studies.13 McConnell documents the effects of basic kinds of input isolation indicating how seriously such conditions distort the perceptions of the individual.

What the novel indicates, from a fictional point of view, is that inner-world interpretations of the outer world are shaped by stimuli present in the physical environment to such a degree that the sense of self or personal identity is controlled or altered by the presence or absence of these forces. The self concept is no more a reality than are the fictions which are accepted as the realities of the outer world. In fact it is just another fiction which, puppet-like, can be altered by the manipulations of environmental factors. Art deals with the construction, or rather re-construction, of reality, and this novel reiterates, in fictional terms, on what fragmentary foundations all concepts of reality are based, and how dangerously vulnerable is the mind which controls them.

McConnell describes three basic kinds of input isola-

tion which involve deprivation of intellectual, social and biological inputs. The treatment Istina is subjected to accurately reflects each of these states, in varying degrees, over the course of the novel.

In spite of Istina's talisman-like grasp of her volumes of Rilke and Shakespeare, which symbolise her, as yet unfulfilled, artistic promise, very little intellectual stimulation reaches her during the entire period of her confinement in hospital. This situation closely resembles the situation McConnell describes as deprivation of intellectual inputs. This occurs when the subject is removed or cut off from environmental stimuli which provide one with knowledge and understanding, and allow for perception of the self and the exterior world.

The quality of contact Istina experiences while she is in hospital is so impoverished that it amounts also to social deprivation. While she is in Lawn Lodge, for example, her fellow patients are wary of engaging "in the perils of human communication."14 Piona, a case in point, prefers to chant swear words, giggle or throw things, which is her way of sending communicative signals. Although they are full of meaning for those who can read them, they are little comfort to Istina, who is capable of what is known as "sensible" conversation. McConnell defines deprivation of social inputs as occurring when the subject is cut off from what other people say and do, or

is isolated from the responses other people make to one's behaviour. Clearly Istina's situation in Lawn Lodge very closely matches McConnell's definition.

While Istina is not denied the basic necessities of life, such as air, food and water, to the degree outlined by McConnell as deprivation of biological inputs, she is subjected to the denial of sensual and aesthetic needs which this state also incorporates. Pleasant smells and skin stimulation, from which one derives pleasure, are absent from her environment.

Faces, however, goes beyond McConnell's study, considering not only the effects of restricting the activity of the senses, but also exploring the trauma induced by exposing them to excessive amounts of stimulation. Istina is not only deprived of the pleasures of the senses, but also endures prolonged subjection to uncontrollabe amounts of sensory stimuli. These are salient details, for the initiate artist not only has to be more responsive and receptive to communications from the senses than ordinary individuals, but also must learn how to discipline and control these highly volatile organs of perception and imagination. At the beginning of the novel, Istina is at the mercy of her wayward imagination which takes over her life and more than threatens her sanity. On other occasions the damaging degrees of sensory stimuli come from the outer environment and remain beyond her control. Exposure to such painful distortions of her

"normal" fictional reality from both inner and outer environments educates the artist into the proper use of the imagination and the senses, teaching her to shape them towards her creative goals. As a patient in ward Four, Five and One, for example, Istina's despair deepens in response to the distinctive and enervating smell which haunts and invades her. She cannot eat and loses weight as the devastating odour saps her energy and, almost, her will to survive. Her fictional interpretations of the surroundings continue to exercise a powerful effect on her mind, for Istina, who responds with pleasure to the scent of marigolds,15 symbolically identifies the smell of Four, Five and One, as the smell of hopelessness.

During her period of hospitalisation, there are many instances when Istina is distressed by constant noise. The raging, screaming people in Lawn Lodge are a source of acute distress, but her greatest anguish occurs in response to Bertha's repetitive singing, which prevents her from sleeping when she is in seclusion. Bertha's singing insinuates itself into her mind with such insistence that she imagines her very skin and hair are contaminated by it and plans to kill Bertha, just to obtain relief. In its interpretations of aspects of the outer world, the mind is again shown to be highly volatile, and predisposed to further distort the messages it receives from the already unreliable senses.

Added to the above excesses of sound and smell are the aberrant visual images with which Istina is also beset. These are initially centred on the ominous figure of the headmaster, imaged as a predatory bird. This focus on the invasion of her psychological landscape by capricious apparitions, recurs throughout the novel, whenever she feels threatened or unable to make sense of her situation.

Istina lives in a metaphoric winter of the mind, which not only symbolises her outsider status as an artist, but also indicates the alienation and fear with which she fictionally interprets the present. The imagery of malignant vegetation becomes increasingly insistent, for example, as Istina's unsuccessful period of probation in her sister's home comes to end. No recognition of her artistic vocation has yet become evident to her and she envies her pregnant sister, longing for someone of her own to love who will rescue her from her empty, aimless existence. As yet she has no understanding that it is only from within herself that this sense of completeness can be sought for.

At this time Istina continues to describe her surroundings in increasingly negative terms, emphasising the association between her growing disquiet and the decaying matter which seems to surround her. When EST is again prescribed for her, poisonous insects and reptiles figure as visual aberrations along with the chaotic plant life,

which signal the continued dislocation of her reality.

Demonstrating how vulnerable and plastic an entity the human mind continues to be, the novel moves on to document the dependence of the psyche on the coherence of the social and emotional environment, and how necessary for its efficient functioning are predictable physical and intellectual conditions.

Further intellectual disorientation results from the disintegration of time as a concept which measures and records the movement of human experience from past through present to future. In the abyss which her life becomes in the hospital, "using tenses to divide time is like making chalk marks on water."16 For Istina is adrift in a social, emotional, intellectual and even physical no-man's land in which she can hardly locate any of the reference points related to her previous existence.

One of the central themes of the novel is provided by this exploration of the nature of reality. The sequential removal of variables, like social interaction, physical autonomy, emotional predictability and intellectual stimulation, which unite to form our layers of experience, is first described. By dramatising the responses of a character who is subjected to disruption of these meaningful signposts, the novel indicates how layers of experience coalesce to create an impression of a predictable existential universe, which is, of course, only fictional.

Istina's confinement in ward Two, on her return to Cliffhaven, further indicates the fragility of the modes of interaction which are commonly taken for granted. For there conversation is not conducted in sentences as a means of communicating information or ideas. Behaviour, speech and silence, are all matters of personal rights, having nothing whatsoever to do with social customs or conventions of courtesy or good manners. The conventions in this ward no more resemble the conventions in the outer world, as Istina knows them, than do customs one encounters in a foreign land. Even the future loses its validity as a meaningful concept, for time itself is a formless expanse of disordered existence, unpredictably punctured by routines and rituals.

Istina's second attempt at suicide is followed by a period in seclusion. Deprivation of this severity intensifies the craving for those inputs which have been denied. The psychological accuracy of the novel can again be verified by reference to McConnell who documents the evidence dramatised in Faces. In efforts to satisfy overwhelming needs which have been denied, values become more flexible. Subjects respond with uncritical enthusiasm, for example, to inputs of any kind. These seem highly significant and cause voluntary control over thoughts and actions to be reduced.

Istina's behaviour demonstrates this with considera-

ble precision. When a nurse surreptitiously provides her with a forbidden magazine, an advertisement for a jelly absurdly becomes a stimulus to her starved mind, which rampantly transports itself, climbing amongst "the ruby crags and sinking transparent valleys."17 Istina's friend, Eunice, finds her in a similar state of susceptibility, when she insists on breaking into her term of seclusion and being allowed to see her. Deprived of reading matter for several weeks, Istina hoards information gleaned from a scrap of newspaper Bertha pushes through the peephole in her room. The only item of mental currency Istina has to offer Eunice is that saved from the paper, concerning the death of a Mr Humphrey Noke. Eunice is understandably puzzled when Istina comments that "Humphrey Noke is dead," adding "I didn't want him to die." Istina's behaviour here could be classified as "mad", if the background initiating it were unknown. Only within the context of her closely-monitored experience, which the reader shares, but to which the staff have no access, does the rationale for her behaviour disclose that it is a normal human reaction to conditions which she has endured. A mind deprived of stimuli, reacts as does Istina's here, with heightened susceptibility to any inputs which break the monotony of the period of deprivation. It is clear from these examples that the novel may be interpreted as an account of the potential artist's enforced passage into the interior environment, and the

monitoring of her responses to physical and psychic environmental conditions.

Disciplined use of sensual perception is one of the artist's fundamental tools. Istina learns this complex task when she is, first, forcibly subjected to uncontrolled sensual stimuli and, later, deprived of all the aesthetic pleasures associated with the senses.

Faces emphasises that the mind is humanity's most precious gift and most vulnerable possession. Jung writes that it seems incredible "when all available energy is spent in the investigation of nature, very little attention is paid to the essence of man, which is his psyche." 18 Although the psyche is mankind's "greatest instrument . . . it is little thought of, and is often directly mistrusted and despised. 'It's only psychological' too often means: 'It's nothing'."

Poets and philosophers through the ages have insisted that the powers of the mind enable human beings to transcend their physical distress and find succour within. Faces, along with Frame's other novels, dramatises what modern psychological research documents, that the human mind is a highly vulnerable and plastic entity, prey, not only to manipulation by environmental forces and the technical devices placed there by others, but also to its own conscious and subconscious fictions. Faces demonstrates, in particular, how dependent on the coherence of the

social and emotional environment the human psyche is and how necessary for its efficient functioning are interpretations of its physical and intellectual environment which gives the appearance of predictability. It is through the experiences of sensual excesses that the young artist learns the value of controlling her powerful creative gifts. The novel emphasises the artist's need to recognise that the mind is not an inviolable sanctuary into which the individual can withdraw for solace and relief. For it is prey to attack from interior as well as exterior forces.

Faces has so far described how the inner identity of the self can be dismantled by the manipulations of environmental forces. It now moves on to show how inner reality can be completely divorced from, and bear no relation to, the identity conferred upon the individual by the outer world. The novel also describes the complexity of inner experience and its overall shaping effect on outward behaviour. Emphasising Laing's contention that behaviour has the power to conceal as well as reveal motivation,19 and experience, it is this shaping power of behaviour which is now focused upon.

The title, Faces in the Water, suggests that only occasional flashes of a submerged personality break through the surface of the water (or protective mask adopted by the individual.) For example, it is only when watching Brenda play the piano that Istina catches isolated glimpses of what she might have become. It is

Brenda's plight which gives the novel its title, for she was once a talented young pianist before a more clamorous and insistent reality appropriated her mind and identity.

The alternative realities which Istina describes cover a wide range of inner conditions. Some characters, like Dame Mary-Margaret for example, have fictioned for themselves solitary, self-contained worlds, which may well be an improvement on their allocated position in the shared outer world. Others, like Marie and Louise in Lawn Lodge and Violet and Miss Wallace in ward Two, are involuntarily trapped in states of mind where they endure considerable psychic anguish.

Dame Mary-Margaret's mind is like a planet in her own private sky, Istina comments, giving no evidence of her real night and day and the pull of her secret tides.20 Marie, on the other hand, lives in an inner world irrevocably constructed from the physical purgatory experienced in a European concentration camp. Hers is an imagined reality beyond the range of human contact. Istina's sentient powers enable her to understand that Marie construes the arrival of a visitor as a summons to the torture or gas chamber, while Louise, Istina notes with some irony, has discovered that man himself is "the inescapable subject and object of all horror."21

All Istina's compassion for her fellow-sufferers is contained in her references to Miss Wallace, whose nights,

in her fictions, are troubled by radar. Although her eyes are constantly red with weeping, Istina is aware that "no one, neither relatives nor the hospital staff, would believe her."22

Istina, with her artist's vision, understands the need to accept the reality experienced by the individual, even though it may not match with one's own interpretation of the situation, all interpretations are, after all, only fictions. Human compassion may be a more important quality for people to possess than narrowly literal judgements of factual accuracy. It is no wonder that patients like Miss Wallace have long abandoned the maze of human communications, for it brings no support or reassurance to alleviate their suffering.

The third significant aspect of the novel is its extensive preoccupation with authority and authority figures. Opening with Istina quoting injunctions given by an anonymous "they," it concludes with her surface obedience to strictures imposed on her as she leaves the hospital. Both phrases highlight the press for conformity, rule-following and ritualisation of behaviour, which not only control the hospital, but also pervade the outer shared world.

The social power structures are of immense consequence for the creative individual, for, as Istina points out, they are maintained by undeviating attention to

conformity rather than openness to innovation and originality. "Cannot one exercise one's will as a living hammer to force the shape of change?" questions Istina in a moment of exasperation with the sacredness of the routines. But the inevitable "Tea Ladies, Lavatory Ladies, Bed Ladies" continues with the regularity of the planets in motion. Mere routines possess the force of rituals and slight changes in the format of these fictions cause consternation amongst the staff.

The same petty but tyrannical fictions and trivial concern for regulations, structure the hospital world as are present in the wider context. Each level in the hospital hierarchy is carefully maintained by the one below and the one above it. At the top of the organisation are the grey-haired, elderly doctors in charge of the hospital who "hurried in and out of their offices down in front of the building like rats in and out of their hiding places."23

The fact that Istina did not have any contact with the Medical Superintendent, Dr Portman, for nine years emphasises the distance of these men from the patients they control. Imaged as rats hiding away in their offices "with the same old chewed solutions littered about them like nesting materials,"24 these authority figures are shown to be imaginatively limited beings by the enthusiasm and fresh ideas offered by the new young Doctor Howell.

Too astute to oppose his innovative ideas, the hospital authorities are aware, as Istina is, that his energy will "quickly perish. . . under the concentrated stress" of chronic overwork. He, too, is an adjunct of the bureaucratic apparatus, to be conditioned by the appropriate fictions which ensure the smooth running of the whole.

Each component in the hierarchy plays its part in keeping the power structure intact. Below the hospital authorities and the doctors come the matron and ward sisters who act as "go-betweens, interpreters and pickets" when the doctor enters the ward on his ritual of rounds. During this Royal Progress, Matron Glass and Sister Honey position themselves strategically to head off any undesirable contact between patients and doctor.

The security of the authority figures depends not only on the allocations of power, but also on the efficient running of the system. This becomes clear on the few occasions when some of these figures are glimpsed, like faces in the water, from positions outside their allotted role. One of Dr Steward's carefully practised fictions is to confide in patients that his wife is suffering from exactly the same problems as they are. Istina notes that, while the technique is successful, it involves little sincerity.

The fictional power conferred by uniforms is particularly noteworthy in a hospital setting. Istina notes that

Matron Glass depends on her occupation to provide her with an identity. Coming upon her one day standing by the bus stop without her uniform, she is instantly aware that "the uniform and veil were a desperate protection for her."25 Without the power bestowed by them she is lost, helpless and even pathetic. "She lived for her job," Istina adds, maintaining the fiction.

At the bottom of the structure are the patients who form a sub-hierarchy of their own, based on gradations of power in their own community. These positions of responsibility are, of course, conferred by the hospital staff and are allocated according to their fictional rationalisations. Groups of patients, for example, are classified by the ward in which they are placed. Those patients in ward Four at Cliffhaven are regarded as the "sensibly" ill and occupy the top ranking in the patient hierarchy. The lowest rating is given to the ward Two patients, for this is termed as the "disturbed" ward and patients in this category are regarded as bestial, animal-like, not quite human, even by other patients. Such is the power of fictions. The nurses also consider them to be non-persons, and when Istina remonstrates with a nurse for using unkind words to a patient, she is told that "these people, to all intents and purposes, are dead."26 Istina excuses the staff by pointing out that it is the lonely struggle in unfavourable conditions which corrupts them and turns them into compassionless, "harrassed, reluctant,

hypocrites and bullies."

Within each ward the patient hierarchy operates on an individual basis, with those fictioned as "trusty" patients receiving rewards for performing menial tasks. What is clear is that whether one is at the top of the hierarchy, like Dr Portman, or at the bottom, like Istina, the overriding fiction is to fit in and obey.

Significant contrasts may be noted between the fictions which maintain the rigidity of the hospital social system, and the anarchic freedom of those with which many of the patients structure their personal universes. Rigid regard for rules, rites and rituals curbs the expansiveness of the mind, preventing originality of thought, innovation and personal growth. It is interesting to note that this most inflexible of social systems is here set up to contain people who conduct their lives in total disregard of it.

The juxtaposing of these two distinctly different social systems, that of the hospital authorities and that of the patients, has some symbolic relation to humanity and its collective shadow. The assiduity with which the forces of authority enclose and attempt to regulate what they regard as the wayward and capricious elements in society is in a sense analogous to the way in which individuals attempt to deny the validity of the dark, uncontrolled side of their nature, by suppressing or

ignoring its existence.

In terms of Istina's development as an artist, the novel concludes on a quietly triumphant note, for Eunice's visit marks a turning point, signifying the beginning of Istina's journey back to wholeness of being. The photograph which Eunice presents to Istina of Henry James's house in Rye is the catalyst which reactivates her buried literary aspirations. This point is clearly related to the themes of inner and outer identity, for it is Eunice's belief in Istina, symbolised by the photograph identifying her with a great writer, which allows Istina to gather together her own almost totally fragmented sense of self. This has been seriously undermined by the outer identity bestowed on her by hospital staff who try to convince her, and almost succeed, that her case is hopeless and that she will remain in hospital for the rest of her life.

Writing of this kind, which Pratt terms "notes from an underground",27 demonstrates the ability of fiction writers like Sexton, Plath, Hanrahan, Rhys, Perkins-Gilman and Janet Frame, to look openly at humiliation and degradation and profound emotional confusion, simply because they possess the sense that such a state need not continue. In Janeway's view 28, writing of this kind must be regarded as a triumphant celebration of survival rather than a negative preoccupation with inadequacy and powerlesness.

Istina's return to personal autonomy is hastened by

the support she receives from one of the doctors, who also indicates his acceptance of her as an independent and intelligent woman. She emerges from her experiences, subdued, cynical, but cautiously determined to accept the challenge before her to survive and become a creative voice in the universe. Her quest is linked to that of Orpheus, not only through her mascot-like association with Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus, but also because she too has visited the psychic underworld. Emerging now emotionally resurrected, she is determined to share her new knowledge of life, through her writing.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## EDGE OF THE ALPHABET

Achieving a balance between the inner world, where human beings live in their minds,1 and the outer physical world where they function according to concepts of fixed time and space, is a complex necessity. So estranged is the present generation from this inner environment, that "many people argue," states R.D. Laing, "that it does not exist at all."2 Even if it does exist, they contend, it isn't important enough to matter.

The issue is further complicated by the need for an accurate means of communication between the two domains of being. Language is the medium through which both inner and outer experience is conceptualised. Dependent as it is on the senses, which are verifiably unreliable, its effects are limited, for language can offer only an approximation to the ideas it attempts to possess.

"We arrive at belief," writes Scholes. "Belief is comfortable, but it is in a sense the enemy of truth, because it stifles inquiry."3 In fact human beings "can never be absolutely sure of anything,"4 they can never attain "reality," only a notion of it which satisfies them enough to found their behaviour upon.5 People, however, continue to act, not only as if reality is possible, but also as if their personal interpretations of it are accurate and valid. The three protagonists in Edge of the

Alphabet all illustrate aspects of these points. Toby believes he will write a book about the lost tribe, Zoe is obsessed with the idea of marriage and motherhood, and Pat's dogmatisms limit his life so severely that they make him substanceless. Frame's intention is to make people aware of their more damaging fictions, and of the need to monitor, and re-evaluate frequently, all personal beliefs which, after all, are no more than fictions.

Because she is working in the area of acknowledged fiction, as well as examining the unacknowledged fictions which individuals engineer to live by, Janet Frame is able to go beyond the studies of empirical researchers such as Erving Goffman,6 to examine, not just behaviour which is regarded as deviant and that which is accepted as normal, but also to consider the fictions through which most people construct what they accept as their "reality". With her early biographical experiences and her active imagination, Frame is uniquely equipped to explore the regions of inner and outer psychological space, and the fictions people build up between and around them.

The human race is a theorising and conceptualising species, which "does not accept experience in and of itself;" but always develops beliefs and theories about its experiences.7 Unfortunately, human beings tend to take their theorising too seriously, forgetting that all premises are essentially fictional. Janet Frame addresses herself to this issue in her third novel Edge of the

Alphabet and to the related fact that we live in a world in which our inner lives are seriously out of touch with the outer manifestations of them. In other words, although the systems of communication between inner thoughts and physical actions essential for adequate functioning as human beings are known to be unreliable, they are nevertheless acted upon as if they were accurate.

Toby has problems with words, for he finds them unmanageable and "poisonous tall."8 He tells Zoe that his ideas float above his head like the little clouds in comics which show what people are thinking. In other words, they are tantalisingly out of his reach and he is unable to absorb and control them. In his presence Zoe feels the effects of this inadequacy so strongly that it seems as if the revolving mechanism of the whole world had broken. ". . . after the idea itself had stirred and crawled its way along the silent corridors of his mind, trying to emerge into the light,"9 he still has to contend with tongue, teeth, lips and all the physical attributes of speech. At the end of his enormous effort, his conversation seldom appears "brave or magnificent or unusual."

Toby is imaged as a silent Orpheus, for he can neither express his ideas to himself, or to others. His position is further complicated because he is unable to pick up the signals and messages directed towards him from his physical surroundings and adapt his behaviour in

response to it. As the novel progresses his actions become increasingly inappropriate. Regarding him as strange, his fellow passengers call him "the man who shouts."

Thora Pattern is the central consciousness of the work and the apparent author. The people she writes about are Toby Withers, a character first met in Owls; Pat Keenan, an itinerant bus driver; and Zoe Bryce, a teacher who, like Pat, is reaching middle age.

"Without the inner," Laing contends, "the outer loses its meaning and without the outer the inner loses its substance."10 This point is very well illustrated by the lives of Fame's protagonists. The identities and apparent realities of these three characters are closely related to the modes or dimensions of being outlined in Owls. Representing the interior of the mind, even before its thoughts are translated into words, Toby falls into the first category, which is defined as almost total immersion in the inner world. This point is illustrated frequently during the unfolding of the novel, for Toby's reference points for behaviour are internal ones, rather than external ones communally shared. For this reason his behaviour is often regarded as bizarre and odd by others.

Pat's apprehensions of the world are almost diametrically opposed to Toby's, for he firmly maintains himself entirely in the outer world, even cutting himself off from the inner world in his dreams, which he passes by as

strangers. Zoe begins in the third mode of being, having a personal inner reality which she bases almost entirely on the fictions that define her in the outer world. This dimension of being is unreliable and limited, and Zoe, after experiencing a moment of awakening, does move a little way further into the fourth mode, in which inner identity and outer reality are appropriately balanced. She is, however, unable to maintain herself in this sphere long enough to attain true wholeness of being.

Toby builds a romantic fiction for himself around Evelina Festing, as illusionary as his fantasies about Fay Chalkin in Owls. When contemplating his imaginary future with Fay in that earlier work, Toby's mind was alive with significant truths about marriage and the consequences for him of the social fictions surrounding it. Then, he was aware that in marriage people are in danger of losing their individuality, not so much to each other, as to the social expectations engendered by the roles, "husband" and "wife." Now he is already dissolving into a dull, literal-minded man, and on his return to New Zealand will sink into comfortable mediocrity in Aunt Cora's home.

Unable to express his vision of the lost tribe through language, Toby's ideas of it vanish along with all his other insights. His condition demonstrates both the inadequacy of words as intermediaries between people, and also their importance for extending the boundaries of human thought. Without words, concept development is

limited, ideas remain cloudy, then fade and are lost.

Toby's life effectively exemplifies Laing's comment, that without the outer world the inner has no substance,10 for he is imaged as a character who spends his life in waiting-rooms without ever reaching any destination. At one point during his stay in London he becomes the doorman at a cinema, an occupation which further emphasises his indeterminate position in life. He directs people towards insubstantial images of fictional worlds which, by the time they reach the screen, are already removed several more times from the fictions which initiated them. Pat Keenan's life as a bus driver is another example of the same theme. Whereas Toby, as a symbol of the inner world, is linked to waiting-rooms which are interior half-way points driving a bus emphasises Pat's association with the exterior physical world, underlining the fact that he is always travelling towards some point which he is never able to reach.

Pat's life is an embodiment only of the outer world. He seals himself carefully away from the world of imagination and art, looking only towards the literal and mechanical aspects of language. Words as he uses them are "rusted knives and empty drums." Caged in a psychic structure of his own devising, Pat is completely closed-minded, and fears everything beyond these boundaries as negative and threatening. In contrast to Toby, Pat

possesses all the superficial techniques of language, and confidently offers his rigid ideas to others by means of re-cycled platitudes. His eagerness to give advice and suggestions is not matched by his powers of perception, which remain severely limited. It is clear that his utterances are hollow and empty, and his well-intentioned but misguided habit of interfering in other people's lives, is carried out with a slick, freely-offered set of remedies for every individual and every occasion.

