Foes, Ghosts, and Faces in the Water: Self-Reflexivity in Postwar Fiction

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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March 2017.

Abstract

This thesis examines the nature and value of metafictional practices in the careers of postwar novelists. Discussions of metafiction have been central to accounts of postwar literature. Where debates in the 1980s and 1990s about metafiction tended to make claims about its distinctive political and theoretical power, recent work in the study of institutions has folded metafiction into the routine operation of the literary field, and attacked previous claims to distinctive value. In this thesis I both historicize self-reflexive literary practices in the literary field, an element largely absent from the earlier scholarship, and present historically determinate claims about the value of these practices, an element I suggest is missing from the more recent work. To do so, I turn to the study of autobiography, specifically Philippe Lejeune's concept of 'autobiographical space.' In the first chapter, I explore how J. M. Coetzee develops academic literary criticism in his fiction. In the second chapter, I examine how Janet Frame responds to both the demands of a national literature and biographical inquiry into her life. In the third chapter, I address how Philip Roth handles the relationship between the politics of identity and the postwar novel. Self-reflexive practices, I show throughout, are ways of writing that were encouraged by particular formations in the literary field and were handled by writers through more or less explicit treatments of autobiographical space. I argue, though, that while these practices can be remarkably inventive, they carry no guarantees for political, theoretical, or aesthetic value.

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List of Abbreviations

AA	*An Autobiography* (Janet Frame)
AL	*The Anatomy Lesson* (Philip Roth)
AM	*The Adaptable Man* (Janet Frame)
D	*Dusklands* (J. M. Coetzee)
DP	*Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (J. M. Coetzee)
EC	*Elizabeth Costello* (J. M. Coetzee)
EJ	*Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Hannah Arendt)
ER	*J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (Derek Attridge)
F	*Foe* (J. M. Coetzee)
FF	*Frame Function* (Jan Cronin)
FW	*Faces in the Water* (Janet Frame)
GO	*Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (J. M. Coetzee)
GW	*The Ghost Writer* (Philip Roth)
IHOW	*Janet Frame: In Her Own Words* (Janet Frame)
LA	*The Lives of Animals* (J. M. Coetzee)
LW	*J.M. Coetzee & the Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time* (David Attwell)
MR	*In the Memorial Room: A Novel* (Janet Frame)
ODC	*Owls Do Cry* (Janet Frame)
OS	*Operation Shylock* (Philip Roth)
S	*The Singularity of Literature* (Derek Attridge)
RMO	*Reading Myself and Others* (Philip Roth)
SAPW	*J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (David Attwell)
TAS	*Towards Another Summer* (Janet Frame)
TF	*The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography* (Philip Roth)
WA	*Wrestling with the Angel* (Michael King)
WW	*White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (J. M. Coetzee)

Acknowledgements

I am indebted most of all to my supervisor, Patrick Hayes. He has been everything a doctoral supervisor can be: a brilliant reader, a trusted advisor, an inspirational teacher. His support, patience, and dedication throughout this process have been unwavering. For this and so much more I wish to thank him.

My thanks go to the many institutions that have given me generous financial support. The Rhodes Trust provided the large majority of the funding for this project – for that and the community they have created I will be forever grateful. Hertford College, where I have been a junior dean for three years, has provided me with a home. Nothing beats its vibe. Additional support through the last year and a half of this project came from St. Catherine's College, the Shirtcliffe Fellowship (Universities New Zealand), and the Anne Reid Memorial Trust. I thank each of these institutions for their support; without them, none of this would have been possible.

I have been assisted throughout this process by the dedication of curators and archivists in the libraries I have worked at in the United States. The staff at the Harry Ransom Center at Austin, Texas helped me to get the most out of the Coetzee papers during a magical summer in 2014. So too the kind staff at the Library of Congress, who navigated the Roth Papers with me.

I have received a number of travel grants, through which I undertook the extended archival research that is central to two of the chapters in this thesis. The Harry Ransom Center provided me with a Dissertation Fellowship. The Maxwell and Meyerstein Fund and the New College Travel Grant funded my trip to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. in 2014. St Catherine's College supported me to go to the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell in the summer of 2016; some of the insights developed there have flowed into this work.

Many of the central ideas of this thesis emerged out of conversations with my friends and colleagues. Alexis Brown has been an inexhaustible reader, friend, and supporter – I cannot thank her enough for her clarity, strength, and good humour. Alicia Broggi has been a remarkably kind and selfless collaborator; she has regularly extended and revised my thinking on Coetzee. Kevin Brazil has helped me from the very first to develop my thinking, sharpen my expression, and expect more of what my research can do. William Ghosh has read more early drafts of my work than can possibly be good for him – his ability to pull out what is useful from my ill-formed thoughts is a rare talent (although not necessarily one he would have cared to discover). Max Harris has given me the gift of negation, both when I wanted it and when I didn't.

I have been enormously fortunate to be able to draw on the insights and generosity of others throughout this process. I am indebted to Ed Dodson, Ed and Imogen Doddridge, Sarah Hanks, Hugh Foley, Will Long, and Callum Seddon. Liz Fink and Evan Spritzer were the best downstairs neighbours I could have hoped for. Aaron Colton has been a kind friend and constructive reader. Stephen Dean and Rebecca Ward have given me time away from Oxford when I needed it most. Anthony and Katie Burn contributed their company and friendship – along with the informal travel grant of a bed in Takoma Park. The kind English fellows at Hertford – Charlotte Brewer, David Dwan, and Emma Smith – have been much-welcome supporters. And then there are those who encouraged me in the first place, and who have continued to read and comment on my work: Patrick Evans, Bruce Harding, Paul Millar, and Nicholas Wright.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents. They have supported me in everything I have done, even when – especially when – this has taken me far from home. My father once asked me, while we were shovelling compost for a community fundraiser, how you move a mountain. 'One spadeful at a time,' he told me, and kept on shovelling. I must have taken that lesson to heart.

The Concept of Metafiction

In what follows I describe the critical reception of metafiction since the Second World War and then develop the approach that informs my readings throughout the rest of the thesis. Early arguments about postwar metafiction focused on value, I show, emphasizing either the form's theoretical and political capacities, or its implication within the ideological structures of late capitalism. More recent arguments have tended not to address questions of value, instead examining metafiction only as part of a broader account of the literary field. I argue that metafiction can be more productively thought of as a set of practices than as a genre *per se*, ones that operate across a career and in relation to the idea of an author that emerges out of reading a corpus. Handled in these ways, I reopen discussion about the nature and value of literary self-reflexivity, but in a manner both more discriminate and historically specified than how critics have tended to approach these questions.

The earliest critical accounts of post-Second World War metafiction date from the 1960s. John Barth in his essay, 'The Literature of Exhaustion' (1967), writes that he is 'inclined to agree' with the view proposed by 'Leslie Fiedler and others,' that the 'printed word' may have 'just about shot its bolt.' Even as Barth accepts this, however, he describes a new fiction (his own), in which 'novels […] imitate the form of the Novel,' and authors 'imitat[e] the role of Author.' He explains:

> Literary forms certainly have histories and historical contingencies, and it may well be that the novel's time as a major art form is up, as the 'times' of classical tragedy, grand opera, or the sonnet sequence came to be. No necessary cause for alarm in this at all, except perhaps to certain novelists, and one way to handle such a feeling might be to write a novel about it. (168)

Barth's suggestion is that in the ruins of the novel there may be material for its reinvigoration: to 'write a novel' about the end of the novel is to give this exhaustion some life. In another essay from the same period, 'Philosophy and the Form of Fiction' (1970), William Gass sought to appreciate the philosophical interventions of the recent 'so-called antinovels' – in an early use of

the term, he finds that these anti-novels 'are really metafictions.' Arguing that metafiction may disturb the propositional thinking of philosophy, he writes, '[p]hilosophers continue to interpret novels as if they were philosophies themselves, […] they have predictably looked for content, not form; they have regarded fictions as ways of viewing reality and not as additions to it' (25). Barth and Gass anticipated much of the later writing about metafiction, both its relationship with a new and bewildering historical situation and its capacity to disturb a discourse.

This writing drew from then ascendant arguments about the death of the novel. Mark Greif in *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933–73* (2015) finds that a general sense of a 'crisis of man' in the 1940s and 1950s was 'transposed' by critics such as Lionel Trilling into epitaphs for the novel. Over the next two decades, the novel's death was a consistent topic of critical debate. Yet where Trilling in the 1940s had tasked the novel, even without a clear alternative in sight, with the '*restoration* of the human,' by the time of Barth's essay this humanist mission was falling out of favour (Greif 104, 106). This shift was in part a result of new thinking about the politics of identity (which was registered in the fiction). 'To unmarked human nature, the novelists [of the 1960s] added the problem of race and tried to understand where it fit (or didn't),' Greif suggests; to 'debates in the philosophy of history, they brought awareness of those who go unrecorded and don't count' (255).

Over the decades following Barth and Gass's essays, literary critical arguments about the nature and value of postwar metafiction tended to be mediated through the term 'postmodernism'. Patricia Waugh in her 1984 book, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Consciousness*, for example, suggests that metafiction is 'a mode of writing within a broader cultural movement often referred to as post-modernism.' Unlike many critics, though, both from this period and later, she does not allow metafiction to be fully captured within arguments about this new 'cultural movement' (21). She instead defines metafiction as 'fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between

fiction and reality.' Metafiction is in this sense 'a tendency or function inherent in *all* novels.' What makes the postwar period distinctive, though, is metafiction's prominence in the novel (2, 5).

Linda Hutcheon, in her series of books in the mid-to-late 1980s (*A Theory of Parody* (1985), *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), and *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989)), emphasizes the break of a particular genre of metafiction from the history of the novel. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, she focuses her account of 'postmodernist contradiction' on what she called 'historiographic metafiction' – novels that are 'intensely self-reflexive,' but which 'paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages.' She argues that this form fitted with then contemporary versions of the postmodern:

> In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative—be it in literature, history, or theory—that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its reworking of the forms and contents of the past.

However, locating metafiction within the postmodern, rather than within all fictional writing, creates difficulties for distinguishing the contemporary form from previous instantiations. The works Hutcheon lists following her first introduction to historiographic metafiction – John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (1975), William Kennedy's *Legs* (1975), John Berger's *G.* (1972), and Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words* (1981) – indicate that the term in her handling referred to writing that emerged out of the 1960s and afterwards (5). Hutcheon herself acknowledged the problem of history in an earlier book, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980). '[S]elf-reflective metafiction,' she explains, is 'a continuation of an already existing narcissistic trend in the novel as it began parodically in *Don Quijote* and was handed on': metafiction is at least as old as the novel itself (153).

