

**The Migration of the Flightless Bird: Janet Frame's *Towards Another Summer***

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The Ugly Duckling who became a swan was not really the loneliest among ducklings. The loneliest was the true duckling who felt himself to be a stranger in his own family. His story has not been written in the fairy tale. Few suspected his condition—for after all he was living with his own species in his native square of farmyard.<sup>i</sup>

The publication in 2007 of *Towards Another Summer*, Janet Frame's posthumous autobiographical novel in which the main character claims to have "changed to a migratory bird",<sup>ii</sup> makes it urgent to assess the role played by animals both in this new book and in the semantic economy of the work as a whole. It is not easy to break down Frame's pervasive animal theme into clearly identifiable symbolic constituents, such is the variety of her treatment of the trope from *Owls Do Cry* (1957) onwards. The critics have certainly tended to ignore this idiosyncratic dimension of the work, unless it was approached anthropomorphically, in order to consider Frame's animals for the analogical features which they incidentally displayed when compared to human beings. For example, Gina Mercer interprets the female baby buffalo, in the novel entitled *Daughter Buffalo* (1972), as an emblem of femininity, so that the male protagonist's curious decision to adopt the animal into his own family is explained in terms of the necessity to accommodate "the female qualities born within men".<sup>iii</sup> In a feminist context, the animal presence in the book is then found to constitute "a wonderfully suggestive image for the ways in which the male/female dichotomy may be discarded, as so-called masculine and feminine qualities merge to create a harmonious ecosystem".<sup>iv</sup> Surely this metonymic approach yields its own insights, but it stops short of taking Frame at face value when she suggests that animals and humans rightfully belong in the same family. Yet a novel like *Intensive Care* (1970), which precedes *Daughter Buffalo* in Frame's opus, had already examined, with a good deal of anxiety, the boundary line demarcating humanity from other, possibly related species. The final section of the book is a disquieting dystopia set in the future, in which the New Zealand government passes a Human Delineation Act which makes provisions for the disposal of all those subhuman individuals who will be classified as animals on the Day of Deciding. The fact that this planned genocide seals the fate of Milly, a mentally deficient young woman whose rich humanity has just been explored and documented, makes clear Frame's view that the notion of mankind is a cultural construct and that, if only on compassionate grounds, it ought to be delineated differently.

Frame's animals then serve to provide an index to alternative ontologies which might be profitably rehearsed with a view to approaching various categories of ostracized humanity. In *The Carpathians* (1988) the point is made that, in New Zealand, both the Maori and the Pakeha have long been in great danger of being relegated to the condition shared by those "rare species" studied in television documentaries like *Our Beautiful World*: "The further away you are, the less you are known, the more easily you may lose your state of being human".<sup>v</sup> This is why one Maori character in this book comes to regret that his people do not

have “multicoloured plumage”, as this would at least earn them the kind of attention accorded to birds in yet another TV programme, *The Forest Families*.<sup>vi</sup> A similar correspondence is intuited by the novelist–narrator in *Living in the Maniototo* (1979), who becomes interested in lycanthropy because she cannot forget the wolf-children languishing in mental hospitals “among the others whom the selective medical miracles had ignored”.<sup>vii</sup> By placing lycanthropy at the heart of her fictional universe in this novel, Frame appears to subscribe to a form of reverse Darwinism which purports to undo selection and to question a conception of progress predicated on the survival of the fittest. It is in keeping that the teeming menagerie which peoples her novels gives pride of place to prehistoric animals and extinct species of various denominations, which do duty as yet another avatar of the “Frameian might-have-been”.<sup>viii</sup> Fossil animals embody a dimension of eclipsed experience which may become available for reclamation, not so much through a Spielberg-like fictional sleight of hand, but at the price of the profound mutation of vision towards which Frame’s work intermittently aspires. This joint preoccupation with animality and extinction constitutes a thematic collocation which, though possibly unexpected, is by no means unique to Janet Frame. One thinks of the later work of J. M. Coetzee, for example his novel *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) in which the eponymous character, an animal rights activist, asks the question: “If we are capable of thinking our own death, why on earth should we not be capable of thinking our way into the life of a bat?”<sup>ix</sup> Like Coetzee, Frame considers that compassion for animals represents a test-case quality defining an ideal conception of selfless humanity. Unlike her South African colleague, however, she makes this sort of sympathy into an aspect of her concern with aesthetics. Thus it can be shown that the capacity for imagined identification across the species boundary emerges in Frame’s work as the touchstone of the true creative artist. This is borne out by *Towards Another Summer* in which the protagonist is a novelist with a gift for creating order from what she calls “the poor bric-a-brac of the animal world”.<sup>x</sup>