Attempting to live through other people, with no real understanding of their needs, or of the condition of their lives, he denies his inner world completely, and has no knowledge that his grasp of "reality" is inadequate. Pat's condition is further symbolised by a dream sequence, where he struggles to produce a flame, by means of an enormous match. Before he is able to fire the spark of understanding which will give meaning to his life, he is horrified to discover that he has aged into a white-haired old man.11

Zoe warns, however, that it would be foolish to imagine Pat's dreams are really only occupied with everyday concerns. Those are "only the daytime convenient notes providing his secret personal music." Even Pat himself, is unaware of the true nature of his dreams, passing them by "as strangers when he meets them in waking life." This point further emphasises the disjunction between Pat's inner and outer states of being, and draws attention to

the diversity of possible selves, stored within the individual which the subconscious may tap. Many of these submerged selves remain latent all one's life. What emerges are only those traits of character which respond to the pool of conditions currently operating in the environment. In his dream, Pat holds in his hands a giant match, the symbolic vehicle of light, but is unable to kindle the flame which will open his mind and give life meaning. Recognising only the literal applications of words, the figurative world which they depict remains concealed from him.

The occupations Pat adopts also signify his character. As a bus-driver, he is the instrument of physical communication between people and places, but is never himself able to arrive anywhere. He remains fixed in a set, limited, physical space which reflects the rigidity of his psychological environment. The bus-route he operates is the metaphoric expression of his mental journeying; he travels endlessly but never reaches any destination. Food, sleep, and safety, are the things he regards most highly. These again signify the limitations imposed on his life by the fictions he adheres to. Longing for love, he also fears it so greatly, that even love cannot penetrate the barriers of prejudice with which he imagines he is protecting himself.

Pat's whole life dramatises the first part of Laing's

quotation, "without the inner, the outer loses its meaning,"12 for his final occupation as the novel concludes is to become a salesman of blank stationery. This position reflects the emptiness of his mind and the aimlessness of his life, emphasising how his fiction building has trapped him in the outer world, preventing him from creating a self which has depth and value.

Elements of both Pat and Toby are present in Zoe. Rigid conformity to small, socially-derived customs and habits based upon communal fictions effectively imprison Pat and Zoe in narrow psychic confines from which they are afraid to escape. Responding to the collective fiction that people get married, both travel to New Zealand in search of a mate, and both are unsuccessful in their quest. Zoe believes that life will become meaningful to her only when she finds a husband to create her identity and validate her life. No thought, that growth into being is a process of self-creation, which the individual must undertake for herself, is apparent to Zoe. Never able entirely to shake off her conformist habits of thinking, Zoe does manage to open her perceptive third or inner eye and hesitantly begin to use it, but only after a significant event has occurred in her life. The kiss of an unknown sailor is the catalyst which causes the change. Zoe is a modern Sleeping Beauty waiting for the kiss of the prince who will marry her, making the fairy tale she has been conditioned to believe in, come true. But the

intention of this novel is to arouse people from their limiting fictions and to re-examine the comforting, but unlikely, beliefs on which they base their lives.

In a satirical reworking of the Sleeping Beauty story, the kiss awakens Zoe, not to physical passion disguised as romantic love, but to some of the qualities which lead to the development of intellectual and artistic fire. Zoe's life is changed, for she sees the world very differently from before, which of course is the point Frame is making here. People construct the world around their fictions, and by changing the fictions they choose to believe in, they dismantle one world and replace it with another. The process is not simple, but can be liberating, as well as negative. What is damaging is that it is often carried out without conscious thought, in which case one foolish dream simply gives way to another equally improbable fantasy.

In Edge Zoe becomes receptive to messages from her inner self and feels as if the kiss has grafted another life onto hers, transferring her to another world.13 Although now attuned to the past and open towards the present, the touch of inspiration fails to guide her into the future. Her mind is opened and her eyes are unblinkered, but she fails to understand the significance of her discovery, or of the process she is part of. The newly awakened powers of insight and perception enable Zoe to convey ideas and emotions to others through the language

beyond the alphabet, which is the universal language of art. The comprehensiveness of this language is demonstrated when Zoe sculpts a silver forest out of paper from a cigarette packet. Her creation is immediately meaningful to the token representatives of humanity gathered with Zoe at the time. Zara, a prostitute, Lawrence, a homosexual, Peter Heron, a struggling artist, and another nameless sailor, all fleetingly share a moment of harmony with Zoe through her small artistic creation.

However, Zoe's mind is so socially conditioned, that she confuses the kiss of inspiration with the kiss of physical passion and continues to focus her life on the belief that to bear a child will initiate the only meaningful existence she can hope for. For this reason, her achievement is followed, not by elation and a commitment to develop her artistic gifts, but by the cynicism and depression which finally lead to her suicide.

Apart from having a narrative identity in the novel, each character is given a loosely allegorical association with time a motif used recurrently by Frame. Toby is a wandering Orpheus, lost in the Lethe-like waiting rooms of the mind. With his focus on the history of the lost tribe he is indirectly imaged as the insightful past now become dull and inarticulate. Pat's firm commitment to the external world and his fear of change, indicate that he is a figure of the present. Whereas Zoe's fixation with

motherhood, and her responsiveness to the awakening touch of inspiration, make her representative of the future. Her subsequent suicide is significant in this context, for in several novels Frame uses metaphor to express very negative ideas about the impotence of civilisation now, and more significantly, even in the future, to combat the strong and perverse human drive towards self destruction.

> Will Time publish us too as grotesque,
> purposeless,
> beyond the range of human language, between the pages of ice turned and torn uncuriously by the illiterate years
> till our story is sealed at last
> till no human mind remains to trace
> the compelling reason, the marginal dream14

These images compare mankind to a species of clumsy, small brained, dinosaur-type beast whose warring has brought them to extinction. Expressing similar concern about the inability of man, even after centuries of so called civilisation, to eradicate his bestial nature, Yeats writes "The rage-driven, rage-tormented, and rage-hungry troop,. . . biting at arm or face,/Plunges towards nothing, arms and fingers spreading wide/For the embrace of nothing,"15 which forcefully describes the "terrible primitivity"16 still latent in mankind. All three characters in Edge reflect this human irresolution, as they hover impotently at the edge of the alphabet.

Only art, in face of this paralysis, has the capacity to awaken the human mind to the untapped power it possesses. The liberating effects of art, and the humanising qualities of the artist, act on the mind to release the

potential for transforming the primitive residue still in mankind into a humane and positive force. Directed by reason and intelligence, this imaginative energy allows human beings "to express what thought cannot (yet) think or what is only (as yet) divined or felt."17 None of the characters in Edge finally achieves this level of artistic development. Although Toby initially responds in an intuitive way to the imaginative possibilities stored in his mind, lacking a voice and a bridge to the outer world, his insights evaporate and his imagination shrivels up and withers. Pat is never conscious, except perhaps in his unknown dreams, that his life has any limits, or that there are any untapped sources in his mind. Whilé Zoe, who, like Toby, also works in a cinema for a time, ushering people in to watch the fictions of fictions, herself remains caught between neither in nor entirely out.

Lacking the means to interpret her position accurately enough, even to understand the significance of her moment of communion, all Zoe finally realises is that to create a child is not her vocation. Although she is aware that her silver forest construction is a kind of language, she does not identify it as the language of art.

Zoe becomes, for one moment, an exponent of this universal language of art which conveys ideas and emotions between human beings on a more complex yet more direct level than is possible through the limits of alphabetical

language. Art also has the potential to narrow the distance between the inner world and our outer physical lives.18 It can do this by offering the substance which is often absent from our inner thoughts, and by providing the meaning which our outer worlds seem to lack. But without awareness the healing and motivating powers of art cannot be used.

> We glimpse our own lives?
> Our minds in the mudflats dying
> unwilling to change or camouflage
> in detergent snows or gusts of opinion
> still wrapped defensively in the Outlandish Good Thing.19

In the limiting fictions of characters in novels such as this one, we glimpse our own lives, dying in the mudflats and choked by beliefs imagined to be "Good Things." The novel calls attention to the constricted existence most human beings settle for, because they fail to control the fictions they construct to live by. Time may "publish us too as grotesque, purposeless," unless we learn to "undo what has been done to us, and what we have done to ourselves. . . and realize that we are as deeply afraid to live and love in all chambers of the mind as we are to die."20

# CHAPTER FIVE

## SCENTED GARDENS FOR THE BLIND

"The touchstone of art is its precision,"1 while the touchstone of life is its uncertainty. Life and art are both, at best, only subjective interpretations of "reality." Art is controlled interpretation directed consciously towards an envisaged end by the co-ordinated powers of a gifted intelligence. Life exists in the round, and its significance must be extracted by those already immersed in it, even though their responses are random and limited.

Life is no less a matter of interpretation than art, but in life human beings are never able to stand, as it were, with their backs to the wall, facing their lives, perceiving all the possible permutations before them, as a painter may stand before a canvas, an author before a page or a musician before a score. Life and art are both subject to the perceptual limitations of the individual. Life often demonstrates the figurative blindness of human beings, while art testifies to the wide sweep of human vision - the infinity of its imaginative horizons.

As the title of Janet Frame's fourth novel, Scented Gardens for the Blind, suggests, this work is primarily concerned with the influences and effects of the senses on human interpretations of the world. Seminal to the novel is the concept of human perception and its effects on the interpretative processes human beings are constant-

ly engaged in. "We live in the mind," writes Wallace Stevens

> We live with the imagination. . . what is engaging us at the moment has nothing to do with the external world. We are concerned with the extent of artifice within us. . . We live in concepts of the imagination before the reason has established them. . . reason is simply the methodizer of the imagination.2

What is already IN the mind, therefore, colours and shapes everything external to it, and all new material is filtered and processed by the senses according to the accumulation of matter already implanted there. All human beings are authors, writing the fictions of their own lives, creating them from endless amaurotic interpretations of their external surroundings.

The function of relativity is also importantly placed in the novel, for it demonstrates how people interpret their lives according to a myriad of variable circumstances, screened through the imperfectly operating senses; a situation which makes all interpretation relative. Time and truth are two constructs used to exemplify this point.

Vera Glace, the protagonist, remembers her imaginary husband, Edward, as a "dark-haired man wearing dark-rimmed spectacles," but Edward is now balding and his mirror-like glasses have no rims. Both are accurate descriptions of Edward for the "adulteration of time" has caused the discrepancy. Eleven years have passed between the two instances and Edward has changed. What is "true," for one time and set of circumstances is not true for another.

Truth is relative, as this simple example indicates.

The only actual protagonist in the work is Vera Glace, a sixty-year old woman, with no family associations, who has been confined in a psychiatric institution for thirty years. During this entire period she has remained silent and completely withdrawn from the external world. Her only contact has been a tacit dependence upon Clara Strang, another hospital inmate who performs small supportive services for her.

Scented Gardens further examines material already touched upon in earlier works. Faces looks at the internal fictions which people construct involuntarily and unconsciously, often becoming trapped and forced to live in them, as if the subconscious had become rampant and taken over the mind of the individual. Faces also examines the ways in which the individual responds and reacts to differences in the degree of sensual stimulation in the environment, demonstrating that even internal, involuntary interpretations of the world can be affected by the amount of sensory deprivation a person is subjected to.

Scented Gardens continues to develop these two ideas, both in terms of the individual who is the author creating herself, and in relation to the artist who is crafting a work of fiction beyond herself. Faces deals primarily with the interaction between the two states of being referred to earlier. It focuses first of all on sets of

characters whose interpretations of their lives have ceased to have any apparently logical relation to the variables evident and significant to most other people functioning in the same environment. This novel also indicates that some individuals, even in such a position, do involuntarily react to variations in the amount of sensory stimulation available.

Scented Gardens further explores these situations through the tripartite character of Vera Glace, but the emphasis is a little different. The effects of sensory contact with the outer world are less important in this work, while the experiences of dismantling and analysing the influences of the senses on the perceptions of the individual are centrally placed.

In relation to the first point, the name of Vera's fellow patient, Clara Strang, seeps into her psychic limbo and is given a place there, becoming part of her imaginary husband Edward's research. More importantly, in terms of the developing artist, Vera voluntarily becomes involved in a process similar to that in which Istina was involuntarily involved in Faces. There, Istina was deprived of her autonomy by other people, and subjected to a range of experiences in which the severity of sensory deprivation led almost to the disintegration of her personality. Vera, is deprived of her autonomy by her own uncontrollable subconscious, and chooses in her internal world persona,

to explore the effects of physical blindness, because she is "surrounded by the atmosphere of blindness."3 Vera is aware of a connection between metaphoric and physical blindness and examines the effects which deprivation of the senses have on her perceptions of the environment.

In her fictional, internal world, Vera is married to Edward who has lived in England for the past eleven years. Apart from his hobby, which is warfare and the reconstruction of historic battles, Edward's only other interest is his research into the history of the Strang family; a project with which he has become obsessed. Vera has remained in New Zealand where she cares for their daughter, Erlene, who has lost the power of speech. Vera's three internal personalities are also recognisably temporal symbols. Edward, with his obsessive concern for history and his fixation on warfare, is a figurative embodiment of the past; Vera herself, is identified as the present; while the silent Erlene, pre-figuring the paralysed Vic in Adaptable Man represents the future struck dumb.

Vera's situation is used to dramatise the dichotomy between internal and external realities. The hospital staff and Dr Clapper, the attendant physician, see Vera in terms only of the outer world. "God knows what dreams they hold inside them," he comments about patients of Vera's type. ". . .what secret silent dreams lie like irremovable stones at the bottom of their minds, mixed

with the sediment of their lives."4 The doctor's interpretation of Vera as a human being is arrived at in the way most people read each other; in terms of her physical behaviour and his perceptions of it. He creates Vera, as most people are created for each other, according to his own perceptions of her. Although he is unusually attentive to the probability of there being an inner dimension to Vera's existence which is beyond his reach, his grasp of her identity is based mainly on his sense of sight.

What Dr Clapper sees is the physical casing of a human being in female form, which has for thirty years functioned as a lifeless machine, and then only when programmed by others. Vera's view of these thirty years presents a totally different picture, and apart from the name of Clara Strang, it bears no relation to the external world of the hospital in which she is physically placed. Vera's active inner life appears to her to embrace all the spatial and temporal dimensions of the external world, and of "reality," which are available to those classified as "sane," or normal.

Yeats devised his theory of the mask to combat "the erosion of exterior fate. . . the mask was that antiself reminding the poet that HIS reality was not the comings and goings outside his window in the street, but the comings and goings in his own mind."5 Frame adds another aspect to this view, by projecting a situation in which

the intricacies of balance between internal comings and goings and the activity in the street outside is disturbed and the sense of relationship between inner and outer, or THAT world and THIS, is eroded to such an extent that only the inner seems to exist. The point is important, for even the poet's reality requires that the balance be maintained. Not even the poet can function entirely in only one mode of being.

Frame's preoccupation is with the mind and all the layers and facets of its functioning. This interest is set alongside and related to her analysis of the fiction making process. Again and again her works explore the ways in which, voluntarily and involuntarily, consciously and unconsciously the human mind is forever condemned to construct and live in fictions. John Barth 6 also sees people as being trapped in life, as Frame envisages them caught in their fictionalising rituals. He uses the analogy of a boy who is trapped in the "funhouse" of life, seeking to maintain control over his existence by fictionalising the fiction that is his reality.7 Frame describes her characters doing exactly the same things, even at times retreating into madness to express a similar rebellion, or protest against their powerlessness in face of the absurdly fictional essences of life.

What energises Barth's universe, according to Scholes, is the tension between human imagination and conditions which actually prevail around people.8 The

energy which sustains Frame's concepts of life is derived similarly, from the tension between the inner and outer modes of apprehending the universe.

Parallels may be seen, too, between Frame and Donald Barthelme, for the relentless irony of his vision 9 is reflected in Frame's negatively ironic vision of the future, reiterated in Edge, Scented Gardens, and Intensive Care, especially. In these works she foresees human beings in the future returning to primitive life forms, or reduced either physically or psychologically to elementary organisms. Language also receives attention from both Frame and Barthelme, who focus on the degenerative influences which are reducing it to banal prosaic statements 10 and tattered bargain-price words.11 By exposing the reductive and trivialising factors which so adversely affect language, both writers seek to counteract them.

Certain correspondences are evident between Frame's works and her intentions, and the writings of Borges and John Hawkes. In relation to Hawkes's work, the similarity is that of methodology rather than intention or result; while with reference to Borges it is in the intention and the final outcome rather than the means of achieving these that the correlation lies. Hawkes's intention is "to apply conscious considerations to materials from the unconscious,"12 and by means of these materials, to induce a dream-like state in himself and in his readers. Frame

also attempts to reproduce material buried in the subconscious and to direct the conscious mind towards it, but Frame reaches behind this material to consider the actual processes and functioning of the mind itself in both reader and writer. She intentionally pushes beyond the dream-like, surrealist state which Hawkes seeks to achieve, and which she does sometimes engineer, insisting on a clear-eyed awareness of that combination of manipulation and willing self deception (or suspension of disbelief) which fiction building, whether personal or professional, finally amounts to.

The parallels between Borges and Frame are more clearly marked,

> to study Borges's fictions is, in a large measure, to study fiction as a genre. These fictions are technically exemplary in that they dramatize the rules and procedures of the narrative genre to which they belong. They are working models of the narrative and to read them intelligently is to understand better than ever before the conventions on which narrative depends.13

Although Frame's focus is different, she also is working in this area of uncovering the fictionalising of fiction making. Although her interest is more centrally in the functioning of the mind and the kaleidoscopic patterning it engages in as it makes and unmakes itself, she, like Borges, at times uses the material she is writing about to comment on the processes and techniques of fiction writing.

Deviance, "madness", or psychological eccentricity

are anchoring concepts Frame uses in many of her novels to explore those states and actions of the mind whose mystery and strangeness fascinate and trouble human beings. "Madness" and its equivalents are all forms of fictions unconsciously rather than intentionally arrived at. But the everyday fictions whose constructions are a fundamental part of all human life are also not evident to those who engage in them: they are related to reverie as deviant mental states are related to dreams. In Scented Gardens Frame considers this association by suggesting that Vera's state of withdrawal is akin to the universal process of dreaming. The two experiences are so close, yet one is essential to the proper functioning of the individual in the external world and the other prevents the individual from entering that dimension of being at all. At one point in the novel the Erlene component of Vera's inner world self comments that she feels as if she has been smeared with a strange substance which has "congealed on her skin and her life, imprisoning her, acting as a soundproof wall through which even if she uttered words, nothing could be heard, no cry or sentence or poem."14

In what amounts to a synthesis of the method of Hawkes and the function of Borges, Frame is here attempting to dramatise the experience of withdrawal, from the inside.

By extracting images and emotions from the subcon-

scious in the manner of Hawkes, or that, in combination with an effort of the imagination, she then, like Hawkes, places the result under the scrutiny of the fully attentive intellect, while at the same time in Borgesian fashion, employing the fictional situation to make a comment on the writing of fiction. Erlene discloses that she knows there are no Strang, "that her father was a myth and a dream. . . and that neither she herself nor her mother was real."

It feels as if all three strands of Vera's psyche "had one night been given free passage in the world, emerging in the path of a dream from the mind of someone asleep," instead of being allowed to dissolve as dreams are wont to do. Personifying the mental impulse which occurred to trap her in this psychic snare, she explains that it seems as if these dreams had been pounced upon by "a strange guardian of the night. . . forced to account for their identity. . . imprisoned as human beings, and denied their rightful blissful fate of dissolution,"15 essential to dreams. The point is that, although Vera's position is the result of some psychological malfunctioning in the process of translating material from the subconscious mind to the dream state in sleep, there are strong parallels between Vera's situation and the waking fictions which human beings allow themselves to become locked into in daily life. As Vera in her internal world believes, "madness is only Open Day in the factory of the

mind. We can walk through, prodding and touching, questioning, feeling wonder at the innumerable patterns of strangeness which woven and processed and delivered, bear no resemblance to the original materials, yet contain them and are part of them."16

The actions of the senses on the literal and metaphoric perceptual acuity of the individual are in question here. Frame's interest in artistic initiation related to her Borgesian function of dismantling the fiction making process to see how it works, leads to further exploration of the systems of communication. The senses, named and unnamed, are pathways or interpretative mechanisms between the inner and outer being. Vera, the first person narrator tries to experience in imagination the effects of physical blindness on the apprehensions. What she discovers is that "sight is pattern crazy." Sight is a fiction, almost arbitrarily imposing images and patterns on the external world, where none may in fact exist. Sight confers on individuals a feeling of power over the environment which is basically illusionary, for it evaporates when sight is removed. Vera finds that "when one is blind, all that once seemed solid now flows and pursues." Without the comforting facility of sight, objects acquire a threatening quality suddenly possessing a new power of mobility. Human control over the elements of their existence evaporates as objects lose the habitual places and proportions which are only bestowed by

sight. Sight is a controlling sense in that its absence puts a distorting pressure on all other senses. Without sight touch loses its certainty. For example, even though it is full summer, Erlene feels cold for she is unable to see if the sun is shining at its hottest. Without sight factual knowledge becomes questionable. What colour is red? she asks. Without sight, the question is no longer meaningful.

Vera goes on to consider the effects of the other senses on the ways human beings interpret their worlds. Not only named senses, but those yet unidentified, Vera notes, are involved here. She is reborn into a new knowledge of the senses by psychologically re-enacting the birth process. Her period of metaphoric blindness is akin to the prenatal darkness of the womb, where she cannot "escape from the gossiping blood."17 Like the new born infant, Vera learns to distinguish between her own sounds and those that come from beyond herself. She moves on to discover the sound of colour, "the surface of it, oranges tar-sealed with golden tar. . ." the sound of the sun and "rush of thought past one's ears. . . (and) the taste of time - sweet and sour." A whole array of new sources of sensual reception emanating from the inter-relation of the five basic senses, augmented by those still denied recognition by a name, become evident to Vera. She feels the touch of music "twining like a bangle" around her wrist, the touch of notes "was cold and menacing." The

notes even have substance and appear like objects in a photograph accompanied by their shadows.

The psychiatrist shares with the artist the social licence necessary for walking about, prodding and touching in the "factory of the mind." But only the artist possesses the understanding which can marvel and feel wonder "at the innumerable patterns of strangeness," into which the original psychic materials are woven. Psychology and psychiatry insist on fact and explanation based on scientific evidence, while the artist has accessible to her the entire universe of symbol, metaphor and figurative correspondences freed from the press of empirical vindication. Vera's musings open up the area of synaesthesia for consideration, recognising the colour and silence of sound, as well as the touch and texture of music, and the smell of decaying words. By heightening the consciousness to this degree the experimental artist expands the universe, opening up the multidimensionality of the senses for examination, emphasising their inter-relatedness and providing new conceptual fields for exploration. These areas are the preserve of the artist, who offers an antidote to the mechanisation of society, the empiricism of science and the predictability of collective entertainment. This last is often set at the lowest common denominator to lull, to amuse and to render passive.

Two functions are achieved by exploring the unusual

states of mind which Vera Glace experiences in Scented Gardens. First of all it demonstrates the range of often untapped possibilities available to the mind, and second it shows the limited use to which these possibilities are presently directed. Fiction building misused locks the individual into inappropriate ways of seeing and relating to the world, whereas imagination, intelligently used, can extend the boundaries of human possibility beyond the limits at which they are currently fixed.

On the one hand, Frame's work resembles that of Barth and Barthelme, who are "chroniclers of our despair over the exhausted forms of our thought and our existence."18 Parallels also exist between Frame and Borges, for he too recognises that language has become little more than "a system of quotations," for "our thoughts are mostly thoughts that have been thought before," and originality is really now, something to hope for.19 On the other hand affinities can be found with Gass and Coover who "are reaching through form and behaviour for some ultimate values, some true truth."20 Frame, too, seems to be tearing at the veil; encouraging human beings to reach beyond the empty forms of thought towards new possibilities; to release new kinds of imaginative energy.

Vera herself, as a symbol of the present, provides a sardonic interpretation of the current state of civilisation. Mankind collectively, like human beings individually, is continuously engaged in making fictions

to explain its place in the universe and to confer on itself some meaningful kind of identity. The fable of Albert Dungbeetle establishes and substantiates these points, for it illustrates the internal and external myth-making processes in action, further touching upon the insoluble problem of interpretation; that is, the problem of extracting THE TRUE meaning from any given set of circumstances. Because the components of any event may remain disjunct the complexity of synthesising available information from both inner and outer sets of signals is often beyond the limited capacity of human beings. People can be aware of their own internal position, and may be partially conscious of their place in the physical world, but because of the play of the senses on both internal and external "reality" any interpretation arrived at by human beings can only be an approximation of the actual, and therefore a fiction.

In Albert can be found the genesis of several future Framean characters, because he constructs his life around a fantasy which causes him to neglect his actual life while waiting for his dream life to be realised. Not only does the dream bring disaster because its substance differs from Albert's fiction of it, but it also leads him to waste all his opportunities for living the agreeable life he already has, for he spends it all in waiting for his problematical miracle to occur. Albert believes that the treasure he awaits is delivered by a god "from some-

where close to the sun and the stars."21 What he values is in fact, only the waste matter discharged from the bowels of an animal. It is this which he mistakes for the gifts of a god. As the analogy implies, human fiction building also encourages people to waste their entire lives waiting for the materialisation of an improbable dream, and as human perspectives are quite as distorted as Albert's, people too grovel in the dung, exalting the base, unable to appreciate the noble and excellent.