Arguments in the 1980s and 1990s regarding the distinctiveness and novelty of postwar metafiction tended to be in the service of broader arguments about the form's political potential. Waugh, for example, finds that the 'practice' of metafiction 'converts what it sees as the negative

values of outworn literary conventions into the basis of a potentially constructive social criticism' (11–12). In this view, as readers are confronted with literary texts that parade their fictionality, the discourses of modernity – positivism, empiricism, materialism, and so on – are demolished from within, setting in motion the possibility for discovering new 'rules' for literature and for life (42). Hutcheon similarly argues that the self-reflexivity of postmodern writing deconstructs 'master narratives of bourgeois liberalism' (*Poetics* 6). For her, this capacity to call into question 'the bases of our western modes of thinking' is the value of the form (even if she concedes that it may have been an 'inheritance from the 1960s to believe that challenging and questioning are positive values') (*Poetics* 8). Readerly estrangement from literary and philosophical conventions, for both Hutcheon and Waugh, represents a significant political intervention. These theorists hence share assumptions with the Russian formalists: they suggest, like Eichenbaum and Shklovsky, that art may be 'a means of destroying the automatism of perception,' and that its power derives from this (Eichenbaum 1070).

Hutcheon's focus on the contradictory nature of postmodernism, in which texts both inhabit a discourse and are critical of it, was adopted by Mark Currie in his edited collection *Metafiction* (1995). Currie argues that the ex-centricity of metafiction provides it with its value, although in this case it was a value more for philosophy than it was for politics (recalling Gass). He suggests that the 'borderline between fiction and criticism has been a point of convergence where fiction and criticism have assimilated each other's insights, producing a self-conscious energy on both sides' ('Introduction' 2). In his headnote to Robert Scholes's essay 'Metafiction' (1970), collected in the 1995 volume, Currie writes that the essay holds a 'special place' in *Metafiction* for the way Scholes argues 'that when a novel assimilates critical perspective it acquires the power not only to act as commentary on other fictions, but also to incorporate insights normally formulated externally in critical discourse' (*Metafiction* 21). Currie here draws from both the critical writing from the late 1960s and early 1970s and from Hutcheon and Waugh: metafiction's power

is its capacity both to transform the discourses through which it would be received, and to generate new insights.

These defences of metafiction were written in parallel with a number of hostile criticisms of the form. Popular criticisms tended to focus on metafiction's apparent self-involvement, linking it with a culture in decline. A prominent example of this approach is Christopher Lasch's bestselling 1978 work, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. Lasch argues that narcissism had become the dominant character type in postwar America. He finds that the new man 'demands immediate gratification and lives in a state of restless, perpetually unsatisfied desire.' In his brief reading of the confessional mode in Mailer, Barthelme, and Roth, he suggests that this mode's popularity 'testifies […] to the new narcissism that runs all through American culture' (xvi, 16–7). 'In Mailer's works and those of his many imitators,' Lasch writes, 'what begins as a critical reflection on the writer's own ambition, frankly acknowledged as a bid for literary immortality, often ends in a garrulous monologue, with the writer trading on his own celebrity and filling page after page with material having no other claim to attention than its association with a famous name.' Philip Roth, among others, '[o]n the verge of an insight,' tends to 'draw back into self-parody, seeking to disarm criticism by anticipating it' (17, 18). This is of course the inverse of Currie's position, in which self-parody both generates insight and reorients criticism. Such criticisms filtered into mainstream politics. Lasch advised on President Jimmy Carter's July 1979 'Crisis of Confidence' speech, while the more general lament for a culture fallen into self-involvement and decline was a predominant genre among cultural conservatives throughout the Reagan era.

Lasch's popular attack came alongside materialist criticisms of the form. Fredric Jameson, in 'Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' (1984) (later collected in a 1993 book of the same name), identifies not narcissism but schizophrenia as the new cultural dominant. Central to Jameson's argument is his view that the psyche is dependent on the organization of capitalism: schizophrenia is the pathology of neoliberalism. He lists the 'constitutive features of

the postmodern': 'a new depthlessness […]; a consequent weakening of historicity […]; a whole new type of emotional ground tone […]; [and] the deep constitutive relationships of all this to a whole new technology, which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system' (6). The Lacanian model of schizophrenia offers for Jameson a 'suggestive aesthetic model': writers and artists such as John Ashbery, Ishmael Reed, and Andy Warhol had manifested the 'breakdown in the signifying chain,' which led to the 'experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time' in their works (26–7). While Jameson's account does not directly address metafiction as such, his juxtaposition of two concerns undertakes similar work. The first concern is that the postmodern subject is fragmented and depthless, and hence unable to mount a viable opposition to the prevailing political conditions. The second is that the postmodern in literature 'is inseparable from, and unthinkable without the hypothesis of, some fundamental mutation of the sphere of culture in the world of late capitalism.' Metafiction of the kind that Lasch attacks would have found little more sympathy with Jameson: 'new political art,' Jameson wrote in the conclusion of the essay, must establish a critical relationship with 'the world space of multinational capital' (47–8, 54). Postwar metafiction, inscribed within contemporary arrangements of capital, fails to achieve such a critical vantage-point.

Arguments about postmodernism and metafiction over the last decade have shifted away from being primarily concerned with their value – whether couched in positive or negative terms – to being primarily concerned with their histories and relationships with the literary field. Jason Gladstone and Daniel Worden write in their introduction to a 2011 special issue of *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 'Postmodernism, Then,' that recent critical work on the post-45 period has 'displace[d] postmodernism as an explanatory category in the name of more pragmatic institutional histories, circulation studies, sociological inquiries, and reception models' (294). Lee Konstantinou in *Cool Characters: Irony and American Fiction* (2016) agrees, writing that postmodernism has suffered the fate of all temporally-located movements, that is, being 'translated into a handful of durable critical slogans, theoretical claims, literary techniques, anthology selections, and course catalogue

descriptions' (4). These arguments matter for Hutcheon's account in particular, as she insists that a 'poetics of postmodernism would not posit any relation of causality or identity either among the arts or between art and theory' (*Poetics* 14). Criticism is now arriving at precisely the opposite conclusion. Turning towards the institutions that have patronized, published, and received literature after the war, critics have increasingly found that the paradigmatic aesthetic practices of fiction in the period, including metafiction, were motivated by the concerns and assumptions of those institutions.

The most influential version of this argument is Mark McGurl's in *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (2009). McGurl argues that the institution of the creative writing programme has produced the 'technologies, the hard and soft machines in and by which literature comes into being' in the postwar period. The creative writing programme is 'everywhere visible in the texts [of the 'programme era'] as a kind of watermark' (3, 4). There is an 'autopoetics' between the writing programme and the fiction of the period; McGurl links 'the metafictional reflexivity of so much postwar fiction' with 'its production in and around a programmatically analytical and pedagogical environment.' The three slogans of the writing programme – 'write what you know,' 'find your voice,' and 'show don't tell' – combine 'experience, creativity, and craft,' and are the three loci of the programme's 'autopoetic process.' These then connect with 'three relatively discrete but in practice overlapping aesthetic formations' in American postwar fiction, what he calls 'technomodernism,' 'high cultural pluralism,' and 'lower-middle-class modernism' (47–8, 23, 32).

McGurl's approach to self-reflexive postwar writing has divorced it from the two arguments about the form that we have already observed, namely ones relating to political consequences and critical or philosophical insight. McGurl establishes this shift in the introduction to the book:

> [W]e could read the reflexive prose experiments of academic creative writers such as Nabokov and Barth and Shelley Jackson not as radically "deconstructive," as they

> sometimes are, but as radically conventional, as testaments to the continuing interest of literary forms as objects of a certain kind of professional research.

McGurl's quarrel is here with the definition or location of the political in literary studies. Rather than identifying politics within the space of the text and subsequently within the (now transformed) reader, he views politics within an overall system of literary production – a field, in Bourdieu's terms. He finds that from the view of 'systems theory,' '[s]elf-reference […] is perfectly routine' (48). McGurl's treatment of literary texts as being dependent on the way culture is produced and disseminated, rather than as autonomous political interventions, means that he comes to share with Jameson the sense that postwar writing is first and foremost generated by developments within capitalism. In McGurl's work, though, there is an institution – the writing programme – which mediates these conditions in its own distinctive ways, and hence affects literary production in the period.

McGurl's treatment of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) is typical of his approach. The novel is of course widely taught on undergraduate curricula across the United States, and it has been credited in criticism and in popular writing with marking a distinctive and powerful intervention into racial politics in America. McGurl, though, tends to resist, or at least ignore, such claims. Reading *Beloved* as a scene of instruction, he suggests that the blending of the 'roles of *author* and *teacher* and *slave-master*' in the novel demand that 'education' be added to the 'potentially relevant interpretive contexts for the novel.' In defence of the reading he is about to offer, which is a knowingly challenging one, he argues that the claims made on behalf of *Beloved*'s political capacities have obscured other and important ways of reading the work – and that it is the contemporary practice of criticism that has made us miss the obvious:

> The novel is preoccupied by [education]—so much so that we might accuse the ever-widening shelf of criticism on this work, having barely mentioned the fact, of staring into a blind spot even larger than the space occupied by schoolteacher. Is it perhaps the same blind spot that has kept critics from making an adequate assessment of the agency of the university in postwar American literary production as a whole? […] [O]wing to the jagged affective intensities of race, the resistance to institutional reflexivity is conducted with particularly high stakes […]. (347)

By setting his own practice of reading in competition with the many others that critics have attached to the novel, McGurl demotes the claims to the political or other kinds of value which make up the 'ever-widening shelf of criticism' on *Beloved*. Instead, his handling brings institutional location to the fore, with all the entanglements that this implies. The novel, he finds, is a reassessment of the modernism of, say, Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* through the paradigm of race; it is enabled by the growth of the academy's role in the dissemination of literature after the war; and it is always engaged with (or haunted by) problems of the relationship between institutionality and liberation politics (354). In none of these elements is it distinctive. Quite the opposite, in fact: Morrison's work is typical of a literary field that is increasingly shaped by the academy, which rewards the linking of formal experimentation with issues of ethnic identity, and which consciously or unconsciously represents the academic situations from which such writing has emerged.