It has been suggested that, at the time of writing *Towards Another Summer*, Frame was influenced by an earlier New Zealand novelist, Robin Hyde, who in *The Godwits Fly* (1938) uses the metaphor of the migration to the north as an attempt to articulate the colonial sensibility of New Zealanders longing to travel back to their place of cultural origin on the other side of the earth.<sup>xi</sup> Yet, strictly speaking, the book’s title is derived not from a work of fiction but from a poem by Charles Brasch, “The Islands”, which indeed encapsulates something of the characteristic slipperiness lying at the heart of New Zealand experience. The relevant passage, on which Frame extrapolates, reads as follows: “...and from their haunted bay / The godwits vanish towards another summer. / Everywhere in light and calm the murmuring / Shadow of departure; distance looks our way; / And none knows where he will lie down at night”.<sup>xii</sup> The persistence of this “shadow of departure”, which unsettles even the “light and calm” moments of nestling, explains why the trope of the migratory bird has been read as a token of “ambivalence” and “resistance to closure, completeness, or arrival”, as if it were the fate of flying New Zealanders to “assume a nomadic existence”<sup>xiii</sup> in their search for an infinitely receding home.

Thus the posthumous book, written in 1963, has been read as a reversal of the time-honoured colonial pattern, since the protagonist Grace Cleave, a New Zealand writer living in London, experiences

bouts of nostalgia for the skies of her native country: “I live in London. The Southern Cross cuts through my heart instead of through the sky”.<sup>xiv</sup> Indeed the book has been read as a post-colonial exploration of the themes of displacement and homesickness, one which “dismisses the validity of London as the origin of creativity and culture for New Zealand”<sup>xv</sup> and recognizes instead the cultural importance of an antipodean matrix of experience. Grace clearly follows in the steps of Charles Brasch, whose experience of Britain during the Second World War also served to enhance his realisation that New Zealand lived on within himself “as no other country could live”,<sup>xvi</sup> so that, by virtue of a post-colonial dissociation of sensibility rather new at the time, his discovery of foreign territories triggered an inward recognition of what constituted the bedrock of his national identity. In the novel, this is identified as a process of “completing the act of finding by losing”.<sup>xvii</sup> It is relevant that, according to Frame’s biographer, she went through a “roots crisis” after taking a trip to Lancashire in February 1963 to spend a weekend with the writer Geoffrey Moorhouse and his family, whose mode of life was sufficiently reminiscent of New Zealand for her to be thrown slightly off balance.<sup>xviii</sup> *Towards Another Summer* is the fictional and somewhat mischievous rendering of this episode, in which the hosts – the book-loving Philip Thirkettle and his kindly wife Anne and children – are gently satirized for their lack of penetration since they fail to perceive that their guest has given up the habit of being human.

Grace Cleave, “a migratory bird instantly in her New Zealand world”,<sup>xix</sup> needs only to open Allen Curnow’s *Book of New Zealand Verse*, which is sitting on Philip’s shelf, to find herself recognizing “objects which only [New Zealanders] could experience”.<sup>xx</sup> The narrative is accordingly bolstered by a rich poetic intertext which draws on works by Brasch, by Curnow himself, but also by C. K. Stead and Alan Masfield, whose words easily coexist with those of another favourite like John Keats. To this extent the migratory bird metaphor can be seen to signify the bipolarity of the protagonist’s cultural moorings, as well as the sense of liberation which is felt to follow from the pursuit of a cross-cultural pattern of identity. This, interestingly, comes across as a matter of importance, because ossified identities carry within them the spectre of extinction. Witness the novel’s opening words: “When she came to this country her body had stopped growing, her bones had accepted enough Antipodean deposit to last until her death”.<sup>xxi</sup> This can be read as a suggestion that further growth depends on one’s openness to metamorphosis, which is why Grace reflects that “we must tend the myths, [for] only in that way shall we survive”.<sup>xxii</sup> The novel consequently accommodates, next to the intertextual links already mentioned, mythological references to the story of Philomela and to that of her sister Procne, who were respectively transformed into a nightingale and a swallow at the moment of death. In other words the miracles of mythology, no less than those of fiction, allow for a form of continuation beyond the finalities of lived experience. Grace’s willingness to slip into her new identity as a bird therefore indicates her wish to outgrow some of the more tragic limitations engrained in the human condition itself.