Albert is not only the focus of his own fictions, for those around him are also eager to offer their preferred interpretations of his behaviour. For some onlookers he is "foolish and selfish," while others view him as brave and noble." He is regarded as behaving with integrity, patience, stupidity, intelligence and foresight, and possessing power or ambition. These interpretations vary, not according to his own actions or intentions, but only according to the perceptual lattice work of the beholder. To some commentators he is a priest beetle, while others regard him diversely, as mad, a foreigner, a tramp and even a divinity.

The truth about Albert's behaviour is not constant, but like most truths, relative. Not only may a new truth be required for each time, place and collection of circumstances, but in each situation there are many shades and forms of truth to choose from. Truth is relative, and

therefore, at best, only a fictional interpretation of what the original might have been.

This small mythic piece is an ironic comment on human pretentiousness and the self deceptions people work upon themselves. Human beings, like Albert, are victims of their own perceptions and often get things out of perspective. Vera is locked into an internal psychic dream; Albert is locked into a waking physical dream; both are conditions human beings are commonly prey to.

The scented gardens of the novel's title are the reassuring fictions mankind spins to ease its anxieties about its position and function in the universe, and to conceal from itself the metaphoric blindness with which it is encumbered. Vera's sensual paralysis is an allegorical account of the present position of civilisation. The communal intellect has fossilised into a state of suspended mental activity. Vera's mind, which has been closed to the outer world for thirty years, parallels the condition of collective humanity, which has remained sensually and emotionally fixed for centuries. The human race is burdened by the past, confined by the present and shaped towards a future which will inevitably destroy all human achievement, ending in a return to an era of primitive consciousness.

In this novel Frame examines the whole spectrum of collective human existence to date. Vera's plight is a

metaphor for the contemporary world, poised on the brink of nuclear suicide. So mesmerised is the human race by its own fictions that it is unable to perceive the patterns of its own devising to which it is conforming. All our thoughts and forms of being are now played out, according to Borges, Barth and Barthelme. Frame, like Gass and Coover insists that there is still time for humanity to break the confining mould and push the imagination beyond it. The alternative is the final destruction of the universe and the re-emergence of primitive life forms capable, like Vera, only of grunts and groans.

# CHAPTER SIX

## THE ADAPTABLE MAN

The four prologues with which *The Adaptable Man* opens identify four major themes: time, adaptability, and professional and personal fiction making, which are examined in the novel. Fiction writing as a craft, and personal myth-making as a way of life, are ideas which give internal coherence to this work while uniting it thematically with Frame's earlier fiction.

*The Adaptable Man* continues the examination of technical procedures involved in the writing of fiction and also further explores the personal fictions people create around their lives. Character creation is the major focus of the first topic, and personal adjustment to time and change is central to the second.

The novel explores ontological and teleological concepts of time and the fictions individuals and groups develop to adapt to them. Human beings are inveterate rationalisers, and can persuade themselves into or out of almost any situation if they believe they are free to choose. The six major characters with whom the work is concerned are figuratively and symbolically linked to the novel's main themes. Past and present time are represented by Russell and Alwyn Maude, while Vic Baldry symbolises the future. The fictions they create in response to the current age all touch upon the theme of adaptability.

Philosophy and religion, art and nature are more indirectly associated with the characters Aisley, Greta and Muriel. Aisley, as a minister of religion wrestling with problems of faith, provides a vehicle for examination of philosophical issues in the modern context. Greta, wife of Russell, who figures as a twentieth century Dis, becomes a modern Persephone finding consolation for life's disappointments fittingly enough for the daughter of Demeter, by cultivating nature in her garden.

Modern, philistine attitudes to art and artists are exposed by Muriel, whose misguided comments and unenlightened approach to art and its humanising and cathartic function in society, epitomises and satirises the ignorant views of large sections of the population. Her statements, which are allowed to pass as informed opinion, emphasise the widespread tendency to pass judgement on issues or objects about which one has no real knowledge, and to act upon these fictions as if they were based on verifiable facts.

The climax of the work occurs when Vic, in his symbolic role as the future, assembles with the three last-named characters to witness the unveiling of a chandelier bequeathed to Muriel. The chandelier, which is a central motif in the novel, is an ambivalent image, loosely a mandala symbol, but also the focus of platonic association. Those who gather to witness its illumination are

clearly not among the chosen, "who have timely, lifted up (their) minds towards the bread of Angels,"1 and are not, therefore, equipped to witness a revelation. The tragedy which befalls them when the ceiling collapses, emphasises that inner harmony, or unity of being, cannot be achieved through improbable fictions based on a talisman, but that completeness must be worked for within oneself.

The first-named group of characters, who become temporal symbols, are given mythic counter-parts which figuratively identify characteristics of the age they represent. Russell is imaged as a modern Dis presiding over Little Burgelstatham, the land of the dead. In his capacity as a symbol of the present, Alwyn is coupled with a series of mythic figures with whom the present age is seen to have affinities.

The technical functions of fiction making as a craft are more openly acknowledged in this work than has previously been the case in Frame's novels. Ironically scattered throughout the text are examples from, and references to, writing of all kinds, which make the book a kind of stylistic compendium. Myths, fairy tales, poems, rhymes and riddles are included in this collection, as are instructions, directions, gossip, rumours and the commands "Eat me" and "Drink me," significantly from a classic work of the imagination, Alice in Wonderland. Also included in this list is the changed bus timetable, which so upsets one of the minor characters, Bert Whatling. The new

timetable makes the old one inaccurate and therefore a fiction.

Associated here with the secondary definition of the term "artist," the narrator is identified as a practical magician and cunning trickster who calls attention to her technical manipulations in this novel, much more directly than has been evident in Frame's other fiction. While directing attention to her mechanical versatility in one area, however, the narrator in The Adaptable Man is usually engaged in technical sleight of hand in another. Irony is never far from the surface of this work, which deals with the traditional ingredients of fiction writing, some of which Frame's earlier narrators have discarded as inadequate for their purposes.

A very different character from these previous artist figures, the narrator in The Adaptable Man emphasises the constraints imposed by the traditional novel mode, while at the same time demonstrating how skilfully she can use the format. Her conventional physical description of Little Burgelstatham, where the novel is set, conforms strangely with tradition in tone and style, when compared with Frame's previously figurative introductory chapters. But this narrator should not be underestimated, for beneath the blandness of the literal setting lurks a very different metaphoric environment. The narrative persona is emerging as a skilled writer, able, not only to make

use of the conventional forms and techniques of the novel genre, but also to offer contributions of her own to its development.

Addressing the reader directly in the first prologue and alluding to Lear and Macbeth, the narrator outlines her recipe for novel writing, indicating that the technical mixture for writing a novel has not altered much from Shakespeare's day. The novelist is imaged as a witch inhabiting a cauldron world where she mixes ingredients, attempting to "bring forth a prophecy." Murderers, adulterers and "souls and bodies strangled at birth," are still required subject matter. The witch novelist continues her lonely existence on Lear's isolated heath, where she collects the figurative entrails, toads and racial scapegoats, which are still part of the modern fictional process.

Some things have changed however, for the armies and moving trees approaching Dunsinane have given place, for example, to the modern snarl of a Whitsun traffic jam, while present day metaphors, contexts and social issues require a contemporary pilot's thumb to guide them. The life of a modern novelist is hard, demanding and not much fun; but then, she adds, who wants fun? Something more satisfying and challenging is involved, for her writing offers humanity original and imaginative approaches to the future, which will contribute to the improved quality of human life. "Mixing a cauldron of uneatables for others

to observe, admire, and shrink from. . ." is an unattractive prospect, but the writer is gripped by an irrepressible compulsion to communicate her ideas to others. It is this which motivates and relentlessly drives her on to endure the harsh isolation demanded by her self-imposed task. The views here expressed by the narrator of The Adaptable Man are broadened and amplified by Frame's own attitudes to fiction writing, which she disclosed in an N.Z.B.C. radio interview. Writing, for her, is expressing an emerging pattern. "As one writes a pattern grows," she explains. "I perceive it from beginning to end. It's there you live through it. Like speeding up a record player. Something that haunts you."2 Reiterating that her novels are "explorations," she adds that it's a matter of seeing what pattern emerges.

With The Adpatable Man Frame enters a new phase in her development as a writer. Gone, for example, are the psychiatric hospital setting and the apparently deviant characters confined there. The narrative revolves around the Maude family, Russell, his wife Greta and their son Alwyn. Russell's brother, the Reverend Aisley Maude, experiences a crisis of faith while convalescing in Russell's home after an illness. His enforced inactivity enables him on the one hand to re-evaluate his beliefs, while, on the other, it allows him to observe the dynamics of the household he has been thrust into. He notes for example that Alwyn is the unsuspected murderer of Botti

Julio, an immigrant Italian farm worker found dead in a lane. He also notes that Alwyn is the possible father of the child his mother is to bear after an incestuous encounter with him. He is aware and disapproves of Alwyn's relationship with Jenny Sparling, and he also knows of the episode which briefly revives the fossilised marriage of Russell and Greta.

The climax of the work comes when Victor and Muriel Baldry, a neigbouring couple, invite the Maudes to a dinner celebrating the coming of electricity to Little Burgelstatham, and the installation of a Venini chandelier bequeathed to Muriel by her uncle. The chandelier has become the focus of Muriel's wishful dreams, but her moment of triumph, when it is finally illuminated, becomes a moment of tragedy, when the ceiling collapses and the chandelier falls, leaving Vic paralysed and Muriel and her guests dead.

In their fantasies both Russell and Aisley, in limited ways, imagine selves different from those they reveal in their daily lives, spinning dreams which embrace aspects of their externally-projected opposite. Both renounce action and progress yet indulge in dreams associated with physical movement. St Cuthbert, whom Aisley would like to emulate, is, for his time, a man of action, even if he would not be so regarded in twentieth century terms. Russell's secret preoccupation with planes, and

his fantasy of himself as a shaper of history, have in them elements of action quite foreign to his publicly acknowledged self. "Every passionate man," writes Yeats," is as it were linked with another age, historical or imaginary, where he alone finds images that rouse his energy."3 Aisley and Russell both demonstrate this phenomenon, drawing psychic energy from linking themselves with ages other than their own, Aisley with the past, and Russell, strangely, with the future. Yeats's belief is that the man of action is basically a dreamer who embraces his opposite, dramatising his dream in action. Russell and Aisley remain contemplative about the actions which appeal to them, but Alwyn determines to become a physical, as well as psychological, embodiment of contemporary humanity. Whereas Russell and Aisley choose to adapt themselves out of, or away from, the twentieth century, Alwyn just as firmly resolves to shape himself INTO what he conceives space-age mankind to be.

This work, patterned partly around the concept of human adaptability, really refers to the adaptability of all mankind. Human beings adapt OUT OF, as well as into, the present age and their own immediate circumstances. One of the central ideas the novel examines is the proclivity of human beings to inhabit psychological times alternative to those they are physically placed in. The four major characters respond in their individual ways to living in the twentieth century by creating a set of

fictions to maintain the self images they have developed. The Reverend Aisley Maude finds his belief in God and the Christian faith are suddenly threatened. God has moved and this steadfast landmark, feature of all his maps, routes, views and references, has become, significantly, an unidentifiable shadow.4 As his carefully constructed fictions crumble, his destination alters and time itself appears wayward and uncontrolled.

Time is also a problem for Aisley's brother Russell, whose life is doubly fixed in the past through his profession of dentistry and his hobby of stamp collecting. He envisages himself in his fictions, preserving twentieth century teeth as human fossils for posterity, while static images of past and present events are captured by his collection of postage stamps. The objects represented by these images are thus immobilised in just the way that Keats highlights in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn."

Russell's son Alwyn, reacting against the family preoccupation with the past, emerges as truly adaptable, firmly rooted in the present and consciously determined to mould himself into the typical twentieth century man. Greta, his mother, compensates for her fossilised marriage by creating a fictional life around her garden. Under the direction of Maplestone's gardening chart, she attacks weeds and undesirable pests with lethal pesticides. In similar fashion, the stray thoughts of modern human beings are controlled and eradicated by applications of a more

figurative pesticide in Alwyn's personal image building.

Alwyn is cumulatively represented as present-day versions of Icarus, Oedipus and Phaethon. All three of these fabulous heroes incorporate elements of wilfulness and youthful arrogance. In his emphatic espousal of the twentieth century, Alwyn displays attributes of all three. His interpretation of the present age is accepted as accurate by the narrator who equates it with the perverse and wayward legendary figures she uses to symbolise and personify it. Alwyn becomes the current century's representative in this mythological grouping. He is a descendant of Icarus, with all the skill and cunning of this fabled ancestor. He can programme his flight through life to a lofty orbit, but his flight is headed towards disaster, for twentieth century adaptable mankind, is no more likely to heed warnings than did his high flying original.

Across the centuries human beings orchestrate another recurring fiction, envisaging themselves as supreme commanders of the universe, in control finally not only of the physical world which contains them, but also of worlds beyond which embrace the stars. Alwyn's dreams of himself as a Phaethon revamped run true to type, for he believes he has learned "the furious adaptation of his age." Picturing himself as a space-age Phaethon controlling his earthly chariot "riding the globe. . . standing astride

it," exulting, he links the loss of his "third eye" to his "emergence from the mud. . . into the white darkness" of the twentieth century. He is exhilarated by feeling "as if he were responsible for building a new world. . . His adaptability positively rippled with power. . . "5

However, the essential twentieth century adaptable man is not, as he imagines, an up-to-the-minute creation but, in what for Alwyn is the ultimate cruelty, only the latest version cast from the mould of the past. Modern humanity cannot escape its fictional heritage. Not only poets, painters, and musician, as Yeats points out 6, but all people, individually and collectively, make and remake themselves continually, but only in terms of what has gone before. Mankind has little vision to see beyond the past, and Frame's didactic intention is aimed at pointing this out.

Alwyn's casual murder of a stranger he meets on the road, and his later incestuous relationship with his mother, identify him also as a latter-day Oedipus. Oedipus, like Alwyn, was similarly known for being "too complacent in prosperity (and) too confident in sufficiency."7 Oedipus, however, was capable of experiencing human passion at its widest range and highest intensity, while Alwyn, epitomising the new cosmic citizen, scorns such emotions as extravagance. He sets out to exert the strongest possible control over his emotions, believing that by doing this, both the pangs of guilt and the

torments of conscience will be avoided. He is proud of what he regards as the twentieth century's psychological superiority to the nineteenth. Two pages rather than a whole novel, for example, would, in Alwyn's view, be enough to describe a contemporary Raskolnikov's emotions after killing.8 Genocide, Alwyn believes, is the basis of survival in the twentieth century, and he exults in having killed successfully.

After outlining the external aspects of global adaptable man, characterising him as confident and energetic, but also as amoral, emotionless and concerned only with the present, the narrator also reveals him as a very different kind of character. Alwyn points out that his own perspectives on the eternal happiness with which everyone credits him, only partly match the perceptions of others. Modern adaptable mankind wears a mask of happiness and behind the mask lurks a creature "exposed and alone against the buffetings of time."9 Faust-like, he feels threatened, "almost as if he has sold his soul to time instead of to the devil so that he could act the Complete Contemporary The Adaptable Man."10 Russell notes Alwyn looks unhappy and Aisley observes his "curious unspoken passion."

At one time, positively described controlling the globe as if it were the chariot of Phoebus himself;11 Alwyn's dreams on another occasion are less than assured.

In this instance he sees himself piloting a space craft, burdened with a monstrous, aching, encephalitic head, "his dream rose, drifting from his grasp, weightless." The circularity of the mythic process is here confirmed, for this over-confident, cosmic Phaethon, is little different from his mythical ancestor. Both suffer from swollen-headedness, lose control of their chariots and pivot helplessly among the stars, threatening the whole cosmos with destruction.

Although Alwyn imagines he is cultivating God-like qualities he also fears that he is going mad, "he was enclosed; sewn up in the present time, as a body is sewn at sea in a canvas shroud before burial."12 The immortalising self image which Alwyn, the modern cosmic citizen, fabricates is clearly only another disguise. Mankind yearns for its opposite, Yeats contends in his doctrine of the mask,13 and this desire is patently evident in Alwyn's behaviour. His persistent attempts to learn "the furious adaptation of his age," conclude with his concealing his true nature not only from others, but also from himself. Behind the fiction of the confident man of action, which is the mask Alwyn desires, there exists a less adventurous creature, anxious and uncertain; who shuns experience for fear of being overwhelmed by it. "If you lived experience," Alwyn declares, "you were too easily drowned in it. Writing about it you could flail and splash your way to the shore."14

But even this form of action is out of Alwyn's reach, for his decision to write a novel is just another way of deceiving himself. The novel does not materialise, instead, Alwyn uses his fiction building facility to become a hack journalist like the hypocritical and dishonest Unity Foreman. The narrator discredits Unity for debasing her writing skills only for money. Her superficial humour and her willingness to edit the "truth" for effect or convenience, identify her as the very antithesis of the artist. The "genuine" artist may do those things too, but her motivation is different; or so, in our fictionalising about art, we injudiciously imagine. Unity's shallowness and insincerity mark her as without either ethical or aesthetic principles. By analogy, the Proteus-like adaptable man is further censured, for the novel ends with his manufacturing the same type of contrived, pseudo-letters for the press as Unity.

Frame's use of myth in this novel has so far pointed up that in spite of their absence of myth-making tools, twentieth century human beings are still a fictionalising species who unconsciously search for their opposite in dreams. Unaware of the fictions they construct, they are often deceived by their own imaginings. Russell, then, symbolises the past, but is psychically lured towards the future. Alwyn, an equally committed representative of the present, is in fact only mirroring the past: the truly adaptable man, symbol of the future, is Vic Baldry

> not only time-minded like Aisley, Alwyn Russell (and) Greta, who believe they have chosen their ideal climate of time; he is also place-minded and may range the world - earth and space - to find the environment he needs to grow and blossom in.15

Vic, as befits a symbol of the future, is brash, confident and larger than life too. Obsessed with his fiction of emigrating to Australia, he behaves as if he is already attempting to fill the vast Australian landscape with his presence. In his role of protagonist in the novel, Vic becomes an overtly theatrical version of Alwyn as he postures and over-dramatises his pseudo-Australian dream. His resemblance to Alwyn is also evident in his figurative role as symbol of the future, where he effects a similar absence of emotion and, singularly pragmatic approach to life. In his energetic denial of the inner dimensions of being, and his firm pursuit of the practical, he determinedly attempts to reduce all thought to action in the manner of the Australians who people his fictive impressions of their land.

Incorporating ancient mythic material into this novel as she does in her other works, Frame uses it to draw parallels between the peoples of earliest times and our world today. With the development of a structured rationality, modern human beings can no longer be myth-makers in the true sense of the term. We no longer possess the "abstracting, god-making, fluid, kaleidoscopic world view

. . . "16 of the ancients. For this reason writers must revisit

> . . . the fabulous to probe beyond the phenomenological, beyond appearances, beyond randomly perceived events, beyond mere history. But these probes are above all . . . sallies - challenges to the assumptions of a dying age, exemplary adventures of the Poetic Imagination, high minded journeys towards the New World. . .17

It is this process of probing, and this function of challenging, that Frame engages in through the use of myth in her fiction.

People today have retreated so far from their mythic beginnings, according to Borges, that in place of the myth-making tools which allowed for the apprehension of a multi-faceted world view, combined in endless variety, only one tune, endlessly repeated, remains. Having lost "the mentality that doubts the validity of its own constructs,"18 which enables myth-making to occur in its fluid form, modern mankind has reduced its scope to one choric chant, which it plays and replays without variation.

> "Myth," Susan Langer writes
> . . . is a figure of THOUGHT, not merely
> of speech and to destroy it is to destroy an idea
> in its pristine phase, just when it dawns on people.
> That is why mythic beliefs really are sacred.
> They are pregnant and carry an unfomulated idea.19

Thus myth-making in its original macrocosmic sense is intellectually liberating in function and kaleidoscopic in process. It encapsulates the very act of concept formation at its inception. But personal, microcosmic aspects of myth-making can be reductive and imaginatively deadening.

This result is exemplified by the personal fiction building of most of the characters. Russell and Muriel, for example, seriously limit their lives as a result of the private myths they construct. It is only by becoming newly aware of the unacknowledged and unquestioned limitations which constrict it that the human race can learn how to destroy its self-inflicted, confining mould. Twentieth century mankind, with its fixed hierarchy of knowledge, is, according to Jorge Luis Borges, like a single "choral group that sings only one dogmatised song."20

Obsessed by truth, humanity may juxtapose thoughts and words how it will, and achieve no more than the enticing fantasy of an immanent revelation. People may possibly have truth. . . they can believe they have it, but they cannot know they have it.21 Although, as Schiller maintains, life itself lies in illusion, and revelation must needs be attended by death, the senseless human questioning about the meaning of the universe continues. Neither reason nor art, in Borges's view, can provide answers to these mysteries, for the mythic, or circular world view is epitomised by stasis and the esthetic experience is incommunicable. Language can reflect no more than an approximation of memory which itself is an imperfect record, at best only a fictional recreation of the original event. Human beings are in thrall to language for it is only through language that they can know their world. As Frame puts it in Living in

the Maniototo, "Language is all we have." But "language cannot bespeak the objective order,"22 when the "pregnant moments" have vanished mere words remain standing where apparent reality used to be.

In her reworking of mythic material, Frame illustrates anew the circularity of all human endeavour, but also projects beyond to a time when the periodic release from this self-inflicted, psychic strait-jacket will occur. During these recurrent cycles of intellectual evolution, the human mind breaks free from its restrictive social and cultural patterning and, surging beyond, it may enter new realms of thought. When this happens it releases the latent potential for initiating new physical and mental constructs about the universe, of which it is capable.

Scented Gardens concludes by implying that the human race is weighted by the past, limited by the present and shaped towards a disastrous future. The Adaptable Man gives dramatic intensity to this position, for, significantly, neither Russell (the past) nor Alwyn (the present) appear at Muriel's dinner party to witness "the brightest of all realities,"23 when the chandelier is illuminated. Only Vic, representing the future, attends, for only the future holds promise of substantiating the dazzling dreams of human beings. Vic however is struck down and paralysed by the weighty chandelier which cannot sustain the accumulated dreams of humanity which it symbolises. Even the

future is finally overwhelmed and immobilised by the mass of human fictions.

Only their dream-weaving faculties "impel human beings from century to century, "keeping them striving with the recurrent hope "that man could at last, feeding upon his burden of dreams, BECOME his dreams. . . "24 But Little Burgelstatham is the land of the dead, presided over by Russell, its shadowy Dis, with "time and place hardening above" Greta, his reluctant Persephone. In such an environment the substanceless fictions of hopeful humans are unlikely to amount to much.

It is Muriel's apparently inoffensive fictions however, which produce the climax of the work, and become the most damaging. Muriel is no trustworthy guide to art or beauty, for she is a purveyor of false or partial knowledge. Embracing the chandelier like a talisman, she demonstrates the illogicality of personal myth-making in process by immediately spinning a fiction around it. "Everything will change, things will be different, happier," she naively tells herself.

Her insensitive attitude to art is confirmed by the narrator's disclosure that she invests with equal honour her memories of a poet with whom she once drank Keats's favourite wine, and a stuffed toy dog which she received for winning a quiz at the W.I. This indicates that she has no real powers of discrimination. Modern painting,

moreover, she regards as "belches of shapes and colour put forward by. . . painters with contemporary indigestion and technical constipation," and her reaction to them is puzzled anger.

Muriel cares for beautiful things only if they can be used and enjoyed in other ways. She echoes Dickens' comment that "use is everthing." Art in itself has never appealed to her, but what finally condemns her is that she cares only for things of beauty if they can affect people,

> . . . not by rousing obscure emotions of pleasure and wonder but by directly and visibly changing the shape of the environment and a person's attitude to it.25

With the exception of Aisley, the four who gather at the Baldry residence to view the unveiling of the chandelier are quite unaware of their unreadiness and unworthiness to witness a revelation. Three of them, representing Art, Philosophy and Nature, suggest that these disciplines are beset with false fictions in the modern world. With her focus on the mediocre and peripheral, unable to detect and appreciate what is truly valuable, Muriel represents a modern philistinism towards art in all its forms. This view may be validated by Alwyn's murder of Art, if in terms of name and origins, Botti Julio, alias Botticelli, may be said to represent that concept. Aisley stands for the doubt-ridden philosophical and religious fictions constructed by modern humanity, which the rat-infested chandelier also symbolises. While Greta, the contemporary Persephone, reflects the modern urge to control Nature by

waging chemical warfare on every stray weed and insect, regardless of the damage that may be caused.