McGurl's is the most ambitious of a number of other recent works which have presented institutionally-focused accounts of postwar writing. Sarah Brouillette in *Literature and the Creative Economy* (2014), for example, grounds her account of the late twentieth century literary field not in the university but in government cultural policy, specifically how the neoliberal 'creative-economy discourse' sponsored by New Labour influenced literary production. This discourse, with its celebration of the 'creative personality,' has contributed to the intensive focus on the self in recent writing, she finds. Writers have incorporated 'the idea that the best work expresses the interiority of talented individuals, the idea that the creative realm is a space of pure introspection unbounded by necessity and expedience, and the related notion that though creative people may work within markets, serious ones will be motivated by internal directives to which profit is irrelevant' (5). The writing personality Brouillette ascribes to neoliberalism is of course a much older idea, returning at least to the Romantics if not earlier, but her interest remains in its pre-eminence at this historical moment. While the political consequences of this has included such troubling developments as having writers consult on urban renewal schemes, she also shows a writer such as Ian McEwan in *Saturday* (2005) checking the political aspirations for his art against its material use in an increasingly

unequal Britain. Brouillette concludes the book by noting how ideas of aesthetic autonomy can be both complacent and critical: 'Investment in autonomy, both affective and practical, is at once an integral feature of capitalist cultural production and an expression of the desire to be free from its constraints' (205). Self-reflexivity is good for business, but it may not simply advance a business agenda.

The study of literary celebrity has also linked the self-reflexivity of the artist to the conditions under which books are marketed and sold. Loren Glass in *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880 – 1980* (2004) explores how writers over this period navigated their celebrity in their writing. The last of these, Norman Mailer, is pictured trading off an authorial persona 'based on the Hemingway model,' deploying his early celebrity as a psychic wound out of which his later writing emerged – celebrity became its own kind of writing institution (177). While for Glass celebrity authorship ended with the rise of feminism in the 1970s (the 'second crisis of masculinity'), for *Joe Moran in Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (2000) and Claire Squires in *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain* (2007), the literary 'star system' was forming at the very point at which Glass's account concluded (Glass 23). According to Moran, the transformation of book publishing into a 'global entertainment and information industry' from the 1970s onwards produced the distinctive formation of the author-celebrity (35). In turn, this kind of celebrity 'seems to enforce self-reflexiveness.' In the star system of the late twentieth century, writers such as Philip Roth and Don DeLillo 'negotiate their own celebrity,' both as a theme to reflect upon in their fiction, and in order to sell books (10). Claire Squires, like Moran, argues that book publishing in the twentieth century saw a 'great upheaval in terms of ownership, operation and competition' (19). Family-run companies became by the 1980s 'global multi-media conglomerates'; this caused the contemporary 'ascendency of marketing over the editorially led tradition' (20). The predominance of marketing elevated the significance of the writer and their public image in the sale of books – a literary star system amid a global leisure and communication marketplace – even as literary studies promoted the death of the author. Squires, citing Lorna

Sage's 'Living On Writing,' finds that such changes foregrounded 'the role of the author/promoter,' which in turn led to an 'internalization of the institutions of publishing' and 'overt inscriptions of the authorial life' in fiction (Squires 177).

These institutional discussions of literature have helped criticism to move beyond long exhausted debates about the nature and value of postmodernism. As Konstantinou finds, 'former critical battles over postmodernism—celebrations of its subversive political powers, acrobatic efforts to explain how it defies definition, fears about its pernicious effects on young minds—today seem dated' (4). Beyond dissatisfaction with the lack of historical specificity behind the likes of Hutcheon, in his reference to 'subversive critical powers' Konstantinou is pointing to 1980s and 1990s claims that postmodern metafiction represents the epitome of political responsibility, claims that neither sufficiently distinguish such fiction from the many literary movements that went before which seem to have done similar things, nor offer an account of precisely how postmodern metafiction intervenes politically. The major themes of recent scholarship have been that, more than anything else, the fictions of the late twentieth century both show the circumstances from which they emerged and bear varied political consequences.

The sense that discussions about postmodernism are becoming historical is reflected in the material of this thesis: my approach is strongly informed by the new abundance of posthumously published or archival material from the postwar period. Writers who began publishing in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s are aging, and their literary archives are being donated or sold to university and national libraries; restrictions on the use of archival documents are also expiring. The now available composition histories of the novels, research materials, and correspondences with other authors and editors show authors at work, enmeshed in local arguments, and engaged with contemporary issues in idiosyncratic ways. Long queried connections between the life and the work are coming to light. A new style of research has become available, one anchored more in textual remainders than in broader theoretical speculations – and this thesis takes advantage of this transition.

Addressing metafictional practices through newly available historical material and the critical turn toward institutions marks the project of this thesis as an unusual one. Few critics in the last decade have taken these practices as their explicit subject. When McGurl refers to reflexivity, he does so as part of his broader argument about the poetics of programme era fiction. For each of the other critics working in an institutional frame that I have described above, the fate of metafiction was not their primary concern – the comments were made in the service of other arguments. This is a significant transition from the 1980s, when questions about metafiction and its value were at the centre of arguments about postmodernism. The broader rejection of the earlier reception of postmodernism is central to this tendency. McGurl, for example, distinguishes his project from the work of 'Brian McHale, Linda Hutcheon, Philip Brian Harper, and others […] who have most acutely defined what we mean when say "postmodern fiction,"' as he instead seeks 'to offer an account of postwar fiction that is at once more concrete and more comprehensive than usual' (31). Brouillette, Squires, and Moran also demote questions about literary form and value, questions that are associated with the writing of the likes of Hutcheon and Waugh's optimistic accounts of the politics of postmodern metafiction.

These more recent accounts have attracted some criticism for their handling of literary value, however. Fredric Jameson, in his review of *The Program Era*, described the 'embarrassing questions of value' that kept reappearing while he was reading the book. Jameson wonders what weight to give McGurl's almost total omission of Faulkner: can the monograph be a literary history, or at least a 'mapping' that may 'modify traditional literary histories,' without Faulkner ('Secret' 42)? The suggestion here is that certain writers may demand attention in themselves, and hence that legitimate accounts of literature from a certain period must be formed at least partly in dialogue with these major figures. Literature, in this account, cannot be collapsed entirely into institutional environments; some writers may reshape what is possible in literature itself. Whatever the shortcomings of Hutcheon, Waugh, and others from the 1980s, they were clear about why

literature from this period mattered, something that Jameson suggests had been less evident in recent criticism, and much to its cost.

Several themes have emerged in this review of the critical literature on metafiction. The genre-based discussion of metafiction exhausted itself because of its tendency to appraise literary value in terms that were often both indiscriminate and unhistorical. The turn towards institutions in literary studies, a turn that has seen metafiction fade from critical attention, has usefully highlighted the dependency of cultural production on institutions and on ideas about the current phase of capitalism more generally. However, criticism in this tradition has not satisfyingly contended with 'embarrassing questions of value.' In this thesis I synthesize these two approaches, asking the questions raised in the 1980s about literary value, but via a focus on institutions and cultural contexts. An extension of the concept of 'autobiographical space,' derived from Philippe Lejeune's study of autobiography in the 1970s and 1980s, is what allows me to combine these two seemingly incommensurate modes of criticism. This concept, as I will adapt it, grounds metafiction in authorial self-consciousness about reception and institutional environments, concentrating on the way that this self-consciousness functions in practice and on what kinds of value are produced. As I go on to show, this concept also strikingly compares with the relationships with readers proposed by each of the authors I examine.

Lejeune proposes the existence of 'autobiographical space' in his 1973 essay, 'The Autobiographical Pact.' The concept arose in his discussion of his definition of the genre of autobiography, which he defined as a '[*r*]*etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality*.' As Lejeune notes, in this definition 'the author (whose name refers to a real person) and the narrator are identical' (4). While this appears straightforward at first, he complicates the meanings of and relationships between each of these terms ('author,' 'real person,' and 'narrator') over the following pages. He

finds that the author is a product of certain practices of reading interacting with the 'real person' who writes:

> An author is not a person. He is a person who writes and publishes. Straddling the world-beyond-the-text and the text, he is the connection between the two. The author is defined as simultaneously a socially responsible real person and the producer of a discourse. For the reader, who does not know the real person, all the while believing in his existence, the author is defined as the person capable of producing this discourse, and so he imagines what he is like from what he produces. Perhaps one is an author only with his second book, when the proper name inscribed on the cover becomes the 'common factor' of at least two different texts and thus gives the idea of a person who cannot be reduced to any of his texts in particular, and who, capable of producing others, surpasses them all. (11)

The figure of the author as he appears to readers, 'defined as the person capable of producing […] discourse,' in effect displaces the real author for Lejeune; the more texts attributed to the same proper name, the more substantial this figure becomes. Lejeune develops how authors are created out of an autobiographical practice of reading (which finally opens out to the concept of 'autobiographical space'). He suggests that 'if the autobiography is a first book, its author is thus unknown, even if he relates his own story in the book.' This author, he explains, 'lacks, in the eyes of the reader, that sign of reality which is previous production *of other texts* (nonautobiographical), indispensable to that which we will call "the autobiographical space"' (11–12).

Lejeune returns to autobiographical space later in the essay. He opens this discussion by exploring the commonplace that 'the novel is truer (more profound, more authentic) than the autobiography.' Having quoted statements to this effect from both André Gide and François Mauriac, Lejeune argues that they both 'designate the autobiographical space in which they want us to read the whole of their work' (26, 27). The 'truth' to which the novel aspires in such a view is the 'personal, individual, intimate truth of the author, that is to say, the truth to which any autobiographical project aspires […]. [I]t is as autobiography that the novel is declared the truer.' Having annexed the novel to autobiographical reading, Lejeune then proposes another pact:

> The reader is thus invited to read novels not only as *fiction* referring to a truth of 'human nature,' but also as revealing *phantasms* of the individual. I will call this indirect form of the autobiographical pact *the phantasmatic pact*. (27)

Lejeune here outlines a mode of reading that is explicitly based upon the *oeuvre*: a corpus of writing creates a writing personality, not necessarily as substance, but rather as '*phantasms*'. And with autobiographical space bearing a phantasmatic relationship with the autobiographical pact, all writing becomes extensions of some figure of the author, and all reading becomes at least in part animated by the search for the figure of autobiography.