Clearly, then, Frame’s metaphor of the migratory bird encompasses levels of significance which call for a complex response from the reader and which remain in excess of the critical cliché whereby migration patterns simply stand in for the cultural schizophrenia typical of the settler colonies of the southern

hemisphere. Even when she appears to adopt the cliché, Frame does so in a way which gestures towards disruption of expected regularities, thus allowing for reserves of creativity undefeated by the determinations of nature. Indeed Grace declares: “So I, a migratory bird, am suffering from the need to return to the place I have come from before the season and sun are right for my return”.<sup>xxiii</sup> This resistance to seasonal rhythms implies an ability to redefine one’s own nature away from ordinary cycles. Frame’s image of the migratory bird is then advertised from the outset as a token of evolving identity, as her character ponders the evolutionary prospects available to her within the terms of her solipsistic brand of Darwinism.

It is an aspect of the complexity of the bird metaphor deployed in the novel that it reflects at times a distorting angle on a humanity seen to share in a monstrous dimension bordering on the grotesque. This is most apparent in a passage when Grace, walking on her own in the park, catches sight of a woman who wears a “black and white patched dress” and is remonstrating with her children in a screeching voice. The dynamic description which follows carries the amusing suggestion that the woman’s outfit makes her indistinguishable from a magpie; while at the same time this is conveyed in terms of a metamorphosis which is really Grace’s own, as if her gaze, too, were being transformed into that of a bird even as she is watching. Thus she feels that she can observe “the final change” taking place in the magpie-woman under her very eyes:

She has surprised her in private metamorphosis – she saw the arms mould themselves to wings, the black and white patched dress change to feathers about her body, her nose extend sharply to form a beak. There was no need for her voice to change. She began screeching once more; she was calling someone, her children. She flapped her wings belligerently as Grace passed her, she turned her bright fierce eyes towards her, then she dropped one wing limply at her side and fluttering the other as if clearing an obstacle from the air, she resumed her screeching.<sup>xxiv</sup>

By dint of these words of estrangement the character’s fancy comes across as fact, which raises the possibility that Grace’s own metamorphosis is a mental rather than a physical phenomenon, indeed as if “birdie” were in the eye of the beholder. This is confirmed by the observation that “no feathers” are growing on her own skin, despite her felt “sensation of down and quilt” which she therefore classifies with those “manifestations of the other world” that must be “kept secret”. There is in fact a sense in which the bird metaphor registers the extent of Grace’s subjective alienation from her fellow human beings, which is encoded in the perceived hostility of the magpie and in its impoverished language. However, the book also explores the various ways in which the curse of ostracism can be turned into a creative asset, for Grace experiences “relief” that she finally managed to “discover her true identity”<sup>xxv</sup> after so many years of feeling “not-human” – a sense of promise which brings with it a fearless determination, now that she has established herself as a bird, to drift “farther and farther away from the human world”.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Her transformation into a bird then emerges, perhaps paradoxically, both as the symptom of Grace’s social isolation and as a potential remedy for that same condition. It is certainly symptomatic that she reminds herself of her avian status every time she is seized by anguish at the prospect of the promiscuity with humans that will be forced upon her by the planned weekend at the Thirkettles’. The impossibility in

human company of so much as hinting at her true nature leads to the constant renewal of the “shocked feeling of exclusion”<sup>xxxvii</sup> by which she is sorely plagued. Yet it is also the case that “a certain pleasure was added to Grace’s relief at establishing herself as a migratory bird”,<sup>xxxviii</sup> because it absolves her of the necessity to maintain more than “vague lines of fatuous communication with the outside world”. One may even speculate that, in what purports to be an autobiographical novel where the facts of Frame’s life are ostensibly subjected to a process of fictionalisation, the invention of the bird metaphor constitutes a fictional response to a loss of pathology in actuality. Indeed the novel hints that the Geoffrey Moorhouse/Philip Thirkettle invitation arrived “just when the decision had been made which [Grace] had been awaiting for years”,<sup>xxxix</sup> which is probably a reference to Frame’s solicitation of the British psychiatric system for a contestation of the diagnosis of schizophrenia with which she had been labelled in New Zealand. As we know from Frame’s autobiography, the discovery that she never suffered from that disease in any formal sense<sup>xxx</sup> was experienced as a cruel bereavement, because “schizophrenia, as a psychosis, had been an accomplishment, removing ordinary responsibility from the sufferer”.<sup>xxxi</sup> The lifting of the curse therefore reintroduced the responsibility of accounting for oneself, but in a way that would integrate the more extraordinary aspects of the author’s personality, so that the agony of self-knowledge may be counterpoised by the luxury of self-invention. The dualities of the bird metaphor in *Towards Another Summer* can then be seen as a reflection of Frame’s twofold realization, that she had only “[her] ordinary or [her] extraordinary self with which to explain [herself]”.<sup>xxxii</sup>