The initial disappointment Muriel feels when unpacking the chandelier and finding the bulbs grey and dusty instead of gold or silver as she had expected, along with the rats she finds concealed in the wrappings, underlines the equivocal function of the chandelier metaphor. Muriel's reaction here reflects Aisley's response to the object at its moment of illumination. For both of them the reality of their dreams, for which the symbol of light stands, is less positive than they are prepared for. Aisley also describes the glass as being "ground from dust and mud the grey of winter and its clouds,"26 likening it to the greyness that descends on human lives and their beliefs. Just as he contemplates these ideas the weighty globe itself, with rather cruel irony, phsically descends to crush his life and beliefs for ever.

In this work the chandelier is used symbolically to rework Plato's metaphor of the cave.27 Those imprisoned in Plato's cave assume that the shadows they see are in all respects real things. The inhabitants of Little Burgelstatham are also imprisoned in a cave, cavern or cavity, for the village is literally known as the burial place of the heathen, a title suggesting a subterranean resting place; and it is metaphorically associated with

the underworld of the dead, through Russell's allusive position as an imitation Dis.

Those who live in Little Burgelstatham are analogous to the prisoners in the cave referred to by Plato: the latter mistake the shadows of reality for their living forms, whereas the former are unaware that the realities they live by are only self-created fictions.

The fact that the future is essentially tied to the past is dramatically acknowledged as a consequence of the chandelier accident, for past and future become symbolically united through the relationship which develops between Russell and Vic. The "Cornstalk" journalist, Unity Foreman, comments on the friendship of the two men with mirrors, "one with a tiny mirror to explore the hidden caves of the human mouth, the other with a huge mirror. . ." through which his entire world is now reflected.

On the literal level, Russell's psychological paralysis makes him a fit companion for the physically paralysed Vic. Metaphorically, however, it is the past which is physically paralysed, as it cannot be reactivated; and it is the future which is paralysed psychologically, burdened as it is with the weight of human dreams. The limitations of human dreams are demonstrated by all the characters in The Adaptable Man who emphasise that human fictions are constantly being

exposed as inadequate and inaccurate. Human beings "journey alone or in twos and threes or in millions. . . physically pursuing, or fleeing from an idea".28 The novel shows that each of the protagonists is attempting to do just that; each is engaged in embracing one set of ideas, while strenuously repelling another. But the problems of finding acceptable fictions, dreams and ideologies are currently compounded by the complexities of the modern world, the fragmentation of once irrefutable philosophies, and the rapidity of technological change. All of these make confused people loth to confront the fearful abyss created in their lives by the collapse of comforting beliefs from the past. Any stray cults of intensity or fanaticism which may appear to offer respite have them rushing for succour.

It will be observed that the characters all live their own fictions independently, yet alongside each other. As Milly points out in Intensive Care two (or many) times can be living together, but because they are absorbed by their own fictions, people are not aware of the very different ways in which life is interpreted by those around them. Human fictions, in the novel as in the world, are associated with human dreams, and ". . . the nature of our wishful thoughts depends on the nature of our oppressive circumstances."29 Living life in mirrors, the narrator reminds us, is an inescapable factor of human existence. For by the fictions we create as we impose

"our own weather, our own limits of reach and touch, our own star-shaped irreparable flaw, don't we all live in mirrors for ever?"30

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## STATE OF SIEGE

"The discovery of the unconscious is one of the most far reaching discoveries of recent times," writes M.L. von Franz, "but the fact that recognition of its unconscious reality involves honest self-examination and re-organisation of one's life. . . causes many people to continue to behave as if nothing had happened."1 Malfred Signal, the only main character in State of Siege, is not one of these people, for having spent forty years of her life conforming to other people's expectations of her, at the age of fifty-three she makes the decision to discover "the treasure or no treasure" which lies concealed in the room "two inches behind the eyes."

The novel dramatises the process of attempting to enter the psyche and confront the shadow self. The siege of the title is the metaphoric siege Malred experiences when she begins to open up to her inner world. Until this time her whole life has been lived according to the social fictions pressed upon her by others. As an art teacher, it was her duty, for example, to teach art according to the syllabus. This required her to instil in pupils, lifeless technical skill measured only with the eye. The consequences of attending to this imposed fiction is that her own perceptions have become distorted. "She had missed seeing, by her dutiful habit of looking."2 Even her own paintings, which had previously satisfied her, now seem

"sentimental and colourless."

Through Malfred Signal, this novel explores the social fictions human beings construct to control and limit themselves and each other. Her professional conduct is enforced by duties, rules and the "syllabus"; while personal and family responsibilities include caring for her ailing mother, which, as the only unmarried female in the family, falls on her. At one point it was her duty to support herself by working, at another she was required to give up work and look after her mother. In each instance she has been living only in the external world, and according only to the demands of others. R.D. Laing calls attention to the prevalance of demands like this, commenting that "we are expected to comply by inner consent with external constraints, to an almost unbelievable extent."3

Malfred is the only member of her family with the seeds of artistic promise in her. Neither Graham nor Lucy, her brother and sister, "had made mountains or trees or separate dreams inside the mind, as Malfred had done." For this reason, the situation of her wasted life is doubly tragic. In several of her novels Frame examines the position of characters whose whole lives are wasted as a consequence of their voluntary or involuntary belief in an absorbing fiction. Malfred's case is particularly poignant, because her undeveloped artistic gifts have been

dutifully suppressed to conform with the controlling fictions of others.

Frame's point is that human beings construct fictions for themselves to live by collectively, as well as personally. Malfred's identity has almost disappeared, because for forty years she has allowed it to be negated. During that time, it has been constantly undermined by the social role her family create for and around her. Heidegger's concept of forfeiture is a relevant one here, for it refers to the way in which human beings are condemned to dissipate their energies in attending to the essential, but trivial, physical necessities of life, and the often unnecessary but socially insisted-upon demands made upon them by others. These last are enforced through collectively-designed group fictions, such as rules, regulations and tacitly-sanctioned habits, customs and expectations. Thus in Heideggerean terms, "inevitably and continuously, the forward driving I is sacrificed to the persistent and pressing they."4

Writing in the same vein as Heidegger, Virginia Woolf comments that to produce a work of genius is almost always a "feat of prodigious difficulty. Everything is against the likelihood that it will come to the (artist's) mind whole and entire. Generally material circumstances are against it. Dogs will bark; people will interrupt; money must be made, health will break down."5

The catalyst which frees Malfred from her metaphoric paralysis is the death of her mother. In a situation reminiscent of the Katherine Mansfield story "Daughters of the late Colonel,"6 Malfred at first finds the freedom she gains by her mother's death is sudden and shaking, and like Jug and Con, in Mansfield's work, she is unable to cut free immediately from her psychological paralysis, even though the forces which caused it no longer apply.

R.D. Laing, explains the phenomenon by which some people, like many of Frame's characters, almost accidently "enter or are thrown into more or less total inner space and time."7 He points out that human beings are socially programmed to regard this state as deviant, pathological, or in some sense anti-social. He believes instead of being subjected to ceremonial degradation, (as Istina in Faces, and Daphne in Owls) under the guise of examination, diagnosis and treatment. Those ready to make the journey into inner space should be provided with a supportive environment, and guidance, preferably from those who have been there and back again.8 It is clear that several of Frame's works touch upon Laing's concerns at many points. In State of Siege Malfred is described setting herself up and embarking upon the journey into her mind, alone and without support. Total immersion in outer space and time is, moreover, accepted as normal, healthy and ideal, writes Laing who makes a strong case for understanding and acceptance of the exploration of inner space, as being as

valid as any other voyages of exploration undertaken in our society.9

The need for separateness, the urge to break away from all personal connections when compelled "to travel the path of psychological wholeness,"10 is noted by von Franz. Malfred reflects this feeling by removing herself from her familiar environment and settling in Karemoana, an island in the north of New Zealand where she is completely isolated. The urge to detach herself from the rest of society and stoically set herself up in isolation, also identifies Malfred with the post-Romantic concept of the artist. She is driven to become an outsider by seeking this solitude. Such separation is essential for the artist to escape from the Heideggerean principle of forfeiture. Not without fears about the experience before her, she remembers once having kept a fierce-looking beetle in a matchbox for a long time. When she eventually opened the box only a shrivelled shell remained.11 She fears that her mind when she finally confronts it, will appear as dry and shrivelled as the beetle.

During the physical journey to her island retreat, Malfred becomes aware that physical freedom has brought an accompanying liberation of perceptions. The novel here is exploring the relationship between the physical and psychological constraints of the environment, and the free functioning of the intellect and imagination. For forty years Malfred has attended to the regulatory fictions of

others, and now discovers that her obedience has forced her to become figuratively blind. Suddenly she sees her surroundings in a new way and is aware of the close association between perceptions and identity. "It seems extraordinary," writes Laing,

> that whereas the physical and biological sciences of it-processes have generally won the day against tendencies to personalize the world of things or to read human intentions into the animal world, an authentic science of persons has hardly got started by reason of the inveterate tendency to depersonalize or reify persons.12

Malfred is becoming aware of this fact, and notes that her New View painting will not be comfortable or flattering to look at. Those who praised her earlier colourless and sentimental efforts will not enjoy the hooked hands, gashed faces and geometrical background figures of her New View works. Both her own identity and that of other people are tied up with the perceptions of things, and she sees that it is almost a condition of society to negate the identity of people. Human beings function out of socially-defined roles and are reacted to, not as themselves, but only in terms of the roles they fulfil. Malfred is conscious of the reification of people commented upon by Laing. A steward on the ferry, for example, is not a fellow human being, only a white rectangle, and absence of identity is the most noteworthy characteristic of her fellow passengers, for social roles tend to dismantle people. Reacting to the personal anomie or hollowness in others, she understands how her own individuality has been

undermined.

Pater writes of the "thick wall of personality," which rings round the evanescent and continually-fading "group of impressions" that alone record what we regard as experience. Frame is emphasising that confining social fictions which ring round the roles people act out in society isolate human beings from contact with experience, with each other and even with themselves.

> Every one of these impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of the world. Analysis goes a step further still and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which. . . experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight.13

This series of fleeting impressions of each other and of the environment, is all the information we have available on which to base our readings of ourselves and the world.

Malfred's State of Siege, around which the book is structured, loosely resembles the mythic format of the death and resurrection cycle. Part one, "The Knocking," is similar to the Agon, or ancient contest with the enemy. The second part, "Darkness," resembles the Pathos, which metaphorically describes the suffering, defeat, death and burial of the protagonist. The novel's final section, "the Stone," is like the Anagnorisis, in which the resurrection, or rebirth of the protagonist takes place. However, Frame is careful throughout the novel to parallel the figurative descriptions of Malfred's experiences with explanations which are literally acceptable. For example,

an unidentified "element" abroad in the village, responsible for "windows broken, baches burned down, gardens trampled, plants uprooted,"14 and possibly the death of the previous occupant of Malfred's cottage, it is implied, may simply be loutish youths making mayhem on the island. Moreover, the erratic lighting which troubles Malfred is explained when a power board employee checks the voltage at the restaurant where she eats, disclosing that the department is frequently adjusting it. Finally Malfred herself is described, from time to time, as suffering from physical symptoms indicative of coronary problems.15

As Malfred begins her confrontation with the forces locked up in her subconscious mind, she is aware of her strong dependence upon sight, and also of its illusory quality.16 The thoughts that accompany her in the waking physical world abound with fathomable sight images, but the landscape of the mind is dark and shadowy,17 and the powers unleashed by the subconscious have no visual dimensions. The enormity of what lay outside her familiar psychic path touches Malfred like a cold brand for she knows she must make "something rational, eternal, from this animal screaming."

At this point Malfred is engaged in a psychic struggle similar to that of the ancient Agon, in which her opponent is the long-neglected shadow, or subconscious self. "The shadow becomes hostile only when he is ignored

or misunderstood,"18 and Malfred has spent forty years of her life firmly suppressing all knowledge of hers. The forces of nature appear to be marshalled against her like a savage animal lurking outside the cottage, and it is not clear to her if the violent knocking she hears at the back door, is real, or within her mind. The novel dramatically traces the course of the psychic struggle which Malfred must experience before she can achieve unity of being. The long repressed psychic energy stored in the shadow self must be confronted, and the conflicting elements in her nature reconciled, before her energy can be directed towards creative ends.

Jung himself believed that the quest of exploration into the subconscious was essential for the formation of an "harmonious and balanced relationship with the self."19 Because the self is the greatest power in the psyche its darker side or shadow self "is the most dangerous of all." It is only by becoming aware of one's incompleteness that one becomes "receptive to the significant contents and processes of the unconscious."20 This is apparently Malfred's position at the beginning of the novel, for her intellectual awakening from the repressive socially-imposed fictions which she had obediently conformed to indicates that she has become aware of her incompleteness and will now be receptive to what is stored in her subconscious. "The knocking", or Agon, follows the movements of her shadow self attempting to break free.

Her journey leads her on to confront the personified unknown creations of her psyche, not as allegorical representations or symbols, as in mediaeval, or even in modern Jungian terms, but as clearly identified images of those closest to her, whom she believes have been responsible for her repression. Each member of her family appears before her and feelings of resentment surface as she considers how her identity has been absorbed by them. Her mother's managing qualities, she believes, invaded her life. "I'll not let her in," she rages "because her life and death have helped to make me a walking cliche'."21 Guilt is also part of the emotion now emerging in response to her mother's image, and more negative feelings surface as the other members of her family pass through her mind.

Malfred discovers that her feelings about her family are self-created fictions which only have validity, and thus power over her life, as long as she subscribes to them. Her negative feelings are dispelled as soon as she interprets her mother from another perspective. Lamenting now the ordinariness of people, she notes that her mother is only a woman of shadows. Human interpretations of each other are fictional and variable, and her psyche is only a shadowless room filled with past dreams labelled for the significant people in her life.

Reaching a calm in the centre of her struggle, Malfred hopes that her projected creativity will produce a

cathartic effect, "bearing away like the dreamed-of but unreliable tides the irrelevancies, the personal flotsam of fifty-three years."22 Conscious that she has survived this much of her conflict, she sleeps peacefully, and the narrator calls attention to her own presence by taking control of the narrative in an open and obvious way and writing now in the present tense. Malfred is described as accepting and acknowledging the fears, thoughts and needs buried in her subconscious. Her new view has made her aware of the "essences" of things and objects, and now her subconscious is showing her the essences, and inner depths of people, for her "rhythm of people is monotonous and meaningless." The identities she has given her family are as insubstantial as her own, as if people themselves have been "banished, leaving only a hint of their flavour."23 We create others, she now understands, just as we create ourselves and the process of self-creation with which she is engaged is dependent upon her making accommodation with others.

In becoming reconciled with her shadow self, she notes that it is her own essence for which she is searching. "I claim it aloud it is my essence, it is more important than shadow or odor or color of Mother, Father, Wilfred, Lucy, Graham. . . My New View must include my own essence."24

In this novel Frame is careful to prevent Malfred's situation and experiences from being in any way associated

with deviance or madness. In this work she is illustrating the point made earlier by Laing, P. 123 (above) by describing Malfred's psychic journey as behaviour accepted as normal in the external world.

Elizabeth Janeway's comments are also relevant to Frame's intentions in this work. It is her powerlessness that a woman must consider if she is to examine her life, states Janeway, "she must choose decisively to confront what has been happening to her as a passive creature and try actively to understand what it means and has meant."25 This plainly describes what Frame is doing when she has Malfred examine, first her position in the outer world, and subsequently her long evaded inner space. Significantly, the experience continues to avoid all suggestion of abnormality and is offered in Laingian terms simply as a valid and pressing journey which Malfred must undertake.

If a woman chooses "to give up known means of control and accepted logic of causality in search of the inner reality of her experience," as Malfred does, and "if this is a choice of madness, it is a special kind of choice."26 Janeway associates the process with the epic travels of male heroes in fictions of the past.

> The closest analogy to such a quest is the mythic or legendary journey to Hell of the hero of the epics, taken from the role of the shaman of primitive religion, who puts himself and everyday sanity at risk in search of healing truth that lies behind accepted structures of belief.27

As Malfred's ordeal reaches its final stage, she begins to interpret herself and her family from new perspectives. Being reborn into a new way of seeing, she regrets her obtuseness and lack of sensitivity to her mother and understands that it is only her own mistaken fiction which imagined her mother as her besieger. This process of anagnorisis describes the dispelling of Malfred's fears and her acceptance of others as she progresses towards independence of being and inner harmony. For this to occur each agent in her trauma must be faced again and the discord between them resolved.

Acknowledging the validity of her relationship with Wilfred her lover, for example, she is able to accept that her love for him was entirely physical. She can concede that although his theories were unimpressive and his treasures of mind just so many worthless "barnacles" yet she loved him with her body. As the process of inner confrontation nears its conclusion, Malfred mentally travels to Auckland by ferry, where she notices a middle-aged woman from Matuatangi "imprisoned in her clothes." Discovering that the woman has no shadow, Malfred is uncertain if she is facing herself or her own lost shadow.

Reviewing the literal and domestic parallels to Malfred's psychological journey, the narrator reduces them all to their apparent physical explanation. She describes her as a tired woman who gets up to make a cup of tea in the night because she cannot sleep, and who casually

notes, while passing the window, that the night has been stormy. This function reiterates the point which was focal in Scented Gardens, that physical behaviour cannot be used to explain or interpret inner motivation.

Mediaeval alchemists who hoped to find God, or evidence at least of the divine presence, believed that the long sought "philosopher's stone" was the embodiment of this secret. However, it was finally perceived that the lapis, or lode stone, could no more than symbolise "something that can be found only in the psyche" of human beings.28 This clearly applies to Malfred, who finds within her own psyche the meaning she sought in life, and dies holding the stone that symbolises her insight.

As she clutches the stone in her hand, it seems to her, "that it lost its chill and grew warm with the promise of the sun."29

Three days pass before Malfred's body is found with the philosopher's stone still clasped firmly in her hand. "All attain the goal," comments the narrator, "though their victory and reward may stay always in the room behind the eyes, unknown to all but themselves."30 Revelation cannot be communicated and must be attended by death, but Malfred's now tranquil spirit spreads its warmth and peace over the universe communicating her signal to others. In the final lines of the novel are synthesised all the elements sun, sea and light, which

have symbolised Malfred's heroic journey to unity of being.

> Outside, the sun, enriching the day, spilled its clear grains of light, and the sea lay calm at last.31

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## YELLOW FLOWERS IN THE ANTIPODEAN ROOM

In this novel, Frame continues to emphasise the far from simple truth that life is made up of a series of fictions. Human beings invent not only themselves but other people as well. The gods and demons we invent are types of fictions. Our ideologies are fictions, for we create them. Our philosophies and the beliefs and values that emerge from them are fictitious, for we alter them as we see fit. The wars we engage in are waged to promote and defend the current fictions we have invented to justify them. Finally, language, which is the medium through which fictions, both this and that side of the alphabet, are communicated, is itself a fiction. Language of all varieties, modes and arts is built up of fictions; oral symbols are represented by visual symbols, which refer to the people, places, objects and abstract ideas with which our lives are engaged.

In this process the artist's role is a crucial one, for she not only translates from one medium to another, she also acts as interpreter between artistic modes, offering her perspectives on ideas drawn from the languages of all other arts. She is a catalyst, a synthesiser and finally a creator, investing past values and beliefs with meanings newly related to the present and future and then going beyond, to offer further unique ways of looking, seeing, acting and being.

The national and cultural aspects of the artist's task are emphasised by the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood. One's country is a state of mind, she points out, composed of "the space you inhabit with your head." In her book Survival, Atwood writes

> Literature is not only a mirror it is also a map. A geography of the mind. . . . We need such a map desperately, we need to know here, because here is where we live. For the members of a country or a culture shared knowledge of their place, their here is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive. 1

What the artist is doing, according to Atwood, is coming to terms with our roots by becoming a creator. Understanding of oneself is only discernable through the literature of one's country. Atwood refers principally to the creation of modern fictional material, but Frame, in Yellow Flowers, re-examines the fictions of the past to cast light on the concerns of the present and future.

In this novel she further develops her analysis of the artist's role by examining two relatively unknown aspects of existence. These are the subconscious mind and the concept of death. Her focus in Yellow Flowers is to continue the explorative reaching of the artist by looking at current ways of accommodating to death alongside examples of the Western literary heritage of death and resurrection mythology.

Death is clearly one of the boundaries which limits conscious existence, while the hidden subconscious is an-

other involuntarily imposed barrier to human awareness which is explored in this novel. The legacy of literary figures relating to the subconscious mind that shadows awareness as death shadows life is examined in this contemporary drama into which a pattern of allusions based on the Graeco-Christian tradition is woven. These concerns lead naturally to a discussion of rituals, both modern and ancient, which human beings have created to explain, temper or deny the fact of their mortality.

Yellow Flowers points out that knowledge of death gleaned from the past comes from our biblical and classical literary heritage. The myths and pseudo-histories on which this information is based are "fictions"; stories, narratives, parables or figurative interpretations of these, put together by artists, seers or believers of former ages. The plot of the novel centres on Godfrey Rainbird whose apparent death and strange resurrection form the basis of the narrative. This continues by describing the negative responses aroused in his family, friends and colleagues by his unnatural association with death. Their rejection leads him to become passive and introspective while his wife, Beatrice, unable to cope with either her own feelings of distaste or Godfrey's passivity, turns to alcohol and finally suicide.

Godfrey is killed in a car accident, and his family

and colleagues react in ways expected of the bereaved. When Godfrey is found to be alive again, after thirty-six hours of having been believed dead, the responses not only of relatives and friends, but also of the wider Dunedin community, are far from accepting. With this narrative as a basis, the novel examines the consequences for the living of death itself and of the fictions with which it is invested.

As this brief synopsis of the novel indicates, Christian metaphor and Greek myth are united in the novel's central character, Godfrey Rainbird. His identity as a contemporary Christ figure is signified by a whole series of allusive material. His name Godfrey, for example, indicates his apparently divine associations, while the fact of his death and resurrection is underlined by the detailed account of his return to consciousness. At that time he feels as if, "with great effort. . . he hauled two stones from the mouth of an unfathomable cave;"2 a description which links him to New Testament accounts of events subsequent to Christ's death and return to life. Godfrey's recollections of the story from his childhood bible class connect him physically with Lazarus, the man whom Christ chose to raise from the dead. His roles as a questing Orpheus, and a modern Dante, involuntarily adrift in the country of the dead, are clearly signified at various points in the text. Near the end of the novel, his Orpheus-like position is indicated when he

takes Beatrice's hand, commenting that "it is a wife's hand. I have shown it the way in the dark. I have picked it up and set it down, there and there and there."3 The mythical Orpheus finally fails to lead Eurydice out of the underworld back to the world of light, while this twentieth century Orpheus, because of his brief and inadvertent entrance into the land of the dead, himself becomes trapped in a Lethe-like state suspended between life and death.

Godfrey's Dante persona emerges most strongly as he is involuntarily pulled back to that concealed territory from which he has so recently escaped. His love for Beatrice, to whom he is married, is frankly acknowledged, and his regard for her is tinged with a belief in her perfection, reflecting the regard of Dante Alleghieri for his earlier Beatrice.4 In this modern fiction where he is depicted as a Lazarus revenant, Godfrey's return is less enthusiastically greeted than in the biblical version of the tale. Considering the pragmatic consequences of his predecessor's situation, he notes that Lazarus would have had to pay for his shroud and his funeral, items with which Godfrey himself will also have to contend. This modern setting adds to his confusion, for death and resurrection, he believes, are easier to accept in their familiar biblical environment, "a remote time in deserts and streets of dust," than in twentieth century Dunedin with "shop windows full of electric frypans, electric

heaters (and) televisions." The mind enjoys the predictability of known and well tried-fictions and resists attempts to transpose the setting or outcome to a modern environment. The simpler life-style of biblical times may be part of the attraction these fictions hold for modern people, for Godfrey points out that even plague could seem paradisal when viewed from the entanglements of the twentieth century."5

In the careful depiction of Godfrey's traumatic state, where information from historical, biblical and mythical sources is collated and synthesised as he returns to life, a close affiliation between the involuntary workings of the body and the concealed activities of the psyche is assumed. Just as the present physical form of the human body has evolved through long historical processes, so, Jung affirms, can one also expect to find an analogous evolutionary procedure in the development of the mind. The "immensely old psyche" which was present in archaic man was close to the mind of the animal and still forms the basis of our mind.6 The original physical pattern of the body can be clearly detected in its currect structure by the biologist or anatomist. Similar patterns can be discerned by the skilled psychologist between "the dream pictures of modern man" and the "collective images" and mythical motifs which are inherited from the primitive mind.

Our foreparents hypnotised themselves into action by

chanting and drumming. Human beings no longer have recourse to such physical manifestations of their fictions. It is even possible, writes Jung, for man to "dispense with a daily prayer for divine aid."7 What Jung also points out, and what Frame emphasises in this novel, is that the motivations which prompted our primitive ancestors to chant and drum in preparation for action have not been eliminated: they have simply been translated into new fictionalising forms or formulae.