In a 1982 essay, 'The Autobiographical Pact (bis),' Lejeune returns to his earlier work and considers some of its shortcomings and assumptions. He reflects on what he called his own tendency to fix an '"all or nothing" position' with regard to the problem of identity. Lejeune now clarifies that there may be 'ambiguities and degrees' of relationships between authors and narrator-protagonists – this much is suggested in the reader-centric notion of 'autobiographical space.' He writes:

> I have always reasoned as if the centre of the autobiographical domain was the *confession*. I have evaluated the whole thing by imposing upon it the rules of functioning of one of its parts: confessions must be signed for them to have any value; there can be no compromise with the truth. (125)

As Lejeune acknowledges, this is a limited notion of autobiographical discourse, tending at the very least to annex all narrative production to the author, as opposed to, say, culture or environment. He explains that part of the problem is that his work was that of a grammarian, and therefore took 'an essentially linguistic and formal point of view' (130). There may be other approaches: 'psychology and psychoanalysis,' for example, or 'sociology and the study of ideology.' The reason these did not form a part of his work was not necessarily naivety – he writes with heavy irony, 'I believe that when I say "I," it is I who is speaking: I believe in the Holy Ghost of the first person' – but rather that the pact describes the reality of a desire for subject-bound autobiography. 'In spite of the fact that autobiography is impossible, this in no way prevents it from existing,' he concludes (131–2).

In this thought Lejeune establishes the possibility of an autobiographical space that contains not only readers searching for the figure of the writer in the fiction, but also 'the

unconscious, the struggle of classes, history' (131). He allows, in effect, for both readers and writers to be in some way mediated or conditioned by exogenous forces, and hence for the space to be something other than simply confession. Lejeune acknowledges this when he writes both that 'the public is not homogeneous' and that publishers and media promote books in individual ways: different groups of readers may value different elements of the text and read or misread in certain manners. In his more recent work, as he notes, he had attempted to 'observe real readings' (126–7). In this thesis, I will show the formation of complex autobiographical spaces. One of the key points that I will emphasize is that this is a dynamic process: authors progressively navigate clearly identifiable versions of themselves in response to the ways in which their work is being positioned and discussed. Autobiographical space also need not solely contain the version of authors created by readers through a process of reading, but rather can involve a series of different and potentially antagonistic agents and understandings, which are themselves in some way produced against a background of forces and institutions.

One of the implications of autobiographical space, not explicitly addressed by Lejeune, but central to my own handling of this concept in what follows, is that an author may manipulate to particular ends the idea of the author that has emerged. This is a dialectical model of autobiographical space as opposed to one based on confession, as writers and readers can at times become locked in an antagonistic struggle over the control for the meaning of the proper name. In each of the three chapters of this thesis, academic critics, reviewers, and other readers set in motion the authorial responses that I trace. This allows me to create a more complex and variegated picture of how 'metafiction' works, one which emphasizes the ingenuity of particular authors without abstract claims about the value and nature of a genre.

Reading for self-conscious incursions into autobiographical space is further promoted by the reflections of each of the authors that I examine: they theorize relationships between authors and readers in ways similar to Lejeune. New Zealand author Janet Frame, in notes she wrote for

press interviews relating to her 1980s autobiographies, almost paraphrases Lejeune when she describes her frustration with the way her work had been read:

> I think that after the publication of one's first book the barnacles move in, clinging; one is no longer the clean proud ship moving through unknown waters […]. I'd rather not meet people who've 'heard' of me. I don't think they ever forgive me for the ordinary practical reality of myself as opposed to the myth that some people in New Zealand have created to represent me. I resent this myth. (*IHOW* 119–20)

The resentment of the myths generated by reader-barnacles led to all kinds of complications, in both her personal life and in her writing. Frame spent her later years moving on an almost annual basis around small towns in New Zealand, distancing herself from whatever or whoever was bothering her. She even added an extra layer of bricks to the front of one of the many houses in which she lived (this one in Levin) – an image of the writer embattled. The resentment of reader myths can be felt throughout her later fiction.

While Frame saw readers of any kind as a nuisance ('posthumous publication,' she once claimed, 'is the only form of literary decency left'), for Philip Roth readers can incite writers to stronger artistic achievements (*IHOW* 119). In an interview Roth conducted with himself on *The Great American Novel* (1973), he described the relationship he had with his readers, both 'appreciative' and 'antagonistic', and the effect they had on his writing. The 'appreciative audience' provided an 'irritant […], specifically by its collective (therefore simplistic) sense of the writer, the place it chooses for him to occupy on the cultural pecking order, and the uses it wants to make of selective, disconnected elements of his work and of his own (imagined) persona.' Both opposition and appreciation may provide an 'irritant': they are 'useful' in that they 'arous[e] whatever is stubborn, elusive, or even defiant in the writer's nature, whatever resents being easily digested.' Roth in effect positioned the novelist as an adversary of whatever is said about him – even if he did not in any sense yearn for Frame's 'clean proud ship.' Appreciative readers lead writers to negate the persona they have imagined into being (a persona that has emerged out of a selective reading of a corpus); hostile readers motivate an oppositional spirit that transcends (often through negation) the terms of their thinking and its limits. Roth identified two models in Salinger and

Mailer. Salinger's refusal to be misappropriated by sympathetic readers ultimately took the form of total silence; Mailer took aim at the 'timidity and conventionality' of his unsympathetic readers, '*exceeding* the misunderstanding in an indefatigable act of public self-realization' (*RMO* 69). All 'serious American novelists with a sense of an audience swing on a pendulum from Mailerism to Salingerism,' Roth concluded, 'coming to rest at a point on the arc that appears […] to be congruent with his temperament and nourishing to the work' (*RMO* 70).

J. M. Coetzee too registered how readers may intrude on writers. In the first chapter of this thesis, I show him in the early 1980s determining to write out of the position of an 'adversary', as he resisted being cast as the author of politically quietist South African fiction. His most explicit public discussion of his relationship with his critics dates from a little after this time, an address to the 1987 Cape Town Book Week, 'The Novel Today.' Attacking attempts to incorporate his work into various critical schemes, he suggested that there is a 'powerful tendency, perhaps even a dominant tendency, to subsume the novel under history, to read novels as […] imaginative investigations of real historical forces and real historical circumstances.' He was resisting the tendency of South African literary critics to transform his work into a '*supplement*' to history (2). By the talk's end, he had affirmed the position of rivalry, refusing to be anyone's 'handmaiden' for any reason whatever (5). He was more measured in *Giving Offense* (1996), though. Here he imagines writing as a transaction with a 'figure of the beloved' that at once attempts to 'please' and to 'revise and recreate' her. With the figure of the censor introducing himself into this transaction, 'the entire balance of the carefully constructed inner drama will be destroyed' (38). While this is not the dialectical struggle of 'The Novel Today,' it still models a process of mutual constitution between reader, writer, and a specific (and intrusive) institutional mechanism.

Autobiographical space, modified and extended in the ways I have outlined, relates authorial self-consciousness to reception and institutional environments, and provides a critical framework that resonates with these authors' own reflections on the creative salience (or otherwise) of their relationships with readers and critics. Drawing attention to iterative and recursive

relationships between readers and authors will allow, in the chapters that follow, a new way of thinking about self-reflexivity in fiction, one that pursues it as a set of practices that take place in an often implicit way across an *oeuvre*, rather than solely within texts themselves. Linda Hutcheon unintentionally encapsulates this notion of reflexivity in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* when she repeatedly misnames the author of *Foe* (1986) as 'Michael Coetzee.' She effectively replaces the author with the idea of an author which had emerged out of his fiction – *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) comes to stand in for J. M. Coetzee (77, 107, 198). However, as I show in chapter one, given the extent to which *Foe* was motivated by a desire to test the assumptions made in the reception of *Michael K*, 'Michael Coetzee' might not be so wide of the mark.

More than this, though, autobiographical space allows for a discussion of metafictional practices as themselves ways of negotiating and transforming both the resources offered by institutional environments and the related images of authors that have been generated by readers. I draw here from the writing of Derek Attridge in *The Singularity of Literature* (2004). Attridge is one of the few critics in recent times to give explicit attention to longstanding but often rather vaguely specified literary-critical terms such as 'originality' and 'inventiveness'. 'Originality', for Attridge, indicates historical novelty; it marks a 'significant departure from the norms of the cultural matrix within which it is produced and received.' Accounts of a work's originality hence require 'historical reconstruction' to determine how the work has departed from norms at the time of its creation. In this sense, originality is tightly bound to context: 'a combination of external and internal pressures makes it possible for a gifted individual or group to create a work of art that […] breaks new ground, or […] brings about the irruption of the other into the same' (*S* 35, 45, 39–40). Inventiveness, on the other hand, is centred on the subject experiencing the work. It is 'the quality of innovation which is directly sensed in the present.' Unlike originality, one 'cannot be mistaken about […] inventiveness, since inventiveness is always inventiveness *for the reader*' (*S* 45).[1] Taking

[1] Attridge goes on to qualify these remarks, noting that appreciation of inventiveness is more likely to be accepted by others within the context of a 'full engagement with the culture at large and with its history' (*S* 45).

inventiveness forward, Attridge argues that the inventive literary work is generative of otherness: it produces an 'encounter with alterity, an alterity that has either in some way survived the passage of time, or, having been for a time culturally accommodated, once more become an effective absence in the present' (*S* 46).

My work brings notions of originality and inventiveness back into discussions about metafiction. Each of the writers I examine attempted to take what was present in the 'cultural matrix' (Attridge's term) and transform it into new norms and forms of insight: this was their originality (*S* 35). Autobiographical space, in the way I will develop this concept, both encompasses the norms of the cultural matrix and shows writers engaged in struggles against the incorporation of otherness into the same. This is why each chapter is both closely historicized and resolutely chronological: my aim is to show the background against which authors' work is received, the processes of accommodation that take place, and the authors' (generally resistive) responses to these accommodations. The extended literary career is a particular focus, of course, as I show how autobiographical space compounds with the *oeuvre* and the kinds of imaginative expansions that can develop as a result. Inventiveness is not only when an author's self-reflexivity breaks from historical norms, but when the writing that emerges continues to startle, or refuses to be accommodated. Finally, despite originality and inventiveness usefully narrowing my discussion of literary value, I do not mean to suggest that value is tied to inventiveness in any absolute way. Rather, inventiveness is one of the primary registers in which literary value is implied throughout the thesis, while the failure of originality to translate into meaningful literary experience in the present indicates that these metafictional experiments are not always successful. There are non-exemplary forms of originality, too, in which works become closed-off, prescriptive, and narrow in scope.