The name of the protagonist, Grace Cleave, aptly encodes the defining tension whereby the chasm of sensibility which cleaves her from others somehow represents a saving grace all the same. On the other hand, it may also be the case that, difficult as it may prove to be in her ordinary existence, Grace still cleaves to the surface of the lives of others: “I am the perpetual eavesdropper, Grace thought; always with my ear to the wall of other people’s lives; such a vicarious existence does not seem possible”.<sup>xxxiii</sup> This is an allusion to the painful social passivity imposed upon her as a consequence of her conversational incompetence, which leads her to approach spoken language as, at best, “prison treatment for ideas crowding behind bars”.<sup>xxxiv</sup> A good deal of the novel’s pathos, as indeed of its comedy, derives from the dichotomy between, on the one hand, the linguistic penury afflicting Grace in her attempts at communication with people, and on the other, the bewildering verbal inventiveness by which she is visited in the privacy of her contemplative life – serve to give the text its distinctive Frameian flavour. *Towards Another Summer* therefore resembles the majority of Frame’s novels which so consistently fathom the gap between contrasted registers of language on both the thematic and the stylistic level. In the new book, Grace is shown to be painfully aware of her expressive deficiencies as she churns out platitudes or creates clumsy silences, so much so that she compares herself to “an automatic machine which is not quite empty but which through a fault in its mechanism can never respond”.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Importantly this concern with an order of clichéd language cannot be separated from Frame’s conception of fiction as another kind of machine, especially designed to process depleted phrases and retrieve, as a second order of expression, either “sediment of thought or imagination”.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In this sense, the

novel can be said to be poised astraddle “the terrible certainties and uncertainties of speech”, owing to its centring on a character like Grace who becomes a vessel of linguistic transformation by virtue of the fact that, “not being a human being and not being practised in the art of verbal communication, [she] was used to experiencing moments of terror when [...] commonplace certainties became, from her point of view, alarming uncertainties”.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The text is then like other works by Frame in that it gestures towards the “intellectual and emotional discomposure”<sup>xxxviii</sup> which attends an aesthetics based on the displacement of the commonplace. Interestingly also, by its own admission, the novel nevertheless remains “coded in a code of the world”,<sup>xxxix</sup> that is “a code which everyone [understands]”,<sup>xl</sup> in a way which places restrictions on its own linguistic utopianism, quite in keeping with the “unfulfilled momentum”<sup>xli</sup> sometimes seen to typify Frame’s art.

Grace’s fluctuation between contrasted levels of creativity is also registered in terms of Frame’s habitual “concern with the imponderables of identity”<sup>xlii</sup> which finds fresh expression in the vagarious variations of the bird metaphor. There is clearly a sense in which Grace congratulates herself on having achieved her identity as a bird, because it represents a protection against the “wonderful fleshy confusion”<sup>xliii</sup> typically manifested by mankind. In her capacity as a bird she continually gives forth “an offensive cloud of emotion and dream – timidity, absorption”<sup>xliv</sup> which, as we have seen, both expresses and enhances her remoteness from her fellow human beings. Her courtship of animal life may then be seen as a bid to repel intruders and to place restrictions on “the delights and dangers of overlapping oneself”<sup>xlv</sup> which had already formed the thematic core of Frame’s previous novel, *Scented Gardens for the Blind* (1963). In other words the distinction of Grace’s identity as a bird is meant to make her unreachable for human beings who show an alarming proclivity to overstep the limits of their being, which is why a sense of identity is compared to “the electrified fences used to control animals, persuad[ing] [them] to stay within the boundaries of living”.<sup>xlvi</sup>