In addition to his attributes as a modern Lazarus, Godfrey's status as a neo-Christ is extended through a whole series of small allusions. The comparison of Dunedin to the new Jerusalem of Revelations also associates him with the visionary images of that biblical text. The local minister's reference to "this biblical happening in Dunedin,"8 and his winning of the children, who are inexplicably attracted to him, all combine to develop the figure. Classical myth and biblical metaphor are carefully but loosely intertwined as Godfrey gazes across the harbour at Dunedin, his modern Jerusalem. It is "the unattainable dream city to which men may set out on a pilgrimage struggling and suffering in a never-ending journey."9 He gazes in fascination at the salt white city while his mind is suffused with thoughts of his death. Godfrey comments periodically that he enjoys gazing at Dunedin, the symbol of the revelationary new Jerusalem, from behind the protection of glass. It is only his

occasional awareness of fly dirt on the windows that reminds him of this barrier between him and his vision of the symbolic city. The New Testament premise that humans are beings of limited vision, who see only through a glass darkly, is rather sardonically reiterated in this allusion which also incorporates Plato's 10 convictions regarding the narrowly confined boundaries of human awareness.

The configuration of mythico-historical figures again converges as the modern scribes and Pharisees, represented by the townspeople of Dunedin, begin to stone Godfrey's house. The symbolism relates to the rejection and crucifixion of Christ on the one hand, and to the stoning of Orpheus by the maenads on the other.

In a reverse analogy to the Orpheus myth, it is Beatrice by her suicide who frees Godfrey to return, not to THIS world, the physical world of light, but finally to enter THAT world, the shadow world of the mind. Beatrice feels threatened by the tides of the subconscious which, as a result of her experiences, seem to be flooding in on her. She marshals her forces to keep "the sea at bay, at BAY."11 There is no question of entering the territory and working through the experiences that have to be faced. There is only the urgent impulse to resist any such confrontation. Beatrice is aware that, with the help of alcohol to which she has become addicted, the fact of Godfrey's death remains outside her, although it has

invaded and is sweeping him out to sea. "At sea that was his place now,"12 she declares believing that because he is beyond her reach she can no longer help him. But ironically by taking her life she does in fact help by releasing him from his state of limbo and his imprisoning love for her, this allows the warmth to re-enter his body, "as if from a secret outward reservoir." Beatrice's death thus allows the process of Godfrey's self-integration to begin. Only when all conscious and subconscious aspects of the mind are in harmony and in tune with the physical funtioning of the body can true self-hood be attained.

Godfrey is aware that irrevocable changes have occurred and that his old self has vanished forever. He retains the indelible psychic imprints of his subconscious journey for "much of him now lives in outposts and corners and unaccountable places."13 Having once inadvertently renounced not just his physical space on earth, but also his mindhold, Godfrey has to struggle "to find living space for his thoughts." These, having been uniquely fertilised by death in THAT world, are no longer easily satisfied by THIS world of life and living. The routines of daily life invite him to the oblivion of mindless existence. The counsel from his family that all is well encourages him to sink back into the "unexamined life."14 He knows he has never been an introspective man different from his acquaintances and therefore an "outsider," but now he discovers he is certainly not outside. As a result

of his experiences he is "in deep." He is in deep deep, for what he begins to understand is that finally there is

> no Out or In; all is one territory, Out is mainly the place where a man is afraid to go, a place that he therefore denies exists, but it is there, in him; it stays, as the sea and the land stay. . . (it is) only at night that people go out of their depths and drown in caverns of sleep and dreams.15

Here the artist/narrator points up the common misconceptions surrounding the little-known psychic regions of the mind. Godfrey, like many of his fellow human beings, believes that the inner world is fit habitation only for society's outcasts. Not being given to introspection himself, he previously viewed with suspicion those who are at home with their inner selves.

What he realises as a result of his experiences, is that that aspect of the mind which he has avoided and ignored, believing it to be beyond the scope of THIS physical world to which he belongs, is not "outside" at all but "inside". Far from being extraneous, it is at the very core and centre of life itself. The artist reminds us, through Godfrey, that at some point in life the psychological boundaries which have been constructed to seal off the threatening psychic sea "become the place not for repelling but for entering, admitting the unknown". Because, Dante-like, Godfrey unintentionally strayed beyond the barrier he is unable to find oblivion and peace in the certainty and rhythm that surrounds him in THIS world. On the one hand he is content to sit in his deck-chair and gaze mindlessly at the sun shining "on the city

of Jerusalem" which Dunedin now symbolises, but, on the other, his impressions of THAT world prevent him from sinking comfortably back into the mentally limited aspects of THIS one.

Godfrey's first conscious thoughts after having been declared alive again are described in detail as the narrator attempts to convey what she imagines are the sensations associated with death.

Predatory birds usually figure as negative symbols in Frame's work and seabird imagery is used in Yellow Flowers to unite the two major themes of the novel. This is done by linking the psyche which is hidden in life with the also concealed state of the mind beyond death.

Godfrey's experiences of having been declared dead and remaining so for thirty-six hours compel him to journey further into these unmapped psychic regions. As an unwilling, modern Dante he must now revisit, consciously and psychologically, the underworld which he recently entered unconsciously and physically. These two domains of existence, relatively concealed from our waking selves are the two areas of life with which people are endlessly preoccupied. The evolution of the human mind, according to C.G. Jung, is a process which is far from complete. It has taken untold ages to reach the civilised state which dates from the invention of script about 4000BC. Much of the human mind is still concealed from human understand-

ing, for what is known as the "pysche" is not identical with our consciousness and its contents.16

Imagination and intuition are vital supplements to the rational intellect, accoring to Jung, who emphasises that even physics, the strictest of all applied sciences, depends to an astonishing degree upon intuition, which works by way of the unconscious. Frame's repeated plea is for human beings, especially New Zealanders, to visit the imaginative realms of the mind more frequently. In this country, she comments, "herbacious borders are more precious than a display of bright ideas in the head."17 Support for Frame's arguments can be found in the writings of Jung, who similarly deplores modern humanity's lack of introspection, stating that the terrible price mankind pays for its rationality and efficiency is revealed by the gods and demons of the twentieth century. These have not been discarded: they have simply been given new names such as alcohol, pills and tobacco which are now used to feed an increasingly complex set of neuroses.18

Frame's message, if she can be said to have one, is simply to urge human beings to use their minds better. By calling attention to the unacknowledged fictions people indulge in and live by, she encourages them to make better use of their mental faculties by becoming both more logical and yet more intellectually imaginative. Moreover, Jung points out that many primitive traits and survivals

still permeate the human mind.

> Modern man is in fact a curious mixture of characteristics acquired over the long ages of his mental development. . . skepticism and scientific conviction exist in him side by side with old fashioned prejudices, outdated habits of thought and feeling, obstinate misinterpretations and blind ignorance.19

As Godfrey returns to consciousnesss his intuitive feelings of alienation are increased by the strange reactions of the nursing staff. Attempting to monitor the state of his body, he is reassured by the sense that his physical functions are still intact. It is as if his body has been assailed by icicles, with his limbs like particles of steel which the warmth of his blood is trying to liquify. His confusion is increased by the behaviour of the hospital staff who react to him with horror and curiosity. A nurse confirms that there has been an accident and Godfrey is aware of having slept in a peculiarly restful way. Yet when he examines the quality of that sleep he recognises that it had been "strangely unattended," like the sleep of one whom the world has deserted." He feels abandoned, alone, with the shadow of waiting birds of prey cast over his body.20

With Beatrice's arrival, Godfrey discovers the appalling truth that he has been a corpse for thirty-six hours. He realises with horror that he can never escape the effects of that pronouncement; it will shadow his life for ever. Godfrey returns home and attempts to continue living as before, but his knowledge of death constantly inter-

venes. The very indefinableness of the occurrence makes it more disturbing. Having accidentally entered the underworld, Godfrey must now continue his Dante-like journey, haunted by the shadowy impressions of untraceable events, which engulf him.21 The ancient cultural symbols of mankind

> are important constituents of our mental makeup . . . when they are repressed or neglected, their specific energy disappears into the unconscious with unaccountable consequences.22

Jung emphasises that one effect of this loss of psychic energy is that it "serves to revive and intensify what is uppermost in the subconscious" becoming an ever-present and potentially destructive shadow to our conscious mind. Although our basic instincts have become separated from what we regard as our civilised consciousness, they have not disappeared. These ingrained impulses with which our conscious minds have lost contact are therefore "forced to assert themselves in an indirect fashion".23 This phenomenon is exemplified in the thoughts of death which overflow all Godfrey's other thoughts, and the hidden experiences which permeate his subconscious mind and enslave him.24

> His experience was leading him a way he had not known before. . . it was an inward path and direction and it was there that his foothold was now most firmly set, against his will. . . He was alone going to a frightening destination that no other person knew of and that he himself could not name.25

While re-examining past fictions related to death and the subsconscious mind, Yellow Flowers simultaneously creates

a new fiction built around the traditional symbols of stones, the sea and the shadow self. From ancient times stones have been used as a symbol of the self, while the link between the sea and the mind is almost a literary commonplace. The third sybmol, that of the shadow, is described by Jung as representative of the hidden shadow self, the concealed psyche. In the process of "becoming", all three symbols must be brought into harmony before integration of the self can be achieved.

Godfrey's self is incomplete, for he has never been an introspective man. Until his accident, he admits, he has remained relatively ignorant of his inner world. As the novel progresses he learns to accept the flowing of the psychic tides, no longer feeling, like Beatrice, that this inner sea must be resisted, "kept at bay, AT BAY," by all means. It is by becoming aware of his incompleteness that he becomes, in Jung's words, "receptive to the significant contents and processes of the unconscious."26 With his gradual acceptance of the inner world, the shadow self is able to assume its rightful place in his life, and the process of self-integration is finally initiated as he moves for the last time towards death.

The artist/narrator has re-examined past fictions surrounding the shadow mind and the state of death. She now goes on to outline some of the intuitive ritualised behaviours which have become almost mandatorily linked with death and dying, and to describe some of the new

fictions with their associated rituals, which have emerged to replace old beliefs now invalidated and discarded. The novel implicitly questions the ideologies created to explain the extinction of physical life. What was valid and appropriate for a time and season long ago and in a distant land needs to be closely scrutinised for its relevance to the modern situation. Can answers which were adequate for questions arising out of the simple, timeless rhythms of life in biblical lands in a by-gone era really provide for the hectically pressured lives of twentieth century, urban human beings? Are the spells, rituals and incantatory rites of two thousand years past powerful enough magic for the twentieth century, or are the emergent group functions which encourage the expression of surface emotion while leaving the intellect untouched even more harmful? These are the socio-philosophical questions that the artist endeavours to make us confront in this novel.

Beatrice is initially described as reacting to Godfrey's death with complete sincerity. Intuitively warned of impending bad news by the chimes from the door bell, which ring out with "hideous pruple stripes," she longs to revert to childhood, to go home to Mum and Dad at Matuatangi. With the arrival of her parents the comforting ritualistic habits take over and she is protected from the sad, the unpleasant, the shocking by

> The sweetness of advice given with the sweet tea

> brewed by someone else, of scones made in a twinkling and no flour spilled.27

The proper rituals are thus set and the synthetic words of comfort surround her, "Be brave. You have my sympathy. Bear up." The whole area of behaviour which is expected, and tacitly acknowledged to be acceptable, in response to death has been explored by Albert Camus in his novel L'Etranger. Frame is here re-examining these patterns of behaviour and the responses they initiate. It is not long before Beatrice sets in motion the customary rites, and she even looks "forward to baptising (her)self in the state of death." Having become accustomed to the idea of Godfrey's body lying all night in the front room and to all the accompanying mourning and burial rituals, when he is unexpectedly pronounced alive again, confusion and resentment are her strongest emotions, in spite of her genuine love for him. Even though her feelings for Godfrey are absolutely sincere, Beatrice resents his return to life because it cuts off and negates the emotions she is legitimately expressing. Her plea for "death to stay in its rightful place," emphasises the human desire for predictability. Reconciled to the role of bereaved wife, because a pattern of behaviour exists for her to adopt, she is doubly at a loss when her husband is declared alive again, because no model exists for her to follow.

Godfrey's sister Lynley also reacts with "anger and dismay and a smaller amount of relief than she would have

thought possible,"28 when she learns of Godfrey's return to life. Her annoyance is tinged with regret at losing the power which Godfrey's death has bestowed on her as sole guardian of the memories of his childhood. This touches on the human tendency towards self dramatisation, which, allied to the rationalisation process, moderates the felt grief of bereavement, aiding accommodation to, and finally acceptance of death. Beatrice comments in intuitive recognition of this fact, "He's dead. That's that. Now let me enjoy his death."29 Beatrice copes by "accepting the platitudes of bereavement" yet questions the rituals of death, asking what lies behind the "wreaths, the letters, (and) the death notice in the newspaper." Demurring at what she feels is the hasty and unseemly dispatch of Godfrey's body, Beatrice notes with irony that it is a "Christian urge" to pretend that the removal of the body is linked to spiritual comfort derived from proximity to the "hovering immortal soul," rather than a simple matter of hygiene. The truth is too disturbing to acknowledge.

The artist narrator in this novel indicates that Pakeha New Zealanders, like many Western social groups, have lost their traditional links with the fundamental human processes of life and death.

> the ancient peoples knew what they were about when they allowed the dead to be part of the living and the living to take their full part in dying and death!30

Beatrice laments, deploring the modern fear of death which has led to its removal from daily life. Every attempt has been made to banish death from everyday experience. Hospitals and homes for old people are now regarded as its appropriate venue.31 When Godfrey challenges Beatrice at one point in the novel with the comment that she thinks "people should be pampered into believing that they are never going to die," he is describing a situation that is widely accepted. In his novel Brave New World.32 Huxley describes the taking of "soma" as a means of escaping from painful emotions. Frame indicates that a similarly anaesthetising effect is produced by the formulaic language with which our rites and rituals have become encrusted.

Writing in Landfall, Heather Roberts describes how Pakeha New Zealanders have alienated themselves from the ceremonies which allow for the open acknowledgement of profound emotion. In Pakeha culture "public grief or public emotion about. . . death. . . does not exist."33 Roberts simultaneously emphasises the perceptive way in which the Maori people have refused to part with their heritage of cultural rituals, which expect, approve and facilitate the visible expression of our deepest feelings, with dignity and respect. Roberts comments that Pakeha culture is incapable of understanding death, while "Maori culture makes death a rich and valuable experience for all those who are involved."

A separation has taken place between our basic human instincts and what is imagined to be our civilised consciousness. The division can plainly be detected in the prevalent attitude to rituals, festivals and ceremonies; an issue of some significance in Yellow Flowers. Through the use of mythic allusions Yellow Flowers is pointing out that the behaviour of modern social groups exhibits the outward manifestations of ancient rituals. Modern people, just like their early ancestors, create fictions to help them control the material world, their ideas, each other and, lastly, themselves. Myths were created from acts, or actions, for the myths came afterwards, evolving gradually to explain the habits, customs, rites and rituals which preceded them.

Yellow Flower is demonstrating how contemporary human beings are discarding some of the fictions which their ancestors created, while at the same time, themselves, engaging in myth-making behaviours. What is significant about these new rituals is that whereas original Christian and earlier pagan rites and ceremonies arose out of deeply-felt beliefs invested with divine origins, modern patterned behaviour, symbolised by the "Michelin caricatures" who line up to perform their orisons to the New Zealand football deity, is based on no fictionally divine motivation and involves no fictionalised personal commitment, but produces ritual behaviours, and instant

surface emotion, divorced from any mythic anchorage.

Godfrey Rainbird's death and resurrection occur with ironic significance at Easter, offering a convenient base for further comparisons of past and present ritual forms. The narrator notes that the commercial trappings of modern ceremonies now command more attention than their spiritual focus. Although both sets of behaviour are based on fictions, the rituals associated with Easter, for example, which for practising Christians are supposed to hold the deepest emotional significance, have degenerated into reflex actions, "alternate wails and cheers from the churches; He is dead. He is risen," declares the narrator. The truly meaningful rituals now seem to be, "Easter eggs for the children. . . death on the roads in the mountains. . . The Easter Show. . . Farm Implements, the Wall of Death. . . Shoot and win a Plaster Ornament."34 People accept the dictates of advertisers whose only motives are to encourage consumerism, and elevate their fictions, delivered through slogans, to the position of divine law and revealed truth. Media-induced exhortations to purchase consumer goods only fictionally associated with each festival, are now central to the ritual ceremonies of birth and death, which Christians celebrate at Christmas and Easter.

Adopting the role of the ancient Shaman, the media itself is responsible for promulgating new cults and promoting established ones. The current preoccupation of

the electronic media with the death toll on the roads, the narrator claims with some irony, amounts to a new national form of worship. Comparisons are made with numbers of victims culled in previous years and predictions are made about the future by an announcer "scarcely able to conceal his excitement as he gave the day's tally of the injured and dead.35 Distintegrating ritual forms, implies the narrator, are thus being replaced by the collective rites performed by audiences at sports meetings, political rallies or mass forms of entertainment.

By examining these modern rituals, and placing them alongside their mythic source, Yellow Flowers sets the apprehensions of our earliest ancestors in ironic counterpoint to the perceptions of human beings today. Death, for example, is an unknown entity, around which our forebears built many fictions. In spite of their continuing preoccupation with mortality, modern sophisticated human beings still rely on the fictions of the past, for their knowledge of the subject. Over the centuries mankind has invented a series of fictions to ease the pain of knowing it will die. The fictions surrounding Christ and Lazarus come into this category, for they assure human beings that death is not invincible, but with great difficulty, and only very occasionally, can nevertheless be overcome.

The subconscious mind is a newer concept, or perhaps an old one that until recently has been forgotten. The

fictions pertaining to Dante and Orpheus are associated with the human desire to understand that concealed aspect of the mind. The fictions surrounding both concepts must allow for them to be held in awe, while offering comfort in face of our mortality and providing means to control our still inborn primitivity.

The final chapter of the novel returns to the function of the artist and her role in interpreting old fictions, creating new ones and offering her working synthesis of them all. The narrator makes a sharp distinction between the fictions of most human beings who dream small illogical dreams and create unexamined fantasies based on fancies, rationalisations and wishful thinking, and the fictions of the artist who is a fictionaliser by trade and craft. The artist tries always to remain clearly aware, and firmly in control of her aims and goals. Just as the internal mechanisms of the body are unfamiliar to most human beings, the more inscrutable and abstract functionings of the psyche are even more of a mystery. Because they fear and avoid these shadowy mental regions, most people are condemned to conduct their lives through fictions of whose existence they are unaware.

The artist, in contrast, spends most of her life exploring these dark corners of her antipodean room, consciously learning from them and purposefully cultivating and developing her imagination. Her fictions

may call attention to unacceptable directions in which society is moving, and offer new and alternative modes of thinking and being. Large numbers of people inhabit the summer season of the mind, dreaming harmless dreams and creating small innocuous fantasies. Some make infrequent sorties into the regions of winter weather, occasionally by choice but more often like Godfrey, accidentally, for avoiding THAT world is the tenet by which most people live. It is only his own fictional death which gradually releases Godfrey from his restricting, imagined fear of his antipodean room. This followed by Beatrice's death releases him from his limiting self-created attachment to her, and finally allows the processes of personal integration, leading to harmony of being to begin.

The winter season of the mind is another matter altogether, for there, "attending" to THAT world, is the whole focus of the artist's existence. In that instance the agony of the creative process cannot be avoided. The artist is then on her own, struggling compulsively to extract from her ". . . flow of flesh under the impulse of passionate thought."36 ideas which, when translated into artistic form, will benefit mankind or enhance the human condition.

# CHAPTER NINE

## INTENSIVE CARE

In the first half of this century "normal men," writes R.D. Laing, "have killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow normal men."1 To become normal in the twentieth century is to become "a half crazed creature more or less adjusted to" the mad world which, Laing adds, our present age happens to be.2 The repression of natural and cultural symbols, archetypes and "eternal truths," which evokes powerful emotional responses in people, is the root cause, according to C.G. Jung, of this disease of modern life. The psychic energy which builds up when these deep feelings are repressed becomes "an ever present and potentially destructive 'shadow', to our conscious minds."3 The effects of this process, in Jung's view, have already produced disastrous manifestations in the present age.

> Our times have demonstrated what it means for the gates of the underworld to be opened. Things whose enormity nobody could have imagined in the idyllic harmlessness of the first decade of our century have happened and have turned our world upside down. Ever since, the world has remained in a state of schizophrenia. Not only has civilized Germany disgorged its terrible primitivity, but Russia is also ruled by it, and Africa has been set on fire. No wonder that the Western world feels uneasy. Modern man does not understand how much his "rationalism" (which has destroyed his capacity to respond to numinous symbols and ideas) has put him at the mercy of the psychic "underworld" . . . he is now paying the price for this breakup in world wide disorientation and dissociation.4

This urge to violence must be admitted and even accepted before we blindly destroy ourselves with it,5 Laing

comments. The drive to "kill and be killed," is almost stronger than the desire to live and allow others to live.

Many of Janet Frame's novels address themselves to these issues, for almost all of them refer to the fictions which allow men to become involved with war. Among the many fictions with which Intensive Care is concerned, those related to war are centrally placed. World War One is the major focus of the book's first part, the Second World War figures prominently in part two and the final section projects into the future when the effects of a third, and now nuclear, world war are outlined. It refers overall to the fictions with which men prepare themselves for war, justify its initiation, sustain themselves during its progress and attempt to idealise it forever, after its conclusion.

In this, her eighth novel, Janet Frame continues to demonstrate her concern for the human mind and all its manoeuvres, for in it she considers the personal and collective consequences of holding specific attitudes and states of mind. Intensive Care develops out of Frame's earlier works and moves on to examine the operations of culturally, socially and politically fostered states of mind which limit human functioning in collective ways. The collective unconscious which transmits the common psychological inheritance of the past has been described by Jung;6 Intensive Care examines the current environmental forces which are still shaping its modern equivalent.

Alongside these communally determined mental states, individually generated attitudes and casts of mind, from which disturbing social consequences often emerge, are also examined. Customs, traditions, habits, conditioning, sterotyping, propaganda, advertising, indoctrination and other such fictions which are all forms of psychological manipulation produce equivalent psychic states simultaneously in large groups of people. Many of these same powerful and persuasive influences also encourage the involuntary development in individuals of fictive attitudes and states of mind which seriously limit a person's effective functioning. Psychic traffic belonging to this category of mental states individually shaped includes the operations of memory, projections of all kinds, prognostications, fantasies, escapism, day dreams, denial in all its forms, wishful thinking, the process of rationalisation, self delusion, and illusion making, along with visions and the involuntary dreams which invade the mind during sleep. That the mind can be teased into submission by such a variety of persuasive mechanisms, not only demonstrates its flexibility, but also confirms how dangerously vulnerable it is.

This last is a point of some significance in Intensive Care, which dramatises the processes and effects of brainwashing and other forms of psychic manipulation practised by modern human beings on each other. Faces looks

at the psychological reactions to conditions in the physical environment, Intensive Care looks at the ways in which human beings react physically to conditions engendered in the psychological environment. Psychological responses to physical conditions it seems, can cause personal derangement, while physical reactions to the psychic climate may bring collective insanity on a widespread scale. The book describes an escalating sequence of physical consequences which stem from various types of psychic engineering. Traumatised by his immersion as a youth, in World War One, Tom Livingstone becomes obsessed by war and voluntarily locks himself into a fictional world which he constructs around it. He participates in the war as if in a drugged sleep, but his nurse, Ciss Everest, is the first person seen on waking. Tom, like a modern Titania regards her as "the natural, the only person to love, to be haunted by."7 Ciss thus becomes the symbol of World War One through her central position in Tom's life and her focal placing in the novel.

The consequences of Tom's personal self-delusion, are limited to himself and his family. As well as ruining the lives of his wife, Eleanor and their children, he wastes his own entire life building a make-believe world around Ciss Everest and their two fantasised daughters. The consequences of acting on fictions as though they were true are described on a wider scale in the book's second part, where the effects of small fictions, collectively

subscribed to, are considered. Tom's brother, Leonard Livingstone, is terminally ill but when he is sent home from hospital to die he is treated by the medical staff as if he had recovered and as if what is being done to him is normal and acceptable. In fact his case is hopeless and the hospital staff want his bed. Sending him home is a callous act disguised with empty expressions of cheerfulness, when it is clear that he will eventually be found, ". . . by accident, dead many days, decomposing, smelling, a dirty, lonely, old man."8 The fictions here are only seen to touch Leonard, but are collective fictions used, like the concealling moss of the section title, to obscure and smother disturbing situations. Collective fictions like these tell the sick "you are well," refusing them comfort, tell the lonely "you have friends, lovers," refusing them understanding and friendship, and tell the dying "you are immortal," offering them no support. The hospital staff know they are condemning Leonard to die alone in squalor, but apply easy fictions to avoid either facing up to what they are doing, or taking any responsibility for it.

These, however, are still small fictions when compared with the new forms of psychic manipulation described in the novel's third section. Here Colin Monk is aware that he is being brain washed, but fearing for his life, continues to condone the fictions which initially seemed horrendous to him. He is shown gradually becoming an

instrument of the ideology, which he previously found insupportable, and assisted by the sleep periods he is forced to undergo, finally rationalises his doubts into silence. Brain washing on a massive scale is then carried out through the medium of television, which uses innocuous fictions such as Milly describes, to lull the population into acquiesence.