In the first chapter, on J. M. Coetzee and the academy, I explore the idea of an academic fiction. It is often claimed that academia has motivated the theoretical sophistication of contemporary

fiction. Judith Ryan in *The Novel After Theory* (2012), for example, argues that a 'remarkable number of novels [are] substantially informed by theory,' and that the 'penetration of theory into fiction goes well beyond the academic novel' (1, 4). Coetzee is one of Ryan's subjects in the book (she reads *Age of Iron* (1990) in the terms of Lacanian theory). There is considerable resistance to such an approach, however. David Attwell in *J.M. Coetzee & the Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time* (2015), finds that Coetzee's 'allusions to other writers (some theorists, but more often than not novelists, poets and philosophers) are brought in only once the work has found its own legs' (*LW* 20). Hedley Twidle in 'Getting Past Coetzee,' his 2012 *Financial Times*-prize winning essay, similarly remarks that while Coetzee's books 'smell of the seminar room […] the theory […] was just the ladder that he climbed up and kicked away from under him' (11). I ask in this chapter: what kinds of self-consciousness does the academic study of literature promote? What opportunities do critical training and critical readerships present for the creative writer? How can metafictional practices inventively revise, or remain other to, criticism's registers, protocols, and assumptions?

The second chapter examines the phenomenon of literary celebrity within a national literary coterie, specifically in the hands of Janet Frame. Decolonization movements after World War Two led to the development of national literatures, along with the later emergence of 'postcolonial literature' in the world literary marketplace. In New Zealand, figures such as Frank Sargeson and Charles Brasch sought to make a place for New Zealand in literature; the result was that questions of Pākehā national identity and distinctiveness, often filtered through modernist aesthetics, became proxies for literary value. We have already observed remarks from critics regarding metafiction and celebrity: self-conscious negotiation in Moran, the inscription of the author-promoter in Squires, and Philip Roth's comments in his self-interview. Frame's celebrity was different from all of these in that it became bound up both for her readers and, in her early writing, for herself, with the insight into life in New Zealand apparently afforded by her diagnosis of schizophrenia – a diagnosis that was later discredited. In this chapter I ask: how can metafictional practices mediate the feeling of being intruded upon by readers (those 'barnacles

clinging')? Can such practices manifest hostility to readers? How can self-reflexivity be used not to open up interpretive possibilities, but rather to prescribe particular beliefs or approaches?

The third chapter studies divided and politicized communities of reception, and the way that Roth's recursive returns to autobiographical space complicate the political moralities that such communities enforce. In the previous chapter, various readers demand that Frame speak for the new nation. Here, a subnational identity-based readership comes into conflict with an academic and literary coterie. Roth throughout his career self-consciously manipulated the expectations of readers, specifically in regards to what Walter Benn Michaels has called the 'novel of identity' (1017). I ask in this chapter: how can metafictional practices engage identitarian political thinking? Can forms of self-reflexivity be used to revise notions of political responsibility in the novel? What are the specific ways in which metafictional writing might intervene politically?

Each of these chapters develops discussions from earlier criticism on postwar metafiction. Metafiction's capacity to disturb discourses and its relationship with transformations in economic or cultural circumstances have long been major preoccupations in writing on the form, as I have already suggested. So too, in more recent times, have its political capacities, and its relationships with various institutions. The issues these chapters address are hence representative of where the critical conversation has been for some time. In this sense, the three writers I examine allow me both to cover significant critical ground and to test and revise the existing body of scholarship. Important in my analysis, though, is the depth that each extended chapter allows for. Relationships are specified in new and distinctive ways, and the abstractions that have been associated with metafiction are here grounded in complex literary situations. As I have indicated, autobiographical space as a concept emphasizes both the gradual development of writerly personalities and the ways authors come to shape and compound their *oeuvres* in response to their publics.

The organizing logic of this work follows the lives of the authors. Yet global relationships, histories, and entanglements come to be told even within their lives and writings. Coetzee's migrations between the United States and South Africa model the way *Dusklands* (1974) and *Foe*

drew from the movement of academic theory. Some of Roth's fictions move between America, Israel, Britain, and Eastern Europe (places in which he stayed for extended periods from the 1970s onwards) and literary traditions with which he was familiar. Israel is a pole within debates about Jewish American identity in the period too. The recent book, *Philip Roth and World Literature: Transatlantic Perspectives and Easy Passages* (2014), takes heed of the internationalism of Roth, reading his work 'within both national and international contexts of earlier and contemporary writers' (Ivanova 3). Janet Frame wrote extensively in and about international settings: *Towards Another Summer* (pub. 2007, written 1963), *The Adaptable Man* (1965), *Daughter Buffalo* (1972), *Living in the Maniototo* (1979), and *In the Memorial Room* (2013) all drew from her time outside New Zealand; *The Edge of the Alphabet* (1962) is primarily set aboard a ship bound for London, registering her own experience of crossing over. This thesis tends to be transnational because the authors themselves were.

Surprising connections appear between authors, too. Frame was in London at the same time as J. M. Coetzee was spending a miserable few years in the city working as a computer programmer. Philip Roth and Janet Frame were at Yaddo together in 1969 and their correspondence is collected among Roth's papers at the Library of Congress. Coetzee's *Inner Workings: Literary Essays 2000–2005* (2007) includes an appreciative essay on Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004). Much of the labour of that essay is making sense of the 'sphere of the Cretan Liar,' a topic that Coetzee addresses in his own criticism and fiction (*Inner Workings* 228). Shared influences and thematics between Coetzee and Roth in particular are now receiving critical attention, such as in Daniel Medin's 2010 volume, *Three Sons: Franz Kafka and the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee, Philip Roth, and W. G. Sebald*, and Helen Small's *The Long Life* (2007).

Reading metafictional practices both transnationally and institutionally is another way in which my work departs from existing institutional accounts of postwar fiction. McGurl and Glass both focus on the United States; Brouillette and Squires on the United Kingdom. But the rise of metafictional was a global phenomenon. *Living in the Maniototo*, for example, is recognizably in the

tradition of works such as Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* (1986) or Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* (1985–6). Yet none of the critics who have turned to institutions have any clear way of accounting for this. After all, when the writers McGurl examines were in American writing programmes, Janet Frame was an inpatient in New Zealand's gulag archipelago of 'lunatic asylums.' Nationalist literary paradigms do not fit these authors, nor self-reflexive literary practices themselves: literary ideas were marked by transnational flows in the period.

In the conclusion to this thesis, I suggest that popular arguments about self-reflexivity have advanced little from the terms set in the 1980s and 1990s. Predictably, charges of political quietism have re-emerged – perhaps they never went away – even if now the field of debate has expanded to cover the 'age of irony,' the supposed contemporary cultural condition. A different kind of debate is possible, I suggest. In what follows I offer a new account of the nature and value of postwar metafictional practices via my adaption of the concept of autobiographical space. It is to this task that I now turn.

J. M. Coetzee and the Academic Novel

[The chapter originally presented here cannot currently be made freely available via ORA.]

I: Criticism

II: *Dusklands*

III: *Foe*

IV: *Elizabeth Costello*

V: The Archive

Writing Against Reading: Dependency and Disavowal in Janet Frame

In the conclusion of a 2008 public lecture in Christchurch, 'Janet Frame Swims the Tasman Sea,' Patrick Evans, a professor of English at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, recollected receiving a call from a reporter after Janet Frame's death in 2004. Evans told the reporter that she wrote 'eleven novels': "'That many?" he said. "I had no idea. Was there anything else?" "A volume of poetry," I said. "Poetry!" the reporter said. "I thought there was just the autobiography."'[1] The television coverage only further baffled Evans. 'As I watched the tributes pour forth on the Holmes show that night, I really did wonder who on earth everyone was talking about, and what on earth it was that everyone was celebrating. Like the reporter, I, too, had no idea' ('Swims').

Evans in his lecture was responding to Frame's position in public life in New Zealand, a position which had developed even in the years after her death. He had recently run an unsuccessful course at the University of Canterbury devoted solely to Frame's work. As students read deeper into Frame's *oeuvre*, especially her darker middle fictions, 'class attendance declined, discussion dried up, students became passive and surly.' In the end of year teaching survey, one student wrote: 'We liked Janet […] until we read her.' Evans in his lecture asked:

> What can that mean? Which Janet did they like before they read her, and how did they find out about her if they hadn't? And why (like many of my students) did they call her 'Janet', as if they somehow knew her personally?

Evans's response drew on the work that he had been undertaking on her since the 1970s, as he suggested that she 'seems to overflow her own writing so that, in a sense, *she* seems to be larger than *it*, and *it* almost seems to write *her* – to write her as an *idea*, as an *absence* that becomes a strange, distinctive, almost intimate presence in our culture' ('Swims').

As Evans found, much of Frame's writing had to be forgotten or ignored for this idea of her to emerge. Upon actually reading much of what she wrote, the students discovered that it did

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[1] I would like to thank Patrick Evans for generously supplying his speaking script from the lecture.

not match with what they wanted her work to be. The reason for this mismatch – or at least one side of it – becomes clear in Evans's account of her *oeuvre*:

> In Frame's first novel, *Owls Do Cry*, [my students] read how a young woman is burnt to death and her sister sent to a psychiatric hospital where she undergoes electro-convulsive therapy and, eventually, a frontal lobotomy. In the second, *Faces in the Water*, they read about a number of people undergoing shock treatment, plus desolating descriptions of life in psychiatric hospitals. In the third, *The Edge of the Alphabet*, they read about two New Zealanders going to London for their OE, where one of them commits suicide and the other gets a huge sore on his chest that causes him to return home. In her fourth novel, *Scented Gardens for the Blind*, they read a conclusion in which thermonuclear war breaks out in Europe and a mute autistic woman suddenly learns to speak, but only in a series of desolate, incoherent grunts. In the opening pages of her fifth novel, *The Adaptable Man*, they read a description of a man being bludgeoned to death, and in its closing pages a scene in which the novel's surviving characters are killed or maimed at dinner when a chandelier falls on their heads. […]

Each of the novels seems to contain its own dark and dismaying materials – in Frame's 'eighth novel,' as Evans reported, a 'young doctor performs surgical experiments on his pet dog, which he likes to have watch him having sex with his girlfriend' ('Swims'). Evans did not mention the short stories or the poetry, which are often as troubling as the fiction. In 'The Bath,' an elderly widow becomes increasingly anxious about her bathtub, waiting for it to claim her in any 'moment of inattention, weakness, pain' (*Human Heart* 187). In the poem, 'The Dead,' the speaker imagines locking herself in to protect from the dead, who will 'overcome you with death/[…] feed from, rob you,/tap your blood and your preserved memory' (*Pocket Mirror* 95). Even as Frame was publishing works of this nature in the 1960s and 1970s, other local writers such as Barry Crump were gaining popularity with yarns of backcountry life in *A Good Keen Man* (1960) and *Hang on a Minute, Mate* (1961). Frame's novel about eugenics and nuclear war, *Intensive Care* (1970), did not meet the same sales success.