The paradox, however, is that her transformation simultaneously brings with it “a gift of empathy accumulated as the prize and compensation for loneliness, for being denied human essence”.<sup>xlvii</sup> The perception that separation and sympathy constitute the two axes of the artistic dilemma is confirmed by Grace’s discovery, subsequent to her change, that she suddenly “understood the characters in her novel”.<sup>xlviii</sup> Inasmuch as *Towards Another Summer* can be read as a *roman à clef*, the novel in question is none other than Frame’s own *The Adaptable Man*, on which she was working at the time of her weekend in the country. This much is known from the official biography of Frame,<sup>xlix</sup> but also from internal evidence provided by “the story of the weekend” which makes it clear that the visit intruded itself “in between the second and third parts of her novel ‘in progress’”.<sup>l</sup> The quotation, in *Towards Another Summer*, of the first line of a poem which appears in full in *The Adaptable Man*, confirms the existence of a link between the two texts, which deserves to be investigated summarily. The poem starts in this way: “They told me you had been to her, and mentioned me to him”.<sup>li</sup> In the later novel, the “adaptable man” of the title confesses that this poem was always found to be frightening because “it is full of mysteriously anonymous entreaties, a terrible fluidity of pronouns – ‘me’, ‘she’, ‘him’, ‘you’, ‘we’”.<sup>lii</sup> This apprehension conforms with

Frame's conception of adaptability, which is defined as a capacity for being completely at one with the contemporary world as it presents itself to the eye, including in psychological terms, so that the integrity of one's identity will be seen to depend on the adaptable person's ability to remain contained within the confines of his or her body. Interestingly this concern with adaptability is imported into *Towards Another Summer* which similarly considers its characters' anxious dependence on the reassuring effect of personal pronouns used in the most conventional sense. As in *The Adaptable Man*,<sup>liii</sup> this desperation to consolidate one's sense of self takes the form of a repetitive reliance on personal pronouns: "I matter. I. I. I matter".<sup>liv</sup> This is elsewhere identified as the "ritual of spoken communication": "If you look towards someone, speak to that person, saying You, you, you, then what you say refers to that person; it's all so simple".<sup>lv</sup>

Grace's assertion that, having become a bird, she now understands her own characters can be read as Frame's autobiographical comment to the effect that the writing of *Towards Another Summer* interjected itself as an indispensable creative excursion, necessary lest her work-in-progress should remain unfinished business or, as she puts it in her Keatsian idiom, "a 'foster-child of silence'".<sup>lvi</sup> But another level of interpretation must be envisaged, so as to recognize the extent to which Grace approaches the members of the Thirkettle family as creatures from her own fiction. Philip, in particular, emerges as the prototype of the adaptable man to come, owing to his susceptibility to the seductions of "simple" being. By contrast, Grace creates a perspective from which she can only marvel at Philip's insistence on "being normally human".<sup>lvii</sup> Thus *Towards Another Summer* belongs to a species of fiction which debunks the fictitiousness of any claim to stabilized identity. In this context, Philip's vain pride in having his likes and dislikes recognized, as when his wife proclaims his partiality for *Spaghetti Bolognese*, is contrasted with Grace's admission that, in all the years that she lived under the same roof with her brother, she never knew that he could not eat egg.<sup>lviii</sup> Likewise the book highlights the absurdity of Philip's romantic identification with the wild wet West Coast of New Zealand, by making it clear that his affiliation with the country is a matter of election rather than birth – only his wife is a New Zealander – and that he felt miserable when actually confronted with the place.<sup>lix</sup>

As opposed to Philip's insistence on performing the "cunning everlasting ritual of identification"<sup>lx</sup> of himself and others, Grace's creative negotiation of the species boundary brings about a blurring of personalities in her estimation of who's who. As a migratory bird she notably displays a "passion for the sunlight of memory"<sup>lxi</sup> which moves her to project herself into the past and to rehearse selected scenes from her childhood. From her inexhaustible fund of imaginative sympathy she helps herself to a "family mixture"<sup>lxii</sup> of experiences and perceives the domestic life of the Thirkettles through the prism of her own youth, and vice versa. Thus Anne's father shares with Grace's own a fondness for bagpipe music and highland dancing, while Philip and his wife, by virtue of being a married couple, repeat the pattern that used to inform the relationship between Grace's parents. She experiences recollections so vivid as to collapse the distinction between past and present, to the point that her youthful apprehension of the tensions between her parents resurfaces as fear that her hosts will become murderous: "Oh my god! – Philip and Anne will kill each other. You see, they are my mother and father". Similarly the suggestion that Anne may

one day resume her teaching career is enough for Grace to become Anne as she remembers how threatened she felt in her brief stint as a teacher without a vocation: “Philip had been speaking to Anne. Yet Grace had been Anne”.<sup>lxiii</sup>