In each of these personal, local and customary, and national and political forms of psychic manipulation, only the artist's voice is raised in protest against the madness which is being endorsed. One must be abnormal as Laing contends 9 to be normal in an abnormal society. For that reason the artist figures in this work are regarded as not normal. Naomi, the creative voice in the first parts of the novel, is physically ill, dying of cancer, and mentally damaged by Tom, labelled as her "insane father acting the war all the time."10 Milly, the second artist figure is also described as physically and intellectually handicapped. On the first count she is autistic and on the second she is categorised as "doll normil" as she calls it in her special spelling. By classifying the voices of sanity as deviant, the population, or those in political control of it, can safely disregard them.

The functions of the artists in Intensive Care are to revitalise the ordinary, investing with new vitality human senses long staled by fictional customs and habits. Naomi

reanimates with metaphor the suspended powers of human judgement, while Milly's candour shocks with its innocent irony. Naomi employs metaphor to make the physical and literal more immediate, while Milly simply describes what she sees and feels with the sincerity and innocence that reflects her "believing brane." Naomi, moreover, shows how platitudes, clichés, and dead metaphors, imprison the imagination and dull the intellect so that what should cause horror and disgust is shrugged off with dismissive tags. "The danger of platitudes," as Godfrey Rainbird notes in Yellow Flowers, "is that we shape our lives to fit them."11 Many small dramas in Intensive Care underline this point.

Naomi is brought up by a father whose obsession with war has made it for her a living, though negative, reality; all around her she sees trees with withered limbs like maimed soldiers; the dead leaves are brown-and-green mottled army coats. "The hills are brown and yellow, like burned flesh, like kahki, like polished brass buttons and buckles."12 She sees the falling snow as no more than a disguise for the rivers of human blood set flowing by horrific battles.

Milly communicates in a very different style, for her direct statements are delivered with ingenuous irony. Innocently exposing the banal phrases uttered by the Prime Minister, she emphasises the political fictions which are

associated with these empty formulae. The country, he declares, is at "war against human customs and accepted morals." The sacrifice of the deformed or the merely strange "is a necessary price to pay" 13 for "keeping the world safe for democracy," and "raising the standard of living" for those who are left. Her final remark "let it never be said that we do not lead the world in social legislation,"14 is a satirical send-up of New Zealand's own favourite fiction, which although still quoted, has long since ceased to have any current foundations.

Both artist figures attempt to cut through the limiting fictions which human beings mindlessly construct. Naomi's ability to see with the sensitised perceptions of the artist, is combined with a talent for sharing her insights through apt comparisons. Maxims are thus discarded, allowing new responses to be made to sights, sounds and ideas often disregarded. Silenced by custom and cliché, for example, human beings collectively assent to events and deeds for which they would never accept personal responsibility. This is plainly illustrated by the Prime Minister's banal phrases quoted above by Milly. With these he extracts silent complicity from the population for the mass extermination of millions of helpless people. Maintaining his fiction that "it is a necessary price to pay," by promising vague benefits, he literally acquires the licence to kill in exchange for these unspecified rewards.

Both Naomi and Milly are described creating elaborate fictions of their own. Naomi, for example, reworks her childhood imaging herself as the focus of her father's affection. This fantasy includes common juvenile fictions, such as the removal of her sister Pearl to an orphanage, and the convenient death of her mother in an accident. As a result of these wishful fictions, in her dreams at least, she no longer has any competition to contend with for her father's affection, which she craves.

Tom, with perverse irony, has always been so caught up in his fictional life with Ciss and their two fantasy daughters who idolise him that he has no time to notice his real daughter who is only too willing to make a hero of him. Naomi repeatedly denies the misery of her early years insisting in her fiction that "our life was one of happiness and calm."15 Pearl, however, reveals the truth that "they had pitied their mother. . . and feared their father,"16 a view supported by Ted, Peggy Warren's barman friend who comments that "Tom Livingstone was a war case" and "those two kids as scared as ever I've seen."17

Milly's most significant fiction concerns Sandy, her mythical reconstructed man. Milly describes him as the twin brother, or shadow self of Colin Monk,18 who has survived the nuclear war which has devastated most of the earth. Sandy has been severely physically maimed by the war, just as Colin is being psychologically mutilated by the brainwashing process he is shown to be undergoing.

Colin's damaged psyche is being patched up with second hand mental constructs, just as Sandy's body has been remodelled with organs gleaned by surgeons from various sources. It is not clear, as Sandy comments, which of them has suffered the greatest amount of mutilation.

The novel here is investigating not the relationship between the inner and outer realms of the mind, which Frame has examined in earlier novels, but the degrees of association between the physical body and the psyche which it houses. Dalton Trumbo, in his novel Johnny Got His Gun,19 explores similar concepts. All that remains of Johnny, in the Trumbo work, is his searching, active mind. Not only are his limbs missing, but the major senses of sight and hearing have been destroyed along with the organs which produce speech. The significant question seems to be, what does it mean to be human? Sandy, the reconstructed man, is in a position similar to that of Johnny, but all his damaged limbs and senses have been replaced with organs transplanted from other human beings, or else they have been artificaially constructed especially for Sandy. Intensive Care seems to be asking who is more human, Sandy the man with the recontructed body, or Colin the one with the readjusted mind. Sandy grieves that in spite of all their dedicated efforts to recreate his body, the surgeons remained unconcerned about his emotions.

"Man's main purpose," writes von Franz, "is not to eat, drink, etc., but TO BE HUMAN,"20 and writers like Frame and Trumbo attempt to identify what such a concept as being human might mean; to define, in fact, in what part of our beings our humanity lies. More questions are raised in this novel than can be satisfactorily answered. For if our humanity lies in the mind which is so susceptible to manipulation by ourselves as well as by others, how can we learn to protect it from the damaging influences of our fellow creatures when it is still prey to illogical fictions of our own?

Love and War are two themes used in Intensive Care to explore further the fiction-making habits of humanity. Both concepts require people to create fictitious states of mind which will justify the kinds of behaviour associated with each. Romantic love is examined as a delusion which people rationalise as a desirable condition to achieve. The amorous behaviour of the serenading lover immortalised by Chaucer's young squire,21 the lover Shakespeare describes "sighing like furnace, with woeful ballad to his mistress' eyebrow,"22 along with the effusions of an Elizabethan love poet following the courtly love tradition, may vary in aesthetics, but not in kind, from that of a modern pop singer; the fictional process and the hypnotic effects which Chaucer and Shakespeare satirise, remain very similar.

The two themes, love and war, are combined in Tom the

living stone's fantasy of Ciss Everest, who like him is presented as an image of stasis. Having wasted forty-five years of his life on his self-induced myth, Tom eventually returns to England when he discovers at last the fraudulence of war. There he confronts Ciss, his romanticised symbol of war, and finds that she is not a beautiful young girl, but a seventy year old tart. Unable to face up to the fact that she does not recognise him and that his whole life has been spent on fruitless dreams, he literally and figuratively smothers her.

Immediately Tom denies that she didn't recognise him, "she knew me all right" he persuades himself. "She had to . . . where have I been living for the past forty-five years if not directly in her shadow."23 Denial is a process by which ideas unacceptable in undiluted form can be reconstructed to comply with an interpretation of the event preferred by an individual or a group. Tom's personal denial of an uncomfortable fact is immediately followed by a collective instance of the same fictional process. During the evening following Tom's murder of Ciss he watches an old war film on television. The film offers the same idealised fiction of war as Tom succumbed to in his youth.

> The last scene showed his (the hero's) grave among the poppy fields, a beautiful sight. . . and no trace of mud. No battle track, duckboards, shell holes, dead men and horses, trenches, no decayed fruit at all, shell fall from the blossoming orchards of war.24

The fictions which disseminate romantic ideas of love are satirised here, along with films which idealise heroism in war by interpreting horrific slaughter as patriotic and glorious deeds. The fictions surrounding war are very powerful indeed, as Godfrey Rainbird points out in Yellow Flowers. Although you curse war, he comments, "once you get the hang of it you love it,"25 and Tom adds that he kills because there was company in the killing and he liked company.26 Clearly the fictional motivation for countenancing and carrying out appalling acts is often casually arrived at to meet small personal needs, which take no account of the harm done to others. Once they have invested enough of themselves in the fictional need to kill, people cannot afford to reassess such irremediable acts, especially if there is doubt about the legitimacy of the cause. Human beings find it much more comfortable to maintain the fictions with memorials, statues, ceremonies and similar collective assurances that insist they did not kill in vain. Politicians rely on emotions like these, and the fictions they generate, when implementing doubtful policies and embarking on questionable wars.

War is a collective fiction which, it is emphasised, is handed on in many ways from one generation to the next. Several of these are noted when Waipori city finds it necessary to erect a new war memorial to celebrate the new dead of The Second World War. Statues are useful objects only for annual deposits of wreaths and daily deposits of

pigeon shit, and Waipori city is tired of statues. An alternative is chosen and the Governor General, deputising for the Queen, who preferred fishing at the lakes to making the Waipori hotel famous for its "royalty of plumbing", is unable to find an appropriate new poem for the occasion. The Governor General had wanted something which would refer to the newly dead, while also expressing "simple faith" in the work and destiny of a soldier. New verses, which, like the old, are all fictions, speak of the dead as "neither heroic nor at peace," as the Governor General wanted, "but simply dead."27 The crowd, however, conditioned to be susceptible to all such fictions is impressed with Rupert Brooke reworked and stands hushed in response to the beautiful poem which exhorts the young to continue the fight, "take up the quarrel with the foe /to you from failing hands we throw/the torch . . . And so forth."28

This re-write of the poem coupled with the narrator's irony exposes the essentially martial theme of the original, concealed beneath its romantic tone. The whole parody, with which the novel emphasises how fictions of war are promoted, perpetuated and encouraged, concludes with the Governor General ingenuously further contributing to the fictions by declaring that it is the boy scouts of the nation who grow up "to become the young shining-eyed men," gloriously ready to sacrifice their lives in defence of freedom and democracy. This whole sequence of the

novel shows how fictions such as memorials, poems, statues, ceremonies, and youth groups, fired by certain kinds of idealism, are used to condition in innocent young men lust for glory. This impulse is then tapped to legitimise the waging of unnecessary wars to satisfy power-hungry politicians. Virginia Woolf also confronts similar issues in Three Guineas, and uncovers more related martial fictions.29

In Adaptable Man the cyclic patterns of human fictions are identified through the reworking of mythic material. Edge suggests that human beings should re-examine their attitudes towards "new armies. . . training, marching, practising manoeuvres."30 Isn't it time to face up to the fiction that this is peace? the narrator questions ironically, or are armies like lizards, part of a primordial process. Is their resurgence inevitable like the regrowing of a lizard's tail? War, the novel points out, is conditioned into people, just as is the notion of romantic love, which Yeats holds would be no more "than an animal hunger but for the poet and his shadow the priest."31 These latter two, poet and priest, now stand in line with an increasingly long list of sources which nourish modern fictions.

The irrational passion which Colin Torrance, Tom's grandson, manipulates himself into is another example of individual fiction making, which is centrally placed in the middle section of the work. Colin himself feels as if

he is partly blind, which of course he is, for, like Tom, he is besotted with a woman who appears foolish and unappealing to all eyes but his own. von Franz describes and explains the "one-sidedness" which makes people lose their balance in this way.32 Parts one and two of the novel show how human beings interpret and reinterpret events and situations as they would prefer them to be, constructing fictions to block out or deny what they do not wish to face. By replaying an action over and over in their minds, people gradually shape them into fictions with which they can live. Imagination, fantasy and escapist fictions are used to re-fashion an item which will become memory when it is finally tailored to fit the needs of the individual.

The work's final section concentrates on the horrors of escalating psychic manipulation which the modern world already condones. Many of the acts outlined as projections of a repressive and frightening future describe macabre events which have already taken place. Television now uses mindless programmes as a means of social control: its ability to shape people's responses and to present one-sided or unbalanced arguments is an accepted fact of modern life. The atrocities projected for deciding day, and others to be carried out as a consequence of the Human Delineation Act, are all brutalities which, prompted by their fictions, human beings carried out on each other during the Second World War. Even the horrors reminiscent

of Swift's "Modest Proposal" which Milly outlines are almost all things which have already come to pass. "I wonder which?" she questions "will be . . . sent to factories to be made into shoes and shoelaces and lampshades and even teacups and saucers."33 Human beings use their fictions to programme and condition themselves like Pavlov's dogs, as well as to condone, excuse, deny, alter, reinterpret and now to manipulate and destroy on a scale massive enough to ensure the obliteration of the entire human race.

Language, which is the medium we use to conceptualise and express all our fictions, is featured prominently in Intensive Care. Not only is it used negatively by human beings, as a weapon to manipulate each other, but its positive communicative functions remain limited. The crudity of language as a means of interaction between complex human beings is a recurrent theme in Frame's works. Through Milly's special spelling, she points up the one dimensional aspect of words, emphasising that they are only arrangements of hieroglyphics on a page or units of sound strung together to represent a concept. At best they are in themselves no more than identifying labels, or naming devices, not really part of the constructs they serve, although they generate powerful emotions through association with the concepts they name. This power of language to shape and colour our views of life is noted by Scholes, along with other concepts such as "space, time,

causality, and society,"34 which also act as filters on our perceptions.

Colin Monk is aware of the "Black water," that lies beneath the ice over which words and phrases are sent skimming.35 Both he and Milly repeat the slogans and jingles used to promote the Human Delineation Act. Colin even becomes part of the system he advances to the point of himself offering automatically the platitudes when required. "Naturally, its the only way, the only solution, as I see it . . . I mean, looked at objectively . . ."36 Milly never becomes a victim of the propaganda in this way, for of course it is towards powerless people like her that the propaganda is directed, and she always retains her ability to consider each point in her own serious straightforward way. Whereas Colin, whose function it is to manipulate others, ends by succumbing to his own propaganda and manipulating himself.

Milly also becomes a vehicle for examining the discrepancy between the denotations of words and the intentions with which they are used. When her parents cut down the Livingstone pear tree in spite of all the grief they know it will cause her, she is puzzled by their readiness to comfort her in her sorrow and, through their words of solace, to disclaim their involvement in the destruction of the tree. Translating their comforting phrases for herself she concludes that what the words

really mean is that "we took our circular saw and our acks and our yellow earth masheens and chopped (it) off the earth."37 When people weep and grieve and say "nothing we can do will bring (it) back," do they really mean something quite different, she wonders? People, she concludes, are not what they pretend to be, and "words are cruel, deceitful liars." Thus Milly emphasises the vulnerability of language to misuse and to misinterpretation, identifying it as both cause and effect of psychic engineering. The point is emphasised through the quixotic shifting of attitude which Colin Monk undergoes in response to brainwashing.

Finally, Colin is truthful with himself, acknowledging that his first error was to accept the fiction of the Human Delineation Act and sign the oath of agreement. Ever since, he has become a slave to the escalating fictions which have been required to maintain and develop his original rationalisations. However, once having opted in to such a horrifying proposal, it is very difficult for Colin to manoeuvre himself out. He is ironically caught up in having to contrive fictions to keep himself alive, which would previously have brought him certain death. In an ironic reversal of priorities, the social fictions which sought to create a supremacist race of "Beautiful New People" are replaced by a fiction which elevates the deformed, the outcasts, and the defective as the new elite. This point returns us, figuratively, to the

comments from R.D Laing, with which the chapter opened. Perhaps modern society, still in the aftermath of two world wars in this century, is already elevating the psychologically maimed as its elite. Milly's dream might suggest so. The final message which it contains, however, is a positive one for the human race, for it is Frame's habit to offer a negative view, against which the reader is challenged to supply the positive alternative. As Annis Pratt contends many women are currently writing in a way that makes us "look at the worst in order to dream of the better."38

In Milly's dream, Sandy the reconstructed man accuses her of choosing to live in a "deprived forest," where the trees are no better than living posts, like Tom, the living stone. "The trees have their heads cut off and their nerve endings . . . (and) will not fruit or experience any seasons or learn to reach beyond themselves to shelter birds and other creatures"39 The metaphor, which is Milly's dream, suggests that human beings are like the maimed trees, but have perversely chosen to live as though they were in a deprived environment. Laing holds that "the ordinary person is a shrivelled, dessicated fragment of what a person can be."40 The novel is reiterating the Platonic theme inherent in much of Frame's earlier works, that human beings continue, through their fictions, to mistake the shadow of life's possibilities for its substance. Sustaining themselves by their ill-

conceived, fiction making, human beings thus continue to settle for a limited material existence "in a deprived forest," imaged by the stunted headless trees of Milly's dream. This is the alternative they choose instead of developing their minds and imaginations in creative and humane ways, allowing their full humanity to be achieved through strong psychic growth, symbolised by the Livingstone pear tree.

# CHAPTER TEN

## DAUGHTER BUFFALO

The fictions human beings create to make death tolerable, along with those they adopt to control and manage life, are the major concepts explored in Daughter Buffalo. Of all the fictions human beings employ to delude and comfort themselves, those built up around the fact of their mortality are perhaps the most extensive and well-maintained. Daughter Buffalo, which has been described as a long meditative essay,1 is centrally concerned with death and with the fictions which surround it. Although the conscious mind, as Yellow Flowers indicates, is limited by death and its shadow, the subconscious, the mind, even in its limited waking state, enjoys a freedom not available to the body and the physical world in which it exists. The functioning human intelligence is not restricted by physical, temporal and spatial abstractions which the living psyche can instantly transcend; and artists, especially writers, have long capitalised on this phenomenon.

Turnlung, the artist narrator, projects himself psychically, in the manner of fiction writers, into the United States to study the fictions of death. There he creates the character Talbot Edelman who is also a student of death studies. Turnlung chooses the U.S.A. because the American approach to death is more "advanced" than it is in other countries. In America, death has been "domesti-

cated" by the fictions with which it is made supportable.

Turnlung's projections also juggle with modes of reality alternative to those controlled by fictions of time and space. His main concern is to encourage rethinking of fictions which separate death from life. Human beings construct elaborate fictions to deny their mortality, conveniently forgetting that it is the denial that is fictional and mortality itself a painful fact. Daughter Buffalo also touches upon concepts alternative to those which are currently adhered to in the management of life. Habitual and enclosing concepts related to the physical body continue to hamper the mind.

As Borges phrases it, "a system is nothing more than the subordination of all aspects of the universe to some one of them."2 Fictions which insist that life must be perceived in terms only of polar opposites, linear thinking, hierarchies of knowledge, separate disciplines and chronological time, can be transcended allowing new structures, alternative realities and original ways of thinking and being to emerge and be considered. Such liberating possibilities are available to all human beings, but more immediately available to the artist, whose mind is less rigidly patterned than most human minds, and more attuned to lateral thinking.

Even the words he uses to write with, Turnlung explains, "are part of the great deceit and confusion,"

involved as they are in the fictional arbitrariness of chronology and linear time.

> I imply that we move from There to Here, that we look backward to the past and forward to the future, but I could just as easily say, convincing myself, that we move round and round the source and the fountain. How we suffer from language.3

Life is presented as a picture enclosed within the confining frames of birth and death. But Edelman dreams he is enclosed by stone walls and confined by a canopy like a placenta, which becomes, rigidly, a stone placenta. These confining structures metaphorically represent the fictions which human beings have set in place to help them define and control their lives and the material world in which they live. People become so accustomed to these imaginary and arbitrary concepts, with which they attempt to make sense of the world, that they begin to act as though their fictions are real.

Time, causality, society and language itself, are all fictions through which the world is filtered.4 But people behave as though these fictions are actual, concrete, objects rather than convenient abstractions.

While attempting to free knowledge and imagination from the structural fictions of life, which tend to be conceived as opposing forces, the novel also, with some irony, gains its central tension from the polar atitudes to death represented by Turnlung and Edelman.

Talbot Edelman, a young American doctor, is the imaginative projection of Turnlung, called into being by his interest in people's fear of mortality. He records the disguises and subterfuges humans develop to protect themselves from facing death. Using the mind's facility to by-pass time and space, Daughter Buffalo investigates current social and cultural attitudes to, and measures for dealing with, death and dying. There are three aspects to this function. Turnlung first describes how people grow into a mental and emotional understanding of death as a physical state and as an abstract concept. This is followed by an outline of the way in which the body prepares automatically for death, by reducing its physical activities and slowing down all its mechanical functioning. Finally Edelman shows how human beings socially react to death and the measures they have set in place to deal with it.

The fictional range of outer positions towards death currently evident in Western cultures is described by Turnlung. He outlines how people acquire and develop the concept of death, from their first introduction to the topic, until their adult understanding of it is complete. Childish reaction to each encounter enlarges one's knowledge by adding new aspects to it from each subsequent instance. Mature acceptance of death is a cumulative process. From each instance of death to which he is exposed, however, Turnlung also gains some understanding

of the "failure of the living;" for their responses to death are structured and contained. Patterns must be followed in the management of emotional as well as physical responses to death. Genuine grief must be suppressed, while artificial surface emotion expressed in response to melodramatic stimulation by the media, is acceptable.

Finding a dead cat in the bushes as a child is Turlung's first experience of death. This animal death is followed by experience of a human death when his grandfather dies soon after. From these he learns that there are hierarchies of death, for the socially maintained power structures insist that "the extent of being," rather than the extent of loving is what matters, "when aids to memory are being planned." A loved animal therefore cannot be celebrated more than an unloved human.5 In their attempts to make death acceptable the social fictions which enclose it also emphasise speed in the management of death. For that reason, it is not until he unexpectedly sees his grandfather's glasses, seven years later, that Turnlung is able to confront his personal grief.

In his catalogue of death experiences, Turnlung notes that the toll taken by volcanoes, earthquakes and other so called "Acts of God,"6 has been given new dimensions with the immediacy offered by radio and television. "It is not the birth explosion, but the death explosion, he comments, which now "threatens to bankrupt man of all that makes him human,"7 for people can no longer respond to the

uncountable number of deaths with which they are daily confronted.

An accident, followed by a murder and a suicide in his own community, teach Turnlung, that shaped and conditioned as they are by the media, the community expend more energy on the histrionics of sensational death than they do on caring for people when they are alive. Murder, followed by suicide, offers a comforting release to the parents of a retarded boy, who can find no caring person to look after their son when they die.

All these incidents point to "the failures of the living" in their responses to death. Turnlung notes a similar failure of his own when he remembers his Aunt Kate's death. From the distance of his own age he can relate now, as he couldn't then, to the small wishes expressed before dying, by this woman whom he admired but didn't like.8

Turnlung describes two bizarre events which occur simultaneously in his town. While two copulating dogs become involuntarily yoked together on the ground, the body of a linesman is noticed adhering to the electric cables overhead. Turnlung feels imprisoned by what he has witnessed, for it points up the fact of human confinement, and the arbitrariness of natural processes. The physical boundaries of life and death are emphasised by the juxtapositioning of these two acts; copulation, which

initiates life, and dying, which is the prelude to death. "Why," Turnlung questions, "need loving and dying be such a state of prolonged attachment?"9 As a result of the fictions which human beings have produced to control loving and dying, these two states, which should be simple, harmonious and complementary, have become complex, dissonant and separated. Modern fictions and the physical measures which they give rise to are on the one hand, making of sexual intercourse a circus performance, a variety act; and, on the other, robbing the living of their necessary intercourse with the dead. Cemeteries, Turnlung used to find, were a haven from the "attachments of living;" but cemeteries take up too much space, and the dead must be dealt with in more economical ways. "There is no place now for the dead, or for the living to learn what the dead may teach them."10

"Literary deaths," are explained in relation to a headmistress friend of Turnlung's who, as a child, learned to cope with the death of her sister through the consoling effects of poetry. The poets provide convenient mental compartments in which to close off emotions and make death supportable. Moreover, the facility of words allows the young girl to expand her "rather thin dull grief to an impressive maturity." Words to flesh out the feelings, no longer have to be groped for; the poets provide them all. The concealing mandate of words is thus pointed up, for words need not describe and pin down actual emotions or

events, but are used to inflate or minimize, according to the whim of the recorder, simply because they are available. What IS then becomes what it is chosen to be. "I discovered that by reading poems I could put my dead sister. . . wherever the poets chose to put her,"11 comments Turnlung's friend.

Poetry, however, fails the woman when a second sister dies ten years later. Because her poetic spending on the first death had been so extravagant, she finds she has "little to give the new hungry death" and is faced with literary bankruptcy. This experience enables her to detach death from the fictional concealments of literature and to replace it, where it belongs, within the mutable pattern of proliferation and decay. The process continues "naturally beyond the act of dying through the cycle of putrefaction, maggots, sculptured weathered bone, to fresh grass and yellow buttercups."12 This link with nature has been "fictioned" out of existence in the large American "cities of pursuit," which have transformed death into a marvel "of cleanliness and concealment and dispatch."