But what about the other side of the mismatch – the students? Why did they call this unlikely figure 'Janet', as if they knew her personally? Her insistent recuperation and re-representation by the culture clearly played an important part in this; as I show throughout this chapter, her relationship with the culture contributed to a series of idiosyncratic and defensive metafictional interventions into her autobiographical space. Yet it is more than that. Evans went

on to explain that her work (that is, when it is actually read) relies on and encourages a mode of engagement that centres on the figure of the author:

> When we say we're 'reading Janet Frame,' we don't mean the same thing we mean when we say we're 'reading Margaret Atwood' or 'reading Alice Munro.' We mean we're actually doing what we're saying – that the writer of the book we're holding – her life, her personality, her persona, her quirks and oddities – is much more of an issue in our reading than is the case with any other author in the world.

He was here describing a particular and intense version of autobiographical space. When we read Janet Frame we are reading the life, personality, and persona of the author in some important way; understanding her work in fact requires this kind of reading, because 'Janet Frame' is a central interpretive context for all of her work. It was not only the publication of the autobiographies that developed this sense, either – it is throughout her writing. In this vein, Evans said that reading her work in the 1960s and 1970s was a 'curious' experience. He felt at the time that her fiction seemed to 'rely heavily on her own life,' but he had no way of confirming this, as she prevented 'anyone from establishing more than basic details about what that life had actually involved' ('Swims'). This was autobiographical space even without a clear biography.

In this chapter I argue that Frame's simultaneous dependence on and disavowal of an autobiographical paradigm of reading led to a series of defensive and at times involuted metafictional interventions in the space of her writing. The predominant cultural image-system I examine in this, the one which in her early career directed interest toward her, is cultural nationalism. Yet in her later writing – that is, from the 1970s on – I suggest that even this system had become incidental, as the problem for Frame had become less how readers were paying attention to her than the fact that they were paying attention to her at all. These dependencies and disavowals both contributed to and derived from her idiosyncratic concerns with the purity of literary vision and the taint of secondary interpretations, I show, especially as these concerns became entangled with readers from at least *The Adaptable Man* (1965). Jan Cronin's sense of Frame as a 'prescriptive' writer is important here: I actively seek to explain, through my account of Frame's relationship with her autobiographical space, what motivated the 'prescriptive features of

the novels,' and the effect that these features had on the kind of vision Frame was able to generate (*FF* 15). Frame's metafictional practices were not in the service of expanding the possibilities of the novel form, but rather both defending herself from dialogical incorporation and inscribing an idealist metaphysics. Her work became narrower as a result, I suggest: the story of postwar metafictional practices is not simply one of success.

I. Developing Frame

In this section I explore two phenomena that I argue are related: Janet Frame's representation of madness and its value in her first three published books, and the development of her reputation as a 'mad writer.' Specifically, I find evidence from within her texts to suggest that these early works promote the idea that madness is a particular way of seeing; that is, madness is merely a matter of differing epistemologies. This connects with the literary nationalist expectation that the New Zealand writer would be a prophet for her people, and hence that seeing differently (through madness) generates insight. I explore how Frame's representation of madness and the terms for literary value proposed by New Zealand literary nationalists established the terms of Frame's public reception, to which she would later respond.

After being diagnosed as a schizophrenic while in Dunedin Public Hospital in 1945, Frame spent the next ten years in and out of 'lunatic asylums' across New Zealand, including Otago's Seacliff, Christchurch's Sunnyside, and Auckland's Avondale. During that time, she received insulin shock therapy and hundreds of applications of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT). She would later write in *An Angel at My Table* (1984) that each treatment of ECT was 'the equivalent, in degree of fear, to an execution' (*AA* 224). In 1952 she was scheduled for a 'prefrontal leucotomy,' a procedure commonly known as a 'lobotomy' (King, *WA* 111). As her biographer describes, she only just escaped this fate – and it was her 'writing […] that saved her':

> Lottie Frame's consent was signed on 20 December [1952] […]. On 26 December, within days of the scheduled surgery, newspapers around the country carried a story headed, 'Writer Wins Prize for Prose': '[…] PEN announces that the Hubert Church Memorial award for prose has been won by Miss Janet Frame of Oamaru for her book "Lagoon and other stories".' The prize, worth twenty-five pounds, was at that time the country's major literary award for prose (Frank Sargeson had won it the previous year). […]
>
> [H]ospital superintendent Geoffrey Blake-Palmer […] came into the dayroom of Frame's ward brandishing a copy of the *Dunedin Evening Star*. He told her about the award (she had never heard of it); and that, because of it, she would be taken off the operation list. (King, *WA* 112)

It would take moving to Auckland in March 1955, when Frame moved in first with her sister and then with Frank Sargeson, a central figure in New Zealand literary nationalism, for her to exit the destructive cycle of committals and discharges that marked her early adult life, and to put behind her the possibility of further ECT.

Frank Sargeson had been aware of Frame for some time, his interest piqued by *The Lagoon* (1951). He reviewed the volume for the New Zealand *Listener* in April 1952, emphasizing what he saw as the work's special vision. He wrote that 'adults either sleep the mental sleep from which there is no awakening, or suffer the emotional strangulation that is slow but sure, and as deadly as death,' and that the author of *The Lagoon* had become 'one more light to help diminish the vast region of darkness by which we are all surrounded.' In the same month, Sargeson wrote to Dan Davin, who was working on an anthology of New Zealand literature for Oxford University Press, suggesting that he include Frame's 'The Day of the Sheep.' "'It's damn fine work," Sargeson told Davin, "and the poor girl is out of the Wow[2] at last – I hope for good, though if it buggers her writing she might just as well have stayed in'" (qtd. in King, *WA* 109).

Sargeson's view of Frame – that her apparent madness gave her special insight about life in the postcolony, a postcolony which her writing could help recreate – was filtered through the priorities of his generation of literary nationalists. Literary nationalism reigned supreme in New Zealand after World War Two. Bringing together modernist poetics and left-wing politics, it was

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[2] The 'Wow' is a name for Avondale Mental Asylum, which was located near the Whau River, in Auckland.

generally concerned with making an imaginative home for settlers on the island. In *The Arts and the Left in New Zealand 1930 – 1950* (1991), Rachel Barrowman finds that there was 'in both left and nationalist responses a self-conscious concern, a sense of responsibility, to create a culture where there existed only a cultural wilderness' (58; qtd. in Hilliard 143). This is clear throughout the publications from the nationalist period. Allen Curnow, for example, in his introduction to the influential anthology, *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923–45* (1945), sought to establish literary value in terms of poetry's contribution to national identity:

> The good poem is something we may in time come to recognise New Zealand by, not something in which we need expect to recognise obvious traces of the New Zealand we know. Local reference ought never to decide our estimate of a poem's worth. ('Introduction' 22)

In a formulation that was favoured by this generation of writers, New Zealandness was a function of the poet's creation of the country, rather than a function of his poems' settings or contents ('obvious traces'). Curnow suggests that the poet in New Zealand would inevitably be drawn to questions of identity, but always as creator: 'anyone capable of poetry, feeling his own land and people, his footing on the earth, to be in any way inadequate, unstable, unreal, is bound to attempt a resolution of the problems set by his birth. […] [T]he New Zealand poet is unlikely to escape wholly the character of prophet to his people' (22). The sense that writers should be prophets, crucial in the reception of Frame's writing, is loosely Romantic in origin, valuing mental limit states for the way they revealed otherwise obscured forms of understanding. Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow* (1941) may well also have been known to the literary nationalists; in this popular work Wilson argues that an artist's psychic wounds could help the artist to form new insights or possibilities.[3] Such beliefs were attuned to the political and social priorities of literary nationalism: figures such as Sargeson thought that Frame's apparent madness both revealed and inaugurated the condition of New Zealand.

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[3] While there is no direct evidence for Wilson's influence on this belief, at least some of his work was known to the literary nationalists. Sargeson wrote to John Reece Cole in July 1948 that he had read Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County* (1946) (Sargeson 107).

Frame's early work found a home in the institutions of literary nationalism. The magazine *Landfall*, edited by nationalist poet Charles Brasch, published some of her earliest short stories. Her first book came out of the Caxton Press, founded by another nationalist poet, Denis Glover. In a sense, it would have been difficult for her to place her work anywhere else. The literary nationalists controlled many elements of local publishing, from the funding bodies (through the State Literary Fund) to the presses and periodicals. Other local publishers, such as A. H. & A. W. Reed and Whitcombe and Tombs, often relied on payments from authors to secure publication – this was well beyond Frame's reach (Hilliard 139). Her early career was hence necessarily shaped by the limited range of publishing avenues along with the priorities of agents such as Glover, Curnow, Sargeson, and Brasch.

Frame's first published works participate in the belief that Sargeson articulated both in the letter and the review, namely that her apparent madness grants her a special form of insight. In Frame's account at least, she endorses this view in her earliest writing not because of the influence of literary nationalists (even though they valued this element of her writing), but rather because of her relationship with John Money, a psychology lecturer at the University of Otago. Frame confided her attempt at suicide in 1945 to Money, and it was through his intervention that she was committed to Dunedin Public Hospital (King, *WA* 68–9). He became her analyst. She writes in *An Angel at My Table* that in their meetings she exaggerated the symptoms of schizophrenia to maintain his interest. She 'built up a formidable schizophrenic repertoire,' a repertoire that was in a literal sense, *textbook*:

> I'd lie on the couch, while the young handsome John Forrest [i.e. John Money],[4] glistening with newly applied Freud, took note of what I said and did, and suddenly I'd put a glazed look in my eye, as if I were in a dream, and begin to relate it as a reality. I'd describe it in detail while John Forrest listened, impressed, serious. Usually I incorporated in the fantasy details of my reading on schizophrenia.

[4] Frame calls Money 'John Forrest' throughout the autobiographies.

Encouraged by Money's comment that when he thinks of her he 'think[s] of Van Gogh, of Hugo Wolf,' she suggests that she came to view 'artistic ability' as the 'pearl of […] schizophrenia' (*AA* 201). It was as her psychologist that Money asked Frame to write for him, having told his patient that writing would serve both professional and therapeutic purposes. Together they would then 'examine words, images, symbols or ideas that arose from her conscious and unconscious mind.' It was in this unusual way that Money helped to shape the stories that comprise *The Lagoon*, and this is how he came to receive the manuscripts too. 'Some she handed to him; some she left behind when she walked out of his office; at least one she screwed up and threw at him' (King, *WA* 83–4). Money, who was connected with literary nationalists such as James K. Baxter and Anton Vogt, sent one of the stories to Charles Brasch at *Landfall*; he subsequently collected the stories and sent them together to Denis Glover at Caxton (King, *WA* 84, 87–8).