These flights of fancy indeed serve to transform the Thirkettles into characters of sorts in the fiction Grace weaves around herself. The “powerful flow of possibility”<sup>lxiv</sup> characterizing her relation to herself – as well as her relation *of* herself – becomes apparent on yet another occasion, when she is made to listen to classical music, which throws her into a mood of “horrified sympathetic contemplation” deep enough for her to experience a spectacular twisting of identity that will result in her subjective identification as, simultaneously, “bird, frog, woman”.<sup>lxv</sup> Amusingly, the confusion of identities thus created continues through the fact that, when Grace tearfully explains that she has to be on her own if she must listen to Bach, it turns out that the concerto played by Philip on his gramophone was only the work of “good old plodding Handel”!<sup>lxvi</sup> Yet this sort of humorous qualification should not obscure the seriousness of Frame’s wish to distinguish the developments of identity favoured in the creative arts from the selfish “sifting and ticketing”<sup>lxvii</sup> of oneself that is indulged by Philip as an aspect of his addiction to realism, which the book interestingly dismisses as “merely the journalist’s passion for the truthful statement”.<sup>lxviii</sup>

It is not unusual for Frame to incorporate into her work a reflection on the conventions of popular fiction,<sup>lxix</sup> meant to serve as a point of ironic contrast with her own experimentations. *The Adaptable Man*, in which the “ordinary recognitions”<sup>lxx</sup> of journalism are correlated with the spurious mysteries of detective fiction, is again a case in point. In *Towards Another Summer* the reader is invited to consider the bird metaphor against the backdrop provided by the fantastic or science-fiction novel. Thus the narrator asks: “Why is so much fiction preoccupied with the conquest of the human race by birds, vegetation, insects, visitors from outer or inner space?”<sup>lxxi</sup> Obviously Frame’s version of this story owes nothing to the laws of the thriller as devised by Hitchcock or his literary equivalents. Her bird embodies a consciousness that develops a fine sensibility to the transformations wrought in the workshop of the creative artist. It is noteworthy that this metafictional orientation becomes manifest in Frame’s autobiographical writing, no less than elsewhere in her work, because autobiography, in view of the expectations associated with the genre, will allow her to demonstrate the impossibility of ever arriving at any “truthful statement” of the journalistic kind. Thus *Towards Another Summer* appears as the first instalment of a life-story that will be further rehearsed in the three volumes of Frame’s autobiography written in the 1980s, which make it abundantly clear that “anything she writes, whether autobiography of fiction, can only be the product of the imagination”.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Within the terms of Frame’s creative vision, the trope of bird invasion takes the form of an imagined resuscitation of extinct species. This is the ultimate significance of the reference to the West Coast of New Zealand, for it is there, in the south, that scientists have “discovered the flightless bird, the takahe, long thought to be extinct”.<sup>lxxiii</sup> The revolutionary implications of this discovery are not lost on Grace Cleave who defines her artistic programme as an attempt to go back, as bird, “to some bountiful coastline with as many waves as beginning fish or sperm before the choice is made”.<sup>lxxiv</sup> She therefore

interprets Philip's fixation on the West Coast as an expression of fear that "[the takahe] will flourish and increase, 'take over' the sparsely populated country".<sup>lxxv</sup> She herself views the prospect more with envy, and she remembers the fascination with which, as a child at the zoo, she used to gaze at the tuatara, a lizard-like reptile which is the sole surviving member of a group common in Mesozoic times: "We're alive, you *may* become *extinct*. Most of the animals and birds known by you are *extinct*. [...] What was it like, tuatara? Why don't you speak to us, why don't you *tell, explain*?"<sup>lxxvi</sup> The point is apparently that, should the tuatara "tell" and "explain", he would offer the creative artist not only a window on eclipsed experience but also a code in which to express the "discarded moments"<sup>lxxvii</sup> in the graph of evolution. This is reminiscent of a scene in *The Edge of the Alphabet* (1962) where Toby Withers, the vexed visionary, is overtaken by a "strange terror" whilst visiting the National History Museum, so that he complains: "These old mammoths, why do they bother to put them together if they've nothing to say to us, why don't they speak and warn us before it is too late?"<sup>lxxviii</sup> In the absence of such a miraculous tip, Frame's artist must obviously fall back on her own resources and struggle to evolve the kind of consciousness with which to imagine perspectives other than human. This is why Grace Cleave in *Towards Another Summer* must go through her metamorphosis and continue to travel away from the limitations of the human race. Her journey is heroic, and its dangers and difficulties are acknowledged as the novel explores the de-creative potential implicit in the wish to revise received ideas about language, identity, and humanity itself. Even Frame must ultimately recoil from her vision of "the boundless billionaire coastline of eternity",<sup>lxxix</sup> which apparently can only be apprehended in "death".<sup>lxxx</sup> This is why, in this autobiographical novel as in her other works, Frame concludes an uneasy pact with realism which is constantly threatened by her forays into analogical thought as well as by the deep suggestiveness of her magnificent metaphorical writing style.