Identifying himself in the prologue to the work as an elderly man waiting for the approaches of death, Turnlung muses on the mechanics of the death process and its effects. "Soon my life will run out. . . soon I shall give up the first and second hand furniture of memory, I shall live in a hollow house. I shall be among the dead."13

Contemplating the changes death will bring, he recounts the inevitable movement of the body towards death as its mechanisms wind down and prepare to stop; "death will. . . tamper," both before and after the event; "soon," he comments, "we shall be lovers lying in tune at last."

In this review of the ways in which his accumulating experiences become synthesised into a mature understanding of death, Turnlung has inevitably touched upon some of the fictions with which human beings attempt to tame this elusive and uncontrollable aspect of life. The work now goes on to examine the socially-engendered responses to death and the fictions with which they are maintained. These are recounted through the experiences of Talbot Edelman, who becomes a student of death in protest against family evasions in life. Edelman is from a comfortably-off Jewish family, what he describes as a "smooth, rich and clean" family. Uncovering the fictions which conceal his father's background, he is shocked by the family's use of "the clean garbage disposal unit," to erase uncomfortable memories. Another shock follows when Edelman discovers that his grandfather is still alive, and because he doesn't fit in with the fictional family image, has been hidden away in a nursing home. In reaction to these evasive fictions, when his grandfather dies, Edelman changes his medical major to death studies as a protest.

It is not long before Edelman himself becomes involved, not only in collective social evasions, but also

in developing evasive fictions of his own. Although he professes to have a deep affection for his dog Sally, for example, he performs almost every possible kind of mutilation on her. These physical operations are analogous to the psychic mutilations human beings carry out on their families and friends, while still, like Edelman, maintaining and believing their fictions of love for them. When a child patient dies, a sexual encounter with his friend Lenore is required as an affirmation of life. The death brings them closer "than even their loving." Showing an awareness of the fictions and their camouflaging functions, Edelman comments that: "after the death, there seemed to be no other place to go except to love as a way of hiding from death and. . . "14 from themselves.

Deaths are experienced by both men as a "succession of loves,"15 but most of Edelman's deaths are hospital deaths, "marvels of cleanliness, concealment and dispatch."16 Even the one automobile accident which he witnesses seems like "an instant accident, package deal like cornflakes," because the bodies, blood and wreckage are so quickly removed. While studying "field" deaths on another occasion, Edelman finds a man dying on the street. This death shocks him because it doesn't fit into his concept of death as instantly disposable. More shocking still is the prevailing mood of the people on the street which prevents him from acting appropriately as a doctor. Instead, he finds their behaviour shapes his mind to grope

for the now familiar means of instant disposal.17

In a sardonic juxtapositioning of events, the arrival is described of a man and his dog, which chooses just that moment and that spot to defecate. The man produces a scoop and a plastic bag into which he transfers the dog's excrement. This incident is followed by the arrival of an ambulance into which the corpse is tranferred after being quickly scooped up by the stretcher men. The placing of the two actions side by side accentuates the association of death with offensive wastes from the body which must be quickly disposed of. The emotionlessness of the proceedings depresses Edelman, whose own lack of compassion confirms that what he is learning from death is evidence of "the failures of the living."18 Encountering a wounded man on the street, shortly after, Edelman's reaction is similar, for he feels angered by the untidiness and incompleteness of the death he finds in his street studies. These uncontrolled deaths threaten the stereotyped attitudes which Edelman has himself already absorbed towards death. Re-enacting the scene later in a dream, he places the man securely in hospital, attended appropriately, "as we like to attend our dying," with a scaffolding of bottles and tubes.19

When Sally, Edelman's dog, dies, the vet he phones for help insists that the body be sent to the "Dog's Heaven," thus uncovering another well-developed set of

fictions. Edelman's decision to keep Sally's body for dissection upsets Lenore, who considers Sally as their child. Investment of emotion on animals, and the fictions which accompany and legitimise it, are again implicit in this small interaction.

Turnlung and Edelman eventually meet and their mutual interest in death leads to friendship. They make excursions to the Natural History Museum, on their first outing there examining imprisoned animals confined by death. On the second they visit the Zoo, where the cages which contain living animals give substance to the metaphor of life as an enclosure. These episodes parallel and enhance Turnlung's earlier metaphor of the dogs become rigid in life and the linesman become locked in to death.

When Turnlung dies, the novel describes Edelman ritualistically denying his friend three times. This demonstrates the tradition of building new fictions on those already established. Edelman retracts an offer made to have Turnlung share his apartment;20 he directs the ambulance men to "take him to the mortuary. . . as an indigent,"21 and, finally, tells the mortuary attendant that he had "never seen him" before in his life.22 These denials are doubly ironic because they demonstrate how far Edelman has been influenced by the fictions which maintain death in its place apart from life. His initiation into death studies was in protest against the fictions his family adopted to deny his grandfather, and he now is

perpetuating similar fictions.

The dream which follows describes Edelman as confined by stone walls and a stone sky, but the place becomes crowded with people who, in a dream within a dream, slowly auction off all his physical and emotional attributes until "The last curse. . . that of uselessness" is now upon him. He feels nothing, and feels he is nothing.23 In his dream Edelman undergoes a speeded-up, fantasy version of the physical preparations for death described by Turnlung, but his lasting sensation is one of peace.24

Edelman has been shown to resist life and to withdraw from death. Turnlung, knowing that it is a solace, a refuge, and a reward at the end of life, has learnt to accept death as a natural part of existence. Life may be full of promises which it may or may not fulfil; death offers nothing, promises nothing, but makes no demands and asks nothing in return. Human beings are afraid of death or rather, Turnlung notes, they have turned against it. To survive in life all bodily functions undergo a change at birth. In the watery pre-natal environment the human foetus is "against breathing," and must turn its lungs towards the air at the moment of birth. Turnlung believes that this process must be repeated to accommodate to death. To die naturally, human beings must turn again, now towards death, developing those functions which are appropriate for death. "all messages from the country of

death," he comments, "convince us that our final role must again be that of turn coat."25

The physical veracity of his narrative is of little significance, Turnlung assures the reader. What does matter, he asserts, is that death is the meeting place; "squamata, sauria, serpentes" all meet in the sanctuary, the heliocentric place of stone light. Turnlung has attempted to make accommodation with death by preparing to defend himself against the onslaughts of time. But death, he finds, is like an exclusive club for which tests must be passed and nothing can be prepared for. His reactions to the American way of death are, finally, sceptical; it is a series of fictions which are all inadequate. Death remains "a consuming mystery, the game to discover the secret, the game of trying to identify the last silence and hardest of all, the game of learning to accept and love the silence."26

No contract can be made with death, except an imaginative one, and "therefore the place to search for the clauses of the contract is among the arts."27 The process may be assisted by language which in time may give up the secrets of life and death leading us through the "maze to the original word as monster or angel. . ."28 This idea has its allusive origin in the logos of St John's Gospel, which is, of course, another narration of events, way of looking at situations, view of life, interpretation, or fiction. Behind and beyond this figuratively

"original" word or logos, used in the sense of divinely inspired message, stands a whole series of literal instances of the "word", which represents the discovery and beginnings of communicable speech, as original referend, symbol and source of language, in many different parts of the world.

The second focus of Daughter Buffalo touches upon the fictions which determine the modes of reality human beings commonly inhabit. This is done by emphasising the latitude of the artist to depart from these fictional abstractions. Turnlung, for example, emphasises that the literal veracity of his narrative, in terms of accepted temporal and spatial configurations, is of little significance. In fact doubts are cast on this aspect of his story from the inception of the work. Claiming to be recounting the details of a visit made to the United States ten years previously, he discloses that a writer friend reminds him that he has never left his native New Zealand, except in his imagination.29 It is then revealed that, although Turnlung has written to Edelman at the New York hospital where he is supposed to work, all the letters have been returned by the dead letter office. Moreover, although Turnlung subscribes to a medical research journal, hoping to find references to, or articles by, Edelman, no trace of him can be found. Turnlung comments that, although his writer friend remains sceptical of the "reality" by which he, Turnlung, records his encounters with Edelman in New

York, his friend was wise enough not to try to define "reality".

These points indicate that Turnlung's New York experiences may be on a different plane of reality altogether from the literal. The mind is not confined to an outer reality of time and place, in which going somewhere requires physical movement. Journeys of the mind can be accomplished instantly with no appurtenances but the mental luggage of the traveller, and this fact, of course, is the basic tool of the novelist. What matters, according to Turnlung, is that he has what he gave, "nothing is completely taken; we meet in the common meeting place in the calm of stone, the frozen murmurs of life. . . in the sanctuary."30

Edelman, like Turnlung, is ambivalent about the scale of "reality" on which the experiences and events he writes of are said to have occurred. Placing them in a time "one summer," he claims that though he is not a dreaming kind of man, yet the circumstances "appear as a dream".

Edelman then considers the capacity of the mind to offer habitation to consciousnesses other than its own. If he exists only as a character in Turnlung's imagination, how far can he be said to be real? If Turnlung shares his mind with others through the pages of his book, does this shared figurative identity give added life to the projected image, and if a human being or a character

in a novel is given living space in the minds of others, does this guarantee them a degree of substance?

In spite of the scepticism of others, Turnlung asserts that he holds fast to his reality, for "with all the cunning of jewel thieves,"31 human beings have a tendency to "ransack one another's reality." Worrying that Turnlung and Sally may find no moment of sanctuary in death, Edelman leases part of his "life and memory to them where they remain, and where Daughter Buffalo grazes as if she grazed upon miles of prairie."32

Writing of Janet Frame's next novel, Living in the Maniototo, Patrick Evans comments that

> it operated in the rarely-visited area that lies between our eyes and the page. No one knows fully what happens when we read a novel, what intimacies occur in the contract a writer makes with each of her readers.33

Daughter Buffalo studies the processes of fiction writing not only with regard to the contract between writer and reader, but also with reference to the contract the writer makes with herself and her characters. It demonstrates the power of the writer, and the willingness of the reader to accept the imaginative projections of the writer, even when the substance of the characters is called into question. Not yet finished making demands on the reader, Frame adds another twist to the fictional licences she has already taken, for Turnlung ends the novel imaged as a figure in the painting "Noon", purchased by Edelman's

father and sold by Edelman to an unknown bidder.

As he describes himself standing on the beach in the full noon-day sun, Turnlung comments that he has no shadow, nothing has shadows in this neon sun.34 This absence of shadows is significant because the shadow is the guide or medium through which one discovers the self. Integration with the shadow is a necessary preliminary to becoming a fully-integrated adult. Turnlung sees death and life as part of the same unified process. Edelman has been conditioned through social fictions to remove death from its natural state and to regard it artificially as being separate from life when in fact it is life's shadow. The novel points out that most human beings, apart from artists, have cut themselves off from their ability to "psychify" or tune-in to nature and the cosmos. The Daughter Buffalo of the title appears to be related to the emergence of the self, for in Jungian psychology, an animal image is frequently used to represent the self,

> The relation of the self to all surrounding nature and even to the Cosmos probably comes from the fact that the "nuclear atom" of our psyche is somehow woven into the whole world, both outer and inner. All higher manifestations of life are somehow tuned to the surrounding space-time continuum. . . The "inwardness" of each animal reaches far out into the world around it and "psychifies" time and space.35

The final image of Daughter Buffalo, who represents the liberated mind, the "nuclear atom" of the psyche, is of her grazing freely "as if she grazed upon miles of prairie."36 This is a positive image, indicating that the

mind can indeed be liberated to range freely and to regain its intended contact with nature and the universe. Humans will then discover that what death offers the living, at the end of life, "squamata, sauria, serpentes;" is a resting place in the shade, a refuge, finally; a sanctuary from living, away from the heat of the "terrible noon sun."37

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## LIVING IN THE MANIOTOTO

According to the interpretation of Janet Frame's novels put forward in this thesis, Living in the Maniototo, marks the conclusion of a stage in her fiction writing. Representing the final work in a series built around the theme of psychic exploration and its relation to artistic development, the intentional and unintentional fiction-making of human beings, is its major focus.

This novel demonstrates the culmination of skills painstakingly developed by the initiate artist through the unfolding of all Frame's previous works. It presents the now skilled writer firmly in control of the techniques of her craft, but still, like everyone else, susceptible to those inadvertent fictions which, without invitation, arrive to shape her life. Alice Thumb, the fully developed artist like all human beings, and especially all writers, is a compendium of personalities, a kaleidoscopic synthesis of the many potential selves who make up her character. Mavis Barwell/Halleton is the THIS world identity, while Alice Thumb, assisted by Violet Pansy Proudlock, ventriloquist, is her creative personality. Her novels are about characters drawn partly from the inner storehouse of her psyche, and partly from original entities which she absorbs from the outer world.

Alice Thumb, sister of Tom, and perhaps related to

Alice in Wonderland too, can speak with many voices; she loves to gossip and tell ALL. Lance Halleton and Lewis Barwell, the two buried husbands of her Mavis persona, may or may not be more of Alice Thumb's fictitious encounters, for she notes at one point that only her Alice Thumb and Violet Pansy Proudlock masks are real. Those two she compares to the metaphoric blankets of words defining the warm, sheltered, private world of the artist during her time of creative activity. Commenting on the deal tables which are imaged in Wuthering Heights, and at Lowood Hall, in Jane Eyre, she points out that they are real only in fictional terms. Referring to herself, the narrator admits that she, like them, is not real, at least while she is writing, except in her Alice Thumb or Violet Pansy guises.1 All her other identities, she implies, are only fictionally real. This point, however, may refer to the fact that authorship, at least in Borgesian terms, is a transformation.2 That is, the writer undergoes a figurative metamorphosis from individual man or woman into author. Authorship itself is a protean role, and during the time of artistic engagement at least, the author's personal identity is no longer required. Alice/Pansy, as the working author persona, closes off her outer world selves and centres her entire consciousness on her identity as an author.

To write, Borges believes, is not to express oneself as a human being, but to realise oneself as an author.3

What an author is, is determined by what one writes, rather than what one writes being determined by what one is.4 Readers encounter, not individual men and women, but only authors. The author, as literary voyager, passes from being an individual human being into being an author. Alice Thumb represents the culmination of this literary journey through all Frame's novels. Although Daphne, Istina, Zoe/Thora, Vera, Godfrey, Malfred, Naomi, Milly, Turnlung and now Alice, are individual characters interacting as separate identities in their own lives and circumstances, there is also a sense in which some of them at least act as composite characters, building upon the learning experiences of those that have preceded them. For most of them, to some extent, are initiate artists, exploring, in Alice's words, their possible and impossible identities 5 in the process of creating themselves as artists.

However, as Frame's earlier works have pointed out, most human beings are neither aware of the identities they display nor of the fictions they create. Alice, the cunning manipulator, is more aware than most, but is also constantly attentive to the possibilities of hoodwinking and deceiving her readers.

By the time that Maniototo is reached, Alice Thumb and her cohorts are comfortable with their myriad possible and impossible selves. "Which self am I?" she ponders from time to time. Alternative identities in the mind of

the artist, have more vigour and persistence as they jostle and push for recognition, than they have in the minds of other people who are less inclined to be attentive to them. Alice Thumb, the competent, fully-fledged artist, has learned many valuable lessons on her journey of artistic development. She knows now, when to listen and look, when to shape and mould and when to adopt Joyce's position and stand back pairing her fingernails.

Most of the action on the artist's journey of learning has taken place on the unidentified plain of the mind, which is only now named and finally given substance in this novel. Defined as the inner psychic world where all human beings live with themselves and where the artist forges her creative offerings, the Maniototo is, however, an ambivalent concept. The site of bloody, internal strife on the one hand, on the other, it offers the writer a warm refuge away from the cold winds of the outer world.

The Maniototo is therefore associated with THAT inner world of the mind where Frame's earlier characters struggle to give their ideas substance so that their artistic voices may be heard. The artist figure in each of Frame's novels is depicted in the process of initiation, each facing a different set of learning experiences and at a different stage of artistic development. All travel through the psychic underworld and describe the pitched battles fought out on the psychic frontline, as the artist

learns the creative skills of seeing, interpreting and communicating.

It is clear that the cluster of identities represented by Alice Thumb has absorbed all the lessons of her Frameian forbears and used them to transform herself into an author. In this process of transformation, people and events from earlier works emerge and recede in subsequent works, either as themselves, or as faintly familiar voices. The instances when characters and situations are translated from one plane of reality to another may be outlined in three ways. The first is internal to the novel and occurs when one aspect of the narrator's outer world is translated or seeps its way into Alice's narrative. This is demonstrated when Alice Thumb's character, Theo Carlton, suffers a stroke similar to that experienced by Lewis Barwell in Alice's outer, Mavis, world.

Translation of a second type occurs between novels, when characters from one work turn up in another, as for example when Toby Withers from Owls reappears in Edge. Resemblances between characters from different novels are also evident, for echoes of Istina Mavet reverberate through the following poem from Alice's novel The Green Fuse. Alice writes,

> As the snow's diminishing became certain, I learned again to survive,
> I found food served by the repentant blossoming wood.
> And then, my blood-colour furled, I flew to the highest bough and I sang
> in detail, without violence, a civilized version of my story.6

These links between characters are exemplified by this poem, for a mature Istina Mavet could well be its author.

Finally in a literal extension of the fictional first instance cited above, translation also occurs from the writer's own life to her writing. This aspect of translation is of some significance to Frame's fiction, for many critics, notably Patrick Evans,7 initially defined her early works as autobiographical. Biographical facts in a literary work, according to Sturrock, require a literary explanation. Once they have been chosen, they pass from life to literature and their meaning changes, for they have been set into a structure.8 It is, however, only necessary to read Frame's autobiographical work To The Island alongside its fictional counterpart Owls to appreciate the artistry of that transformation.

Another writer, Jerzy Kosinski, whose work has been similarly classified as largely autobiographical, writes

> What we remember lacks the hard edge of fact. To help us along we create little fictions highly subtle individual scenarios which clarify and shape our experience. The remembered event becomes a fiction, a structure made to accommodate certain feelings . . . If it weren't for these structures, art would be too personal for the artist to create, much less for the audience to grasp.9

Kosinski, therefore believes that even if the writer intends to write an autobiographical work, the procedure is subject to memory, which is not only selective, but also itself a fictionalising of experience. Moreover, the ordering of experience as required by the conventions of

writing, further distances the end product from the original event. No art can be entirely original in Frame's view, art by its nature is a recapitulation or a reforming of an experience, at least twice removed from the actual, but not, on this count, inferior.

> Between external reality and his own imagination the writer constructs one curtain after another . . . These curtains cannot completely veil reality they merely obscure its patterns.10

This is essentially Frame's view, that art is wrought in a mould fashioned by memory from the original, and therefore is twice removed from the experience which inspired it. Art is "the imitative act hot from the mould of the original fact . . ."11 a concept which reiterates the platonic motif present in most of Frame's novels.

The work is centrally concerned with the processes of writing fiction, or fabulation which is the term coined by Scholes to denote this authorial self-awareness; but inherent in this topic are two related and inseparable issues. The first is the writer's proclivity for operating on shifting modes of reality. The second is the inadvertent fiction-making engaged in by all human beings, and from which the narrator is not exempt. For these reasons Maniototo unfolds simultaneously on several different levels of understanding. Alice, first of all, wants to show the reader how she writes a novel while, in Borgesian fashion, engaging herself at the same time in the actual novel-writing process.12 However, as Alice gradually

discloses, the writer is only slightly more in control of the fictions with which she is engaged than she is of the fictions which beset her in the outer world. While conscious of manipulating her readers into her fictional creation, she herself is at the mercy of her own inner-world fictions and those of her characters, as well as the outer-world fictions with which everyone has to contend.

The novel deals thematically with the processes of writing from three perspectives; that of the writer's engagement with herself, followed by her interactions with her characters and ideas and finally her contract with her readers. These three narrative functions are, however, not distinct, but unfold together as the work progresses.

In Maniototo, the working artist Alice Thumb takes her readers with her as she describes the whole process of writing a novel. In the first, instance the artist must retreat from the outer world of every day living while the creative process is going on. This effort essentially follows the Heideggerean concept of Dasein with particular emphasis on its "Forfeiture" aspect. The three aspects of Dasein or "selfhood," according to Heidegger, are facticity, existentiality and forfeiture. Facticity refers to the fact that human beings inhabit a world not of their own making. They are faced at birth with an already present world, in the development of which they had no part. The second aspect of Heidegger's concept, existentiality, refers to the act of making the world our own.

The human being accepts her situation as a challenge to her power to become what she MAY, rather than simply allow the press of environmental forces to shape her as she MUST be.

For Frame's conception of the artist, as she is described in Maniototo, forfeiture, Heidegger's third aspect of Dasein, becomes the most significant. This idea refers to the

> scattering of our essential forward drive through attention to the distracting cares of everyday and of the things and people that surround us everyday. Thus, inevitably and continuously, the forward-driving I is sacrificed to the persistent and pressing they . . . AND if the world is material for our creative energy, it is also the agent by which we are seduced from the essential drive to understand and create.13

It is this process of avoiding forfeiture which is of optimum importance to the artist. Only by moving into the silent places of the mind and struggling through the painful encounters of this hidden, bloody testing ground, can the creative individual sharpen her powers of imagination and authenticate herself as an artist. It must be to the "highest bough" that she flies, to escape the persistent and pressing "they" of the outer world. Maniototo indicates that the "they" of the inner world may also contribute to the effects of forfeiture at times. It is not to be forgotten that the artist speaks for us all. The artist is the communicator who puts us in touch not only with each other, but most importantly, with ourselves. For people have only recently discovered that

"mystery and imagination" are for everyone. "Isn't the Maniototo," she adds ironically, "also a place where patients go to be cured of their sickness?"14

Adhering to the concept that art is at least once removed from the original, Alice settles herself in a house borrowed, not from friends, but from friends of friends, in order to begin the novel she is writing. The house itself is filled with almost every conceivable kind of fiction, "likenesses of replicas, prints of paintings, prints of prints, genuine originals and genuine imitation originals, imitation sculptures and twin original sculptures."15 The house is of course the house of fiction, and Alice feels uneasy in it, for its unusual shape disturbs her. The one significant omission in the house is the absence of Yeats. Masks there are in plenty, but the volume of Yeats which Alice seeks as an ally cannot be found. Prominently displayed is a mask of Shakespeare which signifies the many faces or identities which the writer is constantly adopting.

Perhaps the presence of Shakespeare linked to the emphatic absence of Yeats is intended to underline the former's clear understanding of, and skill in manipulating, the fictional medium in its widest, most comprehensive sense, while himself remaining apart from, outside and beyond the myth-making procedures. Yeats, for this reason, much as Alice admires him, is not a model, or

fellow sceptic in the fabulation mode, but rather, like most human beings, writers included, a victim of his own, albeit conscious and high order, myth-making on which he organised his life.

Analysing her state of mind as she prepares herself and then begins to write, attempting to keep track of the many almost imperceptible shifts from her inner to her outer world and back again, Alice notes that even in her inner world there are many compartments. The writer has the task of recording her mental movements between versions of outer "reality" and the multiplicity of fictions which evolve there, along with the prolific imaginative creations of her inner world. What she will attend to and what she will avoid are not really choices within the control of the artist, any more than they are for most people. The fictions continually get in the way of seeing and translating both inner and outer worlds.

The many-faceted tools of interpretation shape the mind and direct the perceptions in ways which make objectivity on so many fronts an impossibility. A view of life, an interpretation or an opinion, are all only the chance and fleeting coordination of kaleidoscopically varied possibilities which are seized upon and hardened into doctrines, systems, theories, or philosophies. The compass of the artist's vision may possibly be wider than that of most people, but it is no less subject to the distorting effects of her constantly accumulating filter-

ing mechanisms.

The novel is organised around variations on the themes of attending and avoiding. Focusing attention, examining, scrutinising, analysing some ideas, events or circumstances, and avoiding, disregarding, ignoring, leaving out, omitting, by-passing others, are the two sets of concepts centrally involved in fiction writing and fiction making. Each section of Maniototo is directly named in relation to attending and avoiding. In the first two sections of the book, Alice pays attention to her outer-world Mavis self and the sets of fictions required to maintain this persona. In the third part of the work, she enters the Maniototo, her inner psychic world, and probes now into the process of writing fiction in relation to her Alice identity which controls this aspect of her life.

"Attending" is related to the outer world, while "avoiding" is a function more of the inner psyche which finds attention to outer-world activity of limited importance and therefore avoids it. Human beings, who are themselves replicas, Alice contends, cannot exist until they have shaped what they have discovered in the manifold.16 They must also learn that they too "have been shaped and patterned . . . by . . . an original."17 Some, she points out, live in the manifold without ever exploring or tasting its riches, for they use it as a retreat,

as an act of avoidance from the outer, so that they do not touch, shape or change the inner. Others escape from the manifold on an original path and this intensifies their avoidance. Still others find that all the busy-ness of avoiding and turning towards is irrelevant for the "centre of activity" is elsewhere, "like that of the motionless yet turning world."18

Alice confides that she is not like any of the above, but operates as a kind of commuter between "real life" and "fiction"! Journeying through a novel as she writes it, she moves from attending to the outer, into the inner, where the manifold lies. Once there she consciously avoids the outer until the process is complete and she re-emerges from her period of inner confinement back again to awareness of the outer.