However Frame came to hold the views she describes in *An Angel at My Table*, her early writing certainly relies on these views to achieve its effects. The short work Money sent to Brasch, published in *The Lagoon* as 'Jan Godfrey,' stands out for the way it explicitly engages a rhetoric of artistry and madness.[5] The story is of an author unable to write what she wants, one who instead finds herself undertaking a series of disordered associative leaps. Its opening sets up a kind of refrain: 'I am wanting to write a story today.' She fails, however, as she instead describes her surroundings, including scribbles on the wall left by a child, the books in the bookshelves, and the absence of pictures on the wall. Each of these elements leads to other memories or associations. The smallness of the room reminds her of 'the other room' where she 'felt like Juliet lying in a vault,' able to feel the 'artificial flowers […] put in the tomb with the dead people.' The bookshelves remind her of school, specifically receiving 'Giotto for a prize, poor Giotto with the sad thin mountain sheep and St Francis blessing the birds, and the crucifixion with the people beating their heads and crying' (129–130). After another association, this time between her childhood bedroom

[5] The story was first published in the second issue of *Landfall* in 1947. It was here entitled 'Alison Hendry,' and published under the pseudonym 'Jan Godfrey.'

and asters, the speaker halts again to examine the narrative's failure: 'But I have wandered from my story. I knew I would wander. I will write about the girl who sleeps in the room with me.' The narrative then restarts, albeit in a markedly different direction:

> This story came last night. Everything is always a story, but the loveliest ones are those that get written and are not torn up and are taken to a friend as payment for listening, for putting a wise ear to the keyhole of my mind.
>
> hell
>
> me
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> me
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> me
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> I am writing a story about a girl who is not me. I cannot prove she is not me. I can only tell you that her name is Alison Hendry. (130–1)

With knowledge of the provenance of *The Lagoon* and the relationship between Frame and John Money, the description of the 'loveliest' stories is telling: the role of the friend is to listen to the noises transmitted through the apparently locked room of the narrator's mind, and the stories pay for that service. The startling interruption that follows, 'hell/me/me/me,' has certain continuities with what has gone before. 'Hell' connects with the image of a sequestered, inaccessible, and tormented space – it is another 'tomb' – which in the logic of the text seems to refer to the narrator's mind. The affirmation of the subject, 'me', follows from an uncertainty about the writing self. 'I am like a dead person typing now,' she writes on the first page; she is 'typing words that are not a story' (129). The pressure on this 'me' becomes more marked in the following paragraphs, until the barrier between self and other collapses:

> Alison Hendry. Margaret Burt. Nancy Smith. We cling to our names because we think they emphasise our separateness and completeness and importance, but deep down we know that we are neither separate nor complete nor very important, nor are we terribly happy […]. (131)

The story then moves toward early versions of several of the major episodes from the 1980s autobiographies: the narrator discusses her short career as a teacher, which she 'got tired of,' leading to her ending up in 'hospital in Dunedin'; she is taken to a mental hospital. 'But I have

wandered again,' she writes, 'I am really writing my story of Alison Hendry […] but I cannot prove it is Alison, nor can I prove it is me […]' (132, 133). The story concludes with her simply taking the identity of the woman who shares her room: 'My name is Alison Hendry' (135).

'Jan Godfrey' explores in fiction the insight that can be produced out of unconstrained mental states, states which here come close to modelling the symptoms of schizophrenia as it was understood at the time Frame was writing. The narrator seems to have no fixed self, as she instead adopts other names as her own: all identities are incomplete. The sudden interruption, 'hell/me/me/me,' is a breakdown of sorts, one that could easily be read as taking place in a psychotic rather than literary mode. The point here is that the short story relies on being read as the writing of the mad, rather than as an author experimenting with literary form and impersonation.

Literary experimentation of this kind was risky for Frame. Around the time this story was composed, expression such as that in 'Jan Godfrey' was used by hospital authorities as confirmation of Frame's mental illness. A medical certificate from 4 October 1948 notes that she 'says she is a lot of people … One of the persons is Pierre.' As King identifies, 'Pierre' is an allusion to the character from Tolstoy. Frame had written to John Money the previous day, 'Pierre in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, […] he was a prisoner and looked out of the window and laughed and laughed because the world was inside him' (*WA* 100).

In the years between the publication of *The Lagoon* and *Owls Do Cry* the belief that Frame was a mad author only grew in prominence. After she came to live with Sargeson in 1955 he began disseminating this view of her among New Zealand's small publishing coterie. Recently published correspondence shows him piecing together information that he derived from researching schizophrenia in the Takapuna Library. He wrote in a letter to Glover in February 1956, '[l]ately she has been so hopelessly insane as to be quite unbearable […]. An hour or so of apparent calm is a facade behind which is concealed the possibility of suicide at any moment.' (Glover responded: 'Are you suggesting that J should be given a lot of money [from the State Literary Fund] in order

to jump overboard from a ship? That she should, like Robin Hyde, have enough of a pittance to afford a rented gas oven?' (Sargeson 219–20).) In a letter to Charles Brasch in the same month, Sargeson wrote of Frame's 'type of insanity,' and her 'fantastic misinterpretations, accounts of nightmares, & unceasing talk of death' (Sargeson 217). In March, he told Denis Glover that 'according to the text-books' – the echo with Frame's later autobiographies is unmistakable – she was 'suffering from acute schizophrenia with paranoid and manic complications':

> Her morbid depression is a constant, with frequent dips into a state in which the hallucinations get quite out of bounds (I feel pretty sure that she is hallucinated aurally as well as visually – but she won't admit to the aural ones, mainly because she is aware that they are the more serious). The aurally hallucinated receive commands which they must obey – and in the present instance, if J received a command that she was to bump me off she would have to obey […].

Amid such protests, however, Sargeson acknowledged what he saw as a unique talent, one that was tied to her apparent madness:

> Her writing? She's undone by her brilliant intelligence combined with her frightening clarity of perception. If she was an intellectually mediocre zany scribbling away to amuse herself I should be sympathetic but only faintly interested. But she's so brilliantly acute she sees through every illusion until she becomes, paradoxically, the ultimate in blasphemy and heresy. […] She's mad, as she must be – but the rest of us are blind if we don't see the intimations of love harmony order meaning and all the rest of it which she gets on to paper. (Sargeson 222–3)

Sargeson here expanded on the subtext of his *Listener* review, deploying the tropes of artists as visionaries and of the culture as stultifying and unaware of itself.

Sargeson's view quickly became dominant. What Glover learnt from Sargeson about Frame's mental state led him to be uncertain whether he should assist with either the publication of her first novel or with a grant that would allow her to travel overseas. Glover told Sargeson in April 1956 that 'to subsidise genius is one thing, to subsidise lunacy another'; he told Albion Wright in the same month, 'I just don't know how really mad she is.' With many of the major literary figures of the period sharing the same view of Frame, it is little surprise that the State Literary Fund was initially cautious about providing financial support. It sent a retired school principal to interview her, who, as Michael King writes, was to 'report on whether [Frame] was a suitable

subject for a personal grant […,] the implication being that if she was indeed "mad", the committee would not feel disposed to send her abroad' (*WA* 139–40). Support was eventually granted for both the travel and the book. The work that the committee subsidized, *Owls Do Cry*, published in April 1957, only further contributed to her developing reputation.

Owls Do Cry, like *The Lagoon* before it, values madness as a special way of seeing, one to which those unable 'to hack their heel of reason' have no access (*ODC* 148). Such a valuation allowed Frame to undertake a criticism of repressive, conformist New Zealand culture, a criticism aligned with those being made at this time by Sargeson and others. At the same time, however, yoking political criticism to the insights ostensibly generated out of madness further participated in the mythology of the mad writer.

The didactic nature of *Owls Do Cry* has long been the focus of its critical reception. In his 1970 reading of the novel in *Landfall*, 'No Cowslip's Bell in Waimaru: The Personal Vision of "Owls Do Cry",' Lawrence Jones argues that a 'basic dualism' structures the novel, between the 'outer realm of Time and Death' and the 'inner realm of "treasure"' (281). The novel judges each character 'according to their orientation to the way of false or true treasure' (287). Patrick Evans in his 1977 study finds that the novel rejects 'collective, unexamined social values,' while it privileges 'the childhood vision of imaginative truth' (*Janet Frame* 57). Vincent O'Sullivan in his article in the 1992 collection, *Ring of Fire: Essays on Janet Frame*, suggests that her writing produces an 'economy of the gifted victim' (26). Recent work has found little different: Jan Cronin in *The Frame Function* argues that the 'authorial presence of *Owls Do Cry* venerates the transformative power of the individual imagination' while it 'vilifies the rampant materialism of society epitomised by Chicks.' In Cronin's view, the terms through which critics have read the novel – 'true treasure' and 'not treasure' – are indexes of the 'elitism' foundational to the way the text operates (21–2). While she finds that the novel never gives 'true' treasure positive content, instead tending 'perplexingly towards *how* treasure *is* versus *what* treasure is *not*,' she does not unsettle the existing

poles of the debate (even if she contends that the novel's representation of madness, with its fluid 'true treasure,' ends up contradicting the novel's otherwise dichotomous structure) (23).

From the outset, *Owls Do Cry* privileges imagination over utility. In part one, 'Talk of Treasure,' the Withers children discover their 'treasure at the rubbish dump, amongst the paper and steel and iron and rust and old boots and everything that the people of the town had cast out as of no use and not worth anything any more.' They find a green, worm-eaten volume of Ernest Dowson's poetry, and a volume of *The Brothers Grimm*, 'thrown away because it did not any more speak the right language, and the people could not read it because they could not find the way to its world' (*ODC* 11). Frame sets the children's wonder against the concerns of small-town New Zealand, those who value 'not treasure.' The children's bounty from the rubbish dump contrasts with the leaflets for tourists, which describe the town's official treasure: the 'begonia house at the Gardens,' and 'the Freezing Works […] the inside with rows of pegged pigs with their tiny trotters thrust out stiff.' The children's treasure is of course of much greater value than that described in the leaflets. In the terms of the novel, this treasure allows them to see beyond those who 'live […] between the flags,' those who never explore the 'long sweep of furious and hungry water' (18).

A rich strand of criticism has explored the way that *Owls Do Cry* values various characters' capacity to incarnate the world with wonder. Marc Delrez notes that the author sought 'a new language for humanity'; Daphne, who in adulthood most closely resembles the children of the first section, is the first among Frame's many 'alchemists of reality,' those able to modify the texture of language and create new imaginative possibilities (90, 221). Vincent O'Sullivan quotes from Roland Barthes's *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) to argue that Frame seeks an 'Adamic world where language would no longer be alienated' (26; Barthes 88). This view has had some longevity, appearing in a related form in Patrick Evans's 2010 novel *Gifted*. In his article from the same year in the *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, '"The Uncreating Word": Janet Frame and "Mystical Naming",' Evans enters his reading of the topic through *Owls Do Cry*, tracing Diane Caney's discussion of the passage in which Daphne and Francie name each of the parts of a bike – 'handbrake', 'footbrake,' 'tail-

light' – until a real cycle appears (*ODC* 29; Evans, 'Uncreating' 61). *Owls Do Cry* is the strongest example of this strategy in Frame's fiction, and perhaps as a result the novel sets a rigid division between those it values and those it does not.

Frame put this apparent 'mystical naming' to work in the character of Daphne. Following Francie's death, Daphne has her first vision. Watching as a piece of seedcake 'sprouted into a tall flower growing up through the roof and further than the sky,' she 'picked one of its petals to take home in the car' (*ODC* 41). The vision, which at first appears to describe her retreat into fantasy, contains a series of puns: the 'seed' sprouts into a flower, the cake's flour is its compost, yet only Daphne can see it. Crucially, the novel privileges her ability to transfigure language in this way, inviting readers to value the forms of insight that she can generate: we only gain access to the world beyond the flags by conspiring with her to re-enchant throwaway words by putting the seed back into seedcake, and the flower back into flour. It is in this vein that in the 'Daphne' chapter of part two she is uniquely able to apprehend the threat posed to her when a 'limping woman' cuts her hair as a prelude to her lobotomization: 'she has come from the underworld. I can tell from her thick arms that she has rowed across many rivers of the underworld, snipping the hair from the floating bodies and collecting it in her stainless white cloth' (153). When the 'white tribe' of medical professionals seek to exchange 'their counterfeit whys and hows and wheres, like fake diamonds and gold,' for Daphne's 'genuine treasure,' she resists in the strongest terms, slapping Flora Norris, the matron of the asylum. '[D]igging her hands in the barbed wire,' Daphne allows a 'new flower' to grow 'on [Norris's] right cheek' (134–5). In such associative, allusive thinking, Daphne seems to look in on herself and her world with a power afforded only to her; there is the sense in such exchanges that she has the power to unwind modernity, to return new growth to the world of mills, sirens, and barbed wire.

Lawrence Jones is no doubt correct when he suggests that Daphne's vision throughout is set in contrast to 'the actions and thoughts of "normal" people [so] as to show her superior insight and sensitivity' (289). Chicks in her diary describes the letter she has received from Daphne: 'Her

letter does not make sense, […] all about Christmas and a piece of moon and a mouse nibbling at a shroud of sun […] I can never see her getting better and living a normal life like myself.' This normal life, though, is banal, more concerned with house furnishings than it is with art. It is in this vein that Chicks writes of her 'night creams and astringent lotions and […] powder bases' (*ODC* 101, 111). Chicks only seems to come to life, in fact, when she writes and thinks like Daphne: when she describes the north's 'daylight' as being 'high in the sky, as if the dark were clinging closer to the earth under the whip and strike of the sun,' she reassures herself that such thoughts arise only out of 'the letter Daphne wrote to me, about dark and light and a continent of ice.' Finally unable to share Daphne's vision, though, she comes to represent the normalizing tendencies of the culture. She despairs of ever finding a 'cure' for her sister, 'even with these modern treatments like electric shock and insulin shock and that new kind of brain operation you read about in the papers, the kind where they change the personality' (107–8).

The contrast between the false world of suburbia and the true world of art appealed to the literary nationalists. Michael King records the enthusiasm for the novel from Sargeson, C. K. Stead, and others, as well as the reviews in the major periodicals: there was a 'surprising display of unanimity' in support of the recently published work (*WA* 172). Yet the political criticism that the novel undertakes again invited readers to link the hazy details of Frame's life to the alchemical literary expression achieved by Daphne, expression that is apparently 'mad'. Stead's comments are telling. In a May 1957 letter to Sargeson he wrote that the novel is 'amazing, frightening, and beautiful,' and suggested that the 'satire against [Chicks]' is 'quite devastating' (qtd. in King, *WA* 171). He continued, though, voicing what King calls 'a general preoccupation': 'I can't help being curious about how much of it is based on her own life – did she really have a sister burned to death? And does she have a brother who takes fits? … [When] you know that some of the facts are autobiographical you can't help wondering about the rest' (qtd. in King, *WA* 173).

Following Frame's deterioration in the summer of 1957, by which time she was living in London, she voluntarily admitted herself to the Maudsley Hospital (King, *WA* 182). The conditions there were significantly better than those in the various hospitals that made up New Zealand's 'lunatic asylums,' and it was at the Maudsley that she was told that she was not and never had been schizophrenic. Discharged in February 1958, she found a flat in Kentish Town; by September her mental health had again collapsed, and she was readmitted (King, *WA* 189, 194). In her second stay at the Maudsley she met Robert Cawley, a trainee psychologist with whom she formed a strong bond – she eventually dedicated seven of her books to him. She left the Maudsley again in June 1959, albeit this time with a definite plan. 'Cawley's view,' she recalls in *The Envoy from Mirror City* (1985), was that given she was still 'suffering from the effects of [her] long stay in hospital in New Zealand' she should compose her 'story of that time' to give her 'a clearer view of [her] future' (*AA* 384). Cawley and Frame met twice weekly for the following three years – in late 1959 and early 1960 she brought chapters of her developing manuscript to their meetings (King, *WA* 205). The work that eventually emerged, as she wrote on the typescript she sent to John Money, was an 'autobiographical sketch of a few years in hospital.' As ever with Frame, though, this came with a proviso, which she put in the letter that followed: 'things seem to fall into place in my life,' she wrote, 'as if it were a work of fiction and not, which I doubt anyway, a real act of living' (qtd. in King, *WA* 207).

Readers and critics have long been drawn to the autobiographical quotient of *Faces in the Water*. In *The Envoy from Mirror City*, Frame cites a particularly telling confusion between the author and narrator:

> I was amused by the *Manchester Guardian's* comment, 'Surely the use of the first person was a mistake. A woman who has been what this woman has been would never be able to remember and write about it in this way'. It was assumed that the character of Istina Mavet was a portrait of myself. (*AA* 392)

H. Winston Rhodes writes in his 1972 *Landfall* essay of the temptation to assume that the phrase "'I traded my safety for the glass beads of fantasy" is uttered by Janet Frame herself, and hence

that "the glass beads of fantasy" refer obliquely to her impressive but frequently bewildering use of imagery and verbal pyrotechnics' (135–6). Patrick Evans in his 1977 book argues that *Faces* 'must be understood as more than a documentary but as less than a novel.' In his view, the work portrays a 'society deliberately blinding itself to the fullness of existence' – a description which reprised his account of *Owls Do Cry* in the same volume (*Janet Frame* 80, 84). Donald Hannah in his article in the 1978 collection, *Bird, Hawk, Bogie*, entitled '*Faces in the Water*: Case-History or Work of Fiction?', finds that the novel is '[b]oth, really' (52).

Tonya Blowers, in her 1996 article in the *JNZL*, 'Madness, Philosophy and Literature: A Reading of Janet Frame's "Faces in the Water",' directed critics away from questions of art and life and toward those of representation. Setting the novel alongside Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1961), published in the same year, Blowers suggests that the two works undertake related tasks: where Foucault analysed 'the history of "madness" as discursive concept,' 'Frame's novel, narrated in the first person, provides a fictional account of what incarceration in a psychiatric institution in New Zealand in the 1940s and 50s might have felt like; what the experience of madness meant personally for one defined as "mad"' (74). This leaves Frame facing the same problem that occupied Foucault, namely representing the otherness of madness to reason from within a logocentric discourse.

Jan Cronin developed Blowers' account, arguing that *Faces* elides 'the version of the dialectic between "saying madness itself" and "talking about madness",' and hence that the Foucauldian problem is not resolved, but instead held in abeyance by an authorial sleight of hand. Cronin argues that this sleight of hand extends compassion to those that it represents, modelling 'the reader's conception of and response to madness' (*FF* 29–30). This presents a problem, however. Representing madness as inviolable – that is, talking about madness and emphasizing its unavailability – circumscribes one of the ways in which readers may empathize with those in the asylums, as they are no longer seemingly *like us*. At the same time, to represent madness as some kind of alternative setting 'within the kaleidoscopic spectrum of human experience' would be to

'betray [madness's] inherent tragedy.' The tension is never worked out, and the novel fails to deliver on its promise to find value in madness – even as it delivers its political criticism (*FF* 31).

Cronin and Blowers' readings are powerful ones. The first sentence of the novel shows Frame's tendency to substitute an uncertain representation of madness with political concerns:

> They have said that we owe allegiance to Safety, that he is our Red Cross who will provide us with ointment and bandages for our wounds and remove the foreign ideas the glass beads of fantasy the bent hairpins of unreason embedded in our minds. (*FW* 31)

The 'glass beads of fantasy' reappear several pages later, in the quotation Rhodes cites: 'I was not yet civilised; I traded my safety for the glass beads of fantasy' (33). The beads, alongside the 'bent hairpins of unreason,' have little inherent value, and they sponsor no particular way of reading. At the same time, though, a voice that speaks with the authority of social opprobrium cuts across Istina Mavet's, speaking for 'Safety', and its later echo, 'civilisation', with scant regard for her apparent treasure. The result is an obfuscation: whatever we are to make of Mavet's 'bent hairpins of unreason,' we know that those who speak for the civilized are, like Chicks, representatives of an assertive normalizing tendency in the culture.

While Cronin's argument is convincing, she is too hasty to dismiss Mavet's visions as 'signifiers of dis-ease rather than the imaginative, often metaphoric visions of Daphne': at moments of mental distress Mavet's apparently disconnected expression also reveals forms of intelligence (*FF* 35). In the collapse which opens the novel, Mavet writes: 'Do not sit on the seat of a public lavatory. Danger. Power lines overhead' (*FW* 32). The 'power lines' are indeed dangerous, carrying the electricity that will eventually be fitted over her head to shock her into near oblivion. The words of the health authorities trail off into an allusive network of images: 'Mrs. Hogg will help you, Mrs