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### **Biography**

Marc Delrez teaches literature in English (new and established) as well as comparative literature at the University of Liège, Belgium. In the post-colonial field, his publications include articles on Salman Rushdie, Randolph Stow, David Malouf, Nicholas Jose, Richard Flanagan, Andrew McGahan, Robert Drewe, and Janet Frame. His monograph on Janet Frame, *Manifold Utopia*, appeared in Rodopi's Cross/Cultures series. He is currently working on another book on Frame, to be published by Manchester University Press.

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<sup>i</sup> Janet Frame, *The Edge of the Alphabet*, New York: Braziller, 1995, 201.

<sup>ii</sup> Janet Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, Sydney: Vintage, 2007, 6.

<sup>iii</sup> Gina Mercer, *Janet Frame: Subversive Fictions*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994, 189.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 189–190.

<sup>v</sup> Janet Frame, *The Carpathians*, London: Bloomsbury, 1988, 84.

<sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*, 88. See also Marc Delrez, *Manifold Utopia: The Novels of Janet Frame*, Amsterdam & New York, Rodopi, 2002, 209.

- vii Janet Frame, *Living in the Maniototo*, New York: Braziller, 1979, 123.
- viii The phrase is used by Mark Williams, with reference to mental patients and Maori people, in his *Leaving the Highway: Six Contemporary New Zealand Novelists*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1990, 53.
- ix J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, London: Secker & Warburg, 2003, 79.
- x Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 126.
- xi Dorothy Jones, "Flying Godwits and Migrating Kiwis: *Towards Another Summer*", *Kunapipi*, 29.2 (2007), 14–15.
- xii Charles Brasch, *Collected Poems*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1984, 17.
- xiii Leili Golafshani, "Self as a 'Migratory Bird': Janet Frame's *Towards Another Summer*", *Hecate*, 34.1 (2008), 112.
- xiv Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 10.
- xv Golafshani, "Self as a 'Migratory Bird'", 111. This is also John McLeod's argument with reference to Frame's *The Edge of the Alphabet* and *An Autobiography* in his *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis*, London: Routledge, 2004, 81–92.
- xvi Charles Brasch, *Indirections: A Memoir 1909–1947*, Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1980, 360.
- xvii Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 176.
- xviii Michael King, *Wrestling with the Angel: A Life of Janet Frame*, Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2000, 243.
- xix Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 151.
- xx Janet Frame, *An Autobiography*, New York: Braziller, 1991, 192.
- xxi Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 3.
- xxii *Ibid.*, 109.
- xxiii *Ibid.*, 62.
- xxiv *Ibid.*, 117.
- xxv *Ibid.*, 8.
- xxvi *Ibid.*, 9.
- xxvii *Ibid.*, 230.
- xxviii *Ibid.*, 20.
- xxix *Ibid.*, 18.
- xxx See Victor Dupont, "Editor's Postscript", in *Commonwealth: Miscellanies/Mélanges*, ed. Victor Dupont, Rodez: Editions Subervie, 1974, 175–176.
- xxxi Frame, *An Autobiography*, 375.
- xxxii *Ibid.*, 382.
- xxxiii Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 93.
- xxxiv *Ibid.*, 234.
- xxxv *Ibid.*, 231.
- xxxvi *Ibid.*, 222.
- xxxvii *Ibid.*, 144–145.
- xxxviii Norbert Platz, "Janet Frame's Novels and the Disconcert in the Reader's Mind", in *Imagination and the Creative Impulse in the New Literatures in English*, ed. Maria Teresa Bindella & Geoffrey V. Davis, Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi, 1993, 204.
- xxxix Frame, *The Carpathians*, 171.
- xl Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 227.
- xli Wilson Harris, "Scented Gardens for the Blind", in *The Ring of Fire: Essays on Janet Frame*, ed. Jeanne Delbaere, Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1992, 95.
- lii Marc Delrez, "Forbidding Bodies: Avatars of the Physical in the Work of Janet Frame", *World Literature Written in English*, 38.2 (2000), 73.
- liiii Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 27.
- liiv *Ibid.*, 164.
- liv *Ibid.*, 186.
- lv *Ibid.*, 213.
- lvii *Ibid.*, 94.
- lviii *Ibid.*, 20.
- lix King, *Wrestling with the Angel*, 245.
- <sup>1</sup> Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 3.

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- <sup>li</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. This nonsense verse is really Lewis Carroll's and appears in full in *Alice in Wonderland*, as pointed out by Mercer, *Janet Frame*, 98–99.
- <sup>lii</sup> Janet Frame, *The Adaptable Man*, New York: Braziller, 1992, 139.
- <sup>liii</sup> See Frame, *The Adaptable Man*, 6–7.
- <sup>liv</sup> Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 187.
- <sup>lv</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.
- <sup>lvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>lvii</sup> *Ibid.*, 125; Frame's emphasis.
- <sup>lviii</sup> *Ibid.*, see 101; 199.
- <sup>lix</sup> *Ibid.*, see 124.
- <sup>lx</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.
- <sup>lxi</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.
- <sup>lxii</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.
- <sup>lxiii</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.
- <sup>lxiv</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.
- <sup>lxv</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.
- <sup>lxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.
- <sup>lxviii</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.
- <sup>lxix</sup> See Patrick Evans, "Janet Frame and the Adaptable Novel", *Landfall*, 25 (1971), 448–449.
- <sup>lxx</sup> Janet Frame, "Departures and Returns", in *Writers in East–West Encounter: New Cultural Bearings*, ed. Guy Amirthanayagam, London: Macmillan, 1982, 82.
- <sup>lxxi</sup> Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 125.
- <sup>lxxii</sup> Simone Oettli–van Delden, *Surfaces of Strangeness: Janet Frame and the Rhetoric of Madness*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2003, 84.
- <sup>lxxiii</sup> Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 125.
- <sup>lxxiv</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.
- <sup>lxxv</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.
- <sup>lxxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.
- <sup>lxxvii</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> Frame, *The Edge of the Alphabet*, 258.
- <sup>lxxix</sup> Frame, *Towards Another Summer*, 198.
- <sup>lxxx</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

The idea of a new novel by Janet Frame is in itself a delight and *Towards Another Summer* is a joy to read, with all the poise, inventiveness and clarity of her other work' MAGGIE O'FARRELL. Life in England seems transitory for Grace Cleave as the pull of her native New Zealand grows stronger. She begins to feel increasingly like a migratory bird. Grace longs to find her own place in the world, if only she can decide where that is. But first she must learn to feel comfortable in her own skin, feathers and all.Â Written in 1963, Janet Frame considered this novel too personal to be published in her lifetime. 'In this deeply personal novel of exile and loneliness, Janet Frame proves the master of nostalgia, beauty and loss. Frame is, and will remain, divine' ALICE SEBOLD. *Towards another summer* is one of those rare books which haunt you long after you've closed it. And so yes, thinking back about the novel, one feels gratitude that it exists and could be published.Â Another beautiful, lyrically evocative novel by Frame. It tells of the narrator's social awkwardness on a weekend visit to a journalist and his family; of her feeling that she belongs nowhere - not damp, dreary England, nor her home country of New Zealand, where she was considered 'mad' - except at her typewriter, deep in her work. As such, it is a semi-autobiographical account of the author's time in England.Â I recommend those new to Janet Frame start with any of the novels she released in her lifetime and leave the posthumous stuff for the fanatics. Read more. 5 people found this helpful. <http://hdl.handle.net/2268/64638>. Title : The Migration of the Flightless Bird: Janet Frame's *Towards Another Summer*. Language : English. Author, co-author : Delrez, Marc [Université de Liège - ULiège > Département des langues et littératures modernes > Littérature anglaise moderne et littérature américaine >]. Publication date : Jan-2010. Journal title : Journal of Post-Colonial Cultures and Societies. The publication in 2007 of *Towards Another Summer*, Janet Frame's posthumous autobiographical novel in which the main character claims to have exchanged to a migratory bird, makes it urgent to assess the role played by animals both in this new book and in the semantic economy of the work as a whole. It is not easy to break down Frame's pervasive animal theme into clearly identifiable symbolic constituents, such is the variety of her treatment of the trope from *Owls Do Cry* (1957) onwards. The critics have certainly tended to ignore this idiosyncratic dimension of the work, unless it was approached... Janet Frame, the New Zealand author of *An Angel At My Table*, died in 2004 leaving this unpublished manuscript. Written in 1963 while she was living in London, Frame considered it too personal to make public - understandably so. For while there is nothing scandalous in this slim, impressionistic volume - indeed, very little occurs at all - it is as fiercely private as a journal. This is not, however, to belittle Frame's artistry: *Towards Another Summer* reveals a writer of both skill and transcendent beauty. Concerning the weekend visit of emigrant author Grace Cleave to friends in the industrial North of England, it is in part a record of social embarrassment and the perils of polite conversation.