The manifold is an important concept in this work, central to the process of creation. It is metaphorically presented in Maniototo, as a rather capricious and volatile department of the mind, which not only absorbs material from the outer world, but also functions as a mould or figurative reprographic system. Associated above with the original act, which can never be recaptured except as a replica or copy, the manifold appears to be involved in the process of not only receiving "without choice" 19 and storing material of potential creative value, but also reproducing and re-creating it. Described as a Proteus-like entity, the manifold, which casts the

initial imprint of memory, itself appears to become the "mould" from which the first and all subsequent impressions "of the original fact" are taken. As life in its ceaseless shower of innumerable atoms,20 unfolds before it, the manifold appears to receive and record some of these segments of life, which the artist then "interfere(s) with", changing their shape and direction as she requires.21

"Avoiding, Bound By the Present Historic," continues the theme of avoidance or denial but now in relation to the four characters on whom Alice bases her novel. It also refers to the avoidance or denial of the outer world which the artist must practise during her periods of creation. Such distancing from the outer world is essential at times for the artist to maintain her inspiration and to focus single-mindedly on her writing. It also refers to the relationship between the systems which structure the outer world on concepts of time and space, and the inner world which is not bound by these arbitrarily applied fictions. More significantly still, it refers to the essential immediacy of all fictions which remain forever crystallised in the present in the manner of the figures immortalised on Keat's Grecian urn.

Alice's characters become so real at times that the boundary between inner and outer fictions for example, are confused. "I decided to proclaim my imagining as fact and

in the end I believed my own belief," 22 states one of her characters, Roger Prestwick, but the words accurately describe the situation of Alice herself. In another context, Roger also voices the desire, shared by the artist, to find "a piece of reality that never had a shadow or a replica,"23 which is an impossible fiction. Even when "hot from the mould of the original fact," the representation is still a re-presentation, and therefore not new.

Alice maintains the Platonically-based theme of removal from the original, by planning to write, not herself about a famous New Zealand writer, but about the Watercress family who are engaged in this research. Margaret Rose Hurndell, the focus of their studies, is, of course, Katherine Mansfield. Alice finds her plans do not go well. You do not decide, she points out, but have your actions decided for you.24 For in spite of the clamorous cries of the Watercress family,25 the collection of ideas which emerge from the manifold are centred, not on the characters she intends to write about, but upon the four visitors who are living in the house with her. In fact, she confidingly invites the reader to share her dream that the guests she is entertaining are fictional characters, and not actual visitors at all. However, the implication is that her dream is foolish, for the evidence of her guests' presence is all around. It is only at the end of the book that the dream is shown to be physically actual and the reality which Alice believes to be actual,

is shown to be a fiction.

Battles may be played out on the Maniototo of the mind, but while she works the psychic retreat also offers a kind of shelter or sanctuary to the artist from the cold winds of outer "reality." The final section of the novel relates the state of mind of the artist when the "tongue blossom," or creative work, ends. Alice recounts Roger's comments

> yet there is no end to the telling in the literate world, explaining and telling, propagating and admiring the tongue blossom "day by day uttering speech and night unto night showing knowledge." Then why is each of us so diminished by the resulting fruit of the tongue-blossom".26

Alice's novel has come to an end and she now emerges from her refuge in the Maniototo. Clues to which "reality" she is currently inhabiting are offered by the keepsakes apparently left behind by the four guests she wrote about. This "tongue blossom" has now withered, but the artist will shortly begin to create another, continuing "to live in the house of replicas, usefully having all in mind, the original, the other and the manifold."27

"A writer," Alice explains, "like a solitary carpenter bee, will hoard scraps from the manifold and then proceed to gnaw excessively . . . ".28 The "eater," who is the writer, vanishes and is taken over for a time by the character. This process is already underway in Alice's inner world, for succumbing to the common human dilemma, she can no longer distinguish her intentional fictions

from the unintentional ones which pass for human "reality."

Alice, however, does take herself seriously at one point when the fiction, she confides, may be more unconsciously fictional than she suspects. This occurs when she discusses the motivation for writing. A human being only embarks on the creative journey because she/he "is starving and must plant food for mouth or heart and mind."29 The real artist learns that her want should fill the world, for "to write you have to be at the terrible point of loss, and stay there, wanting in, not out."30 "Why is each of us so diminished by the resulting fruit of the tongue blossom?" she questions. Obsessed and utterly absorbed, living IN the Maniototo while she works, the artist in her fiction of the creative act believes that she is slowly consumed by her creation. Reiterating the point she comments that it is at the cost of "self erasure" that she treats her four guests as fictions. Her own self erasure in this situation, she adds, may vindicate or help to explain Tommy's earlier removal by the Blue Fury.

This episode of Tommy and the Blue Fury is significant on several counts. Initially, perhaps, it simply emphasises the artist's power of life and death over her characters. However, it is also intended to hightlight some of the difficulties the artist has to contend with in face of the Heideggerean notion of forfeiture, with which

modern urban life oppresses. Tommy like Alice, is an artist and craftsman; he is "bleached out" of existence by his own fiction of the rogue bath-cleaner, and he literally burns himself up in the struggle to practise his art in the city environment. Relieved that she is not "ground down among the beetle-people, pinned and crushed with (her) wings picked off," Alice observes that "it's hard to fight the real power of a city."31

More significantly still, this episode touches upon the modes of reality or modes of consciousness alternative to those with which the material world is fictionally controlled. Mavis/Alice explains the event to her friend Brian, by theorising that Tommy has "merely returned beneath the surface of apparent reality."32 Alice's words reiterate the fictional structure of all "realities" which human beings clutch at. Frame's position here again aligns with that of Coover, whose work also seeks to uncover a kind of truth beyond "the rim of reality."33 Although their positions touch at this point, they also diverge for it is the contracting universe, in Coover's view, which forces contemporary mankind to re-assume perspectives which, in their eternal and supernatural sense, are essentially pessimistic.34 Alice's perspectives, here, which might be assumed to reflect those of Frame, are more philosophical than Coover's and more accepting of the continuing tension between fluidity and fusion, of which life and its apparent reality are composed. She writes,

> Those creatures and worlds that we know only in sleep and dream and mythology-of yesterday and of today-the magical technology-are emerging as usual reality in the new dimension of living and dying. And when the unreal has been accepted and made real, new realities will present themselves, forces which become gentlenesses, gentlenesses which become forces.35

The positive tone of this passage acknowledges and is accepting of unconventional states of consciousness and multiple stages of awareness. These imply ways of structuring and ordering the universe alternative to those presently in place. Describing the existence of such states, William James writes that although they cannot "furnish formulae, . . . at any rate they forbid a premature closing of our account with reality."36

Frame, through Alice, juggles with modes of reality, or with what might be called the fluidity beneath the surface of what is, apparently, reality in fusion. She also experiments with composite characters and takes other liberties with the traditional novel form. These approaches bring her close to the realms of metafiction, which "assault or transcend the laws of fiction" as these are currently understood.37

Language as a motif unites with the motif of artifice to underline the novel's central theme of fiction-making. Language is the medium through which the fictions are conceptualised and communicated; while artifice, because all fictions are artifices, replicas, copies, imitations, re-presentations or any one of the numerous lists of

synonyms which Alice offers to highlight this phenomenon, is inherent in the fiction-making function. Lists of words from similar semantic areas are scattered throughout the book, ranging from the catalogue of battles which name suburban streets where domestic battles are played out as "Wunda Kitchens, take shape, in the streets of unimaginable death - "38 to advertising fictions, which pretentiously name carpets, "Sky Planet, Dream of the Night, Forest Splendor, Classic Plains (and) Mountain Glory."39 The Prologue, "Naming People and Places," emphasises the importance the writer places on affixing identifying labels. The reader must be attentive to the way the narrator herself uses names in her work. Names, like the Maori place names Wanganui, Waikato, Tuatapere, Taranaki, which are powerful names, can "set a place alight like a bush-fire," for example. They are not just stuck on places in the manner, that Pakeha names seems to be given, like grocery labels, but are "welded to the place by the first unifying act of poetry."40

The place of language in the novel, and as an extension of that, its function in life, grows out of these points. Referring metaphorically to the warm blanket of words which shelter and protect her in the refuge where she writes, Alice regrets Lewis Barwell's loss of control over language by observing that "all beautiful words that people have but seldom use, the wide, rich tapestry of language that could cover the whole earth like a feasting-

cloth or a golden blanket-these were lost."41 While Mavis/Alice romantically asserts that "language never hurt anyone," Lance Halleton emphasises that he has experienced the rape, murder, debt, and suicide that language is responsible for.42 Alice marvels at Lance's knowledge of places he has never visited, except in his imagination. She has a code for dealing with the protean behaviour of words and the metamorphism of language. "A word," for example, "which doesn't slop its meaning over the side, is good." A sentence is bad if it "stumbles on useless objects unless it "casts a unique radiance upon them."43 Alice calls attention to the strange variety of tasks that language is required to perform. It is used to communicate information related to specific professional, occupational or technical fields, as, for example, when Mrs Tyndall, Brian's black cleaning woman, dies, and medical jargon, "dreadful doctorese," as Alice terms it, is used to convey the medical facts of her death.44 Less obviously and more significantly, people use it, not only to avoid unpleasant facts, but also as a means of keeping at a safe distance from each other. Alice notes how she uses language to avoid responsibility for Mrs Tyndall's hard life. We have our own reasons for using words and we live out our separate lives "glancing at each other from time to time with clear intuition and acknowledgement of our . . . accumulation of self deceits and compromises."45

During the entire course of the novel cognates of

artifice, deception and concealment are piled up and frequently related to cognates of language which also abound in the book. "Imitation" and a "masquerade"46 referring to the presence of frost in a reputedly frost-free district are examples of the first, while describing Roger as a translater of "clichés" 47 and her own life as "woven of commonplaces," are examples of the second. Continuing the theme of artifice, houses are described as faced with "new false bricks and real bricks over false bricks, and false iron and false wood. . ."48

Bird imagery in Frame's work is often used negatively, and the image of "language as the hawk suspended above eternity, feeding from it but not of its substance,"49 which depicts language as a scavenging or predatory creature feeding upon eternity as though it were carrion, contrasts sharply with Mavis/Alice's romantic view of language as a feasting-cloth or golden blanket, as outlined above.50

The ambivalent nature of language which these dichotomous interpretations pinpoint probes to the core of the human dilemma which is of course the core of Frame's concerns in these novels. They spotlight the precarious position of bewildered human beings, whose drive to achieve a sense of security in a complex and unpredictable world is almost fatally doomed. Not only are human perceptions limited, unreliable and faulty, but also, as we have seen, it is this flawed medium of language which is the

principal communicative system on which they depend. The recording of almost all thoughts and ideas is carried out through the process of language, and more serious still is the fact that language is probably the major, if not quite the only means of conceptualisation used by people in today's world.

These points explain the modern urge to make myths, and show why the capacity for fiction building is such a basic, and well-developed impulse in contemporary human beings. We no longer have to chant and drum our way through myths, as Jung 51 has pointed out, but this very fact means that the entire process of making fictions, which is how we interpret ourselves and our worlds, is so speeded up that the number, shape and variety of these interpretations continue to multiply. Channelled and disseminated by paper, print, sound waves and electrical impulses, these fictions, which have now exploded on to celluloid film, plastic tape, electronic image, and computerised micro-chip, form a set of shared fictions which run parallel to, and even become confused with, those stabilising fictions human beings use personally and individually to maintain themselves.

Alice describes writing as a "carefully-planned and controlled use of attention." Although this is at least her third book, she feels confused by the writing process. "I found myself beset upon" she confides, "not knowing

what to do, in a whirl of avoiding and not avoiding, haunted by the manifold, the replicas and the original."52 The figure of Yorkie Wynyard, who transforms himself in the instant, donning a set of impromptu personae designed to fit in with who or whatever happens to be appropriate at the moment, is likened to the role of the writer who also changes shape in response to circumstances.

Acknowledging that human beings are materialistic, hypocritical, and bent on avoiding unpleasantness, Alice also accepts their vulnerability and powerlessness. At the same time, however, she assert with vigour the need for people to attend more carefully to language and to use it with respect and intelligence. "I have to cry out here," she proclaims, "that language is all we have for the delicacy and truth of telling;"53 the generosity and forgiveness of words make one weep, she adds. These statements mark a significant change in Frame's attitude to language, for their positive tone contrasts sharply with her usual critical stance. Here she makes a clear distinction between the words themselves and the people who use them, making allowances for both.

As the final work in a series of novels which specifically examines the masks people display to the world and to themselves, Maniototo abounds with characters who exemplify Yeats's doctrine of the mask. Yeats writes, "the MASK and BODY OF FATE occupy those positions which are most opposite in character to the positions of WILL

and CREATIVE MIND."54 The behaviour of 'Yorkie' Wynyard, and Brother Coleman acts out this theory. The former is a notorious confidence trickster who, disguised as his opposite, Lance Halleton the debt collector,55 leaves bad debts everywhere. Likewise, Brother Coleman, the religious healer, is really only a mask behind which a cheap crook exploits gullible people.56

Alice's four 'guests', all also conform to this pattern by behaving in ways which oppose, or are contrary to, the facts which actually apply to their lives. Doris, for example, hides from her dreams on the one hand, while, on the other, creating an improbable fiction that she will write a novel. Confessing that she has taken liberties with Doris's story, Alice is very snide about these authorial aspirations, and clearly "sends up" Doris's narrative, by recounting it in the mannered, self-conscious style she suspects Doris would adopt.57 Roger won't acknowledge that his ambition to experience a vision of God in the desert is improbable, impractical and only an attempt to compensate for his lack of substance. By spending his money recklessly, Theo avoids facing his financial problems, while his cultivation of a youthful image is a denial of his advancing age.

Only in rare moments of solitude does Zita admit that her much-advertised perfect marriage with Theo is in fact a hollow relationship. When her private thoughts surface,

she sees that she is Theo's shadow. He is so powerful and her life is so absorbed in his that she has not thought her own thoughts for years, only shadows of his.58

This motif of shadows is a recurring symbol, central to many of Frame's other novels, which also figures largely in Maniototo. In Jungian psychology the shadow offers an essential counter to the material physical being. Generally exerting a neutral or positive influence, it occasionally becomes actively negative if it is suppressed or denied for too long, as State of Siege suggests. By commenting on the psycho-emotional effects of social, cultural and political trends, the artist exerts a stabilising influence on human beings, acting like the collective shadow of humanity. Through her works of art, the artist provides a meeting point where the inner and outer lives of human beings can merge. Her creative offerings furnish a kind of psychic and emotional thermometer to gauge the inner temperature of humanity, as well as offering a type of collective safety valve. "Art reproduces the inner life, the life of the affections and the emotions," writes Ernst Cassirer.59 By providing a socially-acceptable focus for pent-up feelings to be unleashed, works of art counteract the negative effect of constantly suppressing the inner world, which the rigours of currently-organised daily existence demand. By affording a figurative confluence between the physical and psychological worlds, the cathartic influence of works of

art helps to maintain the psycho-emotional health of humanity. The role of the artist is thus no less than a synthesis of reporter, interpreter and healer for all human beings. Moreover, art is one of the systems of symbolic form which provides human beings with their "reality," for until their scarcely-perceived ideas are created in symbolic form, people have no reality. "Art. . . is another world in the sense that it is an alternative mode of apprehending the world, one of the organs by which" humanity creates its reality.60

During the course of her writing, Alice not only describes the writer's relationship with herself, with her techniques, ideas and characters, but also directs attention towards the writer's effects on those who will read her works. Of this process, Patrick Evans writes,

> Living in the Maniototo, is an unusual novel, because it operates in the rarely-visited area that lies between our eyes and the page. No one knows fully what happens when we read a novel, what intimacies occur in the contract a writer makes with each of her readers. But it seems that, of all the writers living today, Janet Frame knows more than most about the magical spell that compels us to read and believe. . .61

Alice's ability to take the readers with her into this house of fiction, and to hold their attention through the myriad stops and turns and changes of direction which the writer experiences as she writes, testifies, not only to the reader's willingness to believe, but also to the writer's skill as an artist. Alice demonstrates this skill by persuading the reader into a fiction without one

even being aware of it. Adopting one of the writer's many proteus-like guises she welcomes the readers in the manner of an entertainer at a fair ground or a variety show. After introducing the accoutrements of her trade, which emphasise its elements of artifice, "pocket head" endowed with artificial fitments for smiling, head nodding, swivel eyes. . . moving ears, squirting of water from the eyes for crying, and sensation wig for standing on end,62 she rushes the reader straight into the episode of Tommy and the Blue Fury. Demonstrating with this event the writer's power to manipulate the reader, she proceeds to hold the reader's attention through the many convolutions involved in the writing process. The writing of fiction, as already outlined, entails embarking on the journey of self creation, creating oneself, not as a human being, but as an author.

Shakespeare, of course, is the writer who most forcefully exemplifies this concept, for with Shakespeare, more than any other writer, most author and least man is available for scrutiny.

While in the grip of her compulsion to write, only her Alice Thumb and Violet Pansy Proudlock masks exist for her. Reminiscing about the many half-constructed fictional houses that have sheltered her for a time, Alice concludes that "the cost of the warmth" within the sheltered inner world has always been too great. "I know who live outside the house of fiction where the cold wind blows across the

waste spaces from heart to heart."63 Yet, in her own self-indulgent fiction which compels her to be a writer Alice believes that one only enters the warmth of the creative shelter from "the terrible point of loss," when your want fills the world. Thus her personal fiction romanticises the compulsive urge which keeps her writing.

Continuing in the meantime to manipulate her readers, Alice carries them along with her in the belief that the Garretts, whose house she is living in, have been killed in an earthquake in Italy and have bequeathed the house to her. Having presented her guests with keepsakes from the house, she is surprised to find on their departure, that in spite of having aniously argued over them, they have left their gifts behind. In addition, the house seems strangely untidy and neglected although it has been continually inhabited. Mould is growing on the preserves and a half-eaten candy remains on the coffee table, where Alice recollects having placed it two weeks before.

At this point doubts about the length of time she has been working on her novel begin to trouble Alice. The timelessness of this period of psychic limbo, which occurs between leaving the inner creative world and re-entering the outer shared one is communicated to the reader as Alice experiences it. For a time the boundaries of the two worlds are uncertain, for she has lived with such intensity of concentration in THAT world that transition

to THIS one is prevented by her sense of confusion.

The strategems by which Alice directs the responses of the reader continue to be employed but Alice finds she has been fooled by her own fictions, for just as she leaves the house a taxi arrives and the Garretts climb out. Such is her discomfort that she is tempted to rush headlong into another fiction, simply to escape "the possibility and responsibility of feeling" which the outer world demands. Resisting the temptation, she is, however, worried about the extent to which she is out of touch with the shared outer world. Hoping to prove that she herself is "not just a character out of fiction, a replica of a replica dreaming of a replica of dreams,"64 she is distressed to discover that a butcher's shop stands where she thought the Carltons lived and a supermarket is sited where the Garretts' lawyer should be.

These confusions continue when she reaches Baltimore, for on learng that her friend Brian has died, she finds the news hard to accept in her present state of dislocation. The Garretts unexpected return is easier to acknowledge because their bulk and shadow give people a presence,"65 which testifies to their existence. Brian's absence is more difficult to adjust to.

Alice's feelings of confusion and uncertainty are shared by the readers who accompany her on the journey from the Manioto, back to the shared outer world. Empti-

ness and exhaustion are the dominant emotions, and Alice asserts that she has had enough for the present "of the manifold and the real and unreal `marble complexities and bitter furies' of paying attention and avoiding."66 This, however, is only "for the meantime," for the narrator knows that her Alice Thumb identity will continue to lure her back to "live and work in the house of replicas, usefully having all in mind, the original, the other and the manifold."67

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## CONCLUSION

The unifying principle behind all of Janet Frame's novels is the acknowledged and unacknowledged fiction-building which is central to human life. In each of her novels, as this study has shown, a distinct but related aspect of these themes is examined.

The complexities of transition from the inner-directed world of childhood to maturity with its increasing dependence on the fictions of the outer shared world were identified as significant in Owls. Media induced adult fictions, such as advertising, popular music, organised religious worship and the "drug drop" of news and press reporting, along with the effects these fictions have on the lives of the characters, have all been touched upon in relation to this novel.

The disintegration of personality configurations in response to environmental conditions was explored in Faces, while similar concepts involved in attaining wholeness of being both as an individual and as an artist were focused upon in Edge. The works of Hanrahan, Rhys and Perkins-Gilman, it was noted, are all significant in relation to the former, while the writings of R.D. Laing, while shown to be relevant to the latter, were also found to be important for an understanding of State of Siege. Describing the inner psychic journey of its central

character, this novel, like Edge, was discussed in terms of both the individual sense of self and the artist's search for identity as a creator.

Scented Gardens, which further emphasises the unreliability of the fictions on which people structure their lives, was analysed in terms of the perceptual limitations of human beings. Time, change and the ways people adjust to these concepts, were focused upon in relation to Adaptable Man; while death and the fictions surrounding it were found to be central to Yellow Flowers and Daughter Buffalo. The subconscious mind was seen to be a major theme in the former, while the latter, it was shown, continued to explore the many modes of apparent reality in which the artist can operate.

This concept of artistic diversity was also pointed up as focal to Living in the Maniototo which was seen to synthesise most of the themes and motifs present in works which precede it.

Finally, parallels were identified between, Faces, which dealt with the psychological effects of outer world phenomena on the inner self concept, and the physical effects inner, politically-motivated, fictions have on people and objects in the material world, which were pointed up as major concerns in Intensive Care.

An integral part of most of these works is the growth of the individual into personal integration and unity of

being. This is parallelled by the twin theme which traces the growth and development of the artist from the inner-directed, embryonic state of childhood in Owls, to the skilled narrative persona, functioning as a creative writer in Maniototo. A different stage of personal and technical development is focused upon as the artist is accompanied through the vicissitudes of growth in each of the novels. The trauma of adolescent breakdown, and various incipient stages of learning, are passed through in the early works. Scented Gardens explores the mechanics of sensory and perceptual filtering on interpretations of the environment; and State of Siege describes the inner journey of healing and reintegration in an artistic, as well as a psychological, sense. Learning to face and make accommodation with the shadow self is a recurring theme in many of Frame's novels, and is central to this one.

Adaptable Man addresses the theme of fiction writing very directly, and the theme of personal integration more indirectly through the fiction building of its characters. Concerned as they are with dimensions of being alternative to those of the outer shared world, Yellow Flowers and Daughter Buffalo are both centrally involved with personal and artistic growth, and death in its place as part of the natural cycle of life.

This thesis has attempted to show the direction in

which Janet Frame's work has been moving to date. Evans 1 detects a circularity in her writing which he conceives as stasis, or movement without progress. The present study identifies this rather as a spiral movement which revisits and reiterates similar themes and ideas, but is essentially moving on, accumulating new perspectives with each sweep of its cycle.

Similarities have been noted between Frame's work and that of Barth and Barthelme. This link is viewed as that of technique rather than of substance, for these last-named writers, in Scholes words, "are chroniclers of our despair over the exhausted forms of our thought and existence."2 Frame, on the contrary, is only too willing to point out new directions and to offer new forms and new thoughts. More lasting associations have been outlined between Frame and Gass and Coover, who "are reaching through form and behaviour for some ultimate values, some true truth."3 Moving in a similar direction to these last named, Frame is found to be approaching the realms of metafiction.

Jung's view that "it is a common illusion to believe that what we know today is all we can know,"4 is in strong opposition to the pessimism of Barth and Barthelme. All Frame's novels affirm Jung's point, for it has been her constant and energetically-pursued intention to stress the limitations of social "realities" as they are con-

ceived today, and to emphasise the range of imaginative possibilities which wait to be uncovered. Scholes asserts his belief in the relevance and indispensability of fiction for providing these insights; and fiction making in all its guises, this study contends, is what Frame's novels are fundamentally about.

"Fiction," writes Scholes, "which gives us images of human situations and actions, is superior to philosophy, which tries to capture these things in mere abstract co-ordinations of words."5 Fiction has more lasting qualities not only than philosophy, but also than science. As Jung states, "nothing is more vulnerable than scientific theory, which is an ephemeral attempt to explain facts and not an everlasting truth in itself."6 Functioning as both a map which provides fixed cfigurations, and as a mirror which is "perpetually various,"7 fiction by its very nature endures because it doesn't aspire to the factual validity of the empirical sciences. It explores ideas, seeking to establish emotional truths only, and those, as Borges 8 points out, are limited partly by the context which initiated them. For that reason a novel can be more true than any truth in the outer, material world, which is always subject to erosion, amendment, and discrediting displacement.

"Our conscious mind," von Franz prompts, "continually creates the illusion of a clearly-shaped "real" outer world that blocks off many other perceptions."9 Frame's

work, like that of Coover and Gass, recognises this fluctuating variety of all "reality". Only art, through metaphor, symbol and fiction can explain this protean "reality" which pushes on over the rim and beyond the edge of the alphabet.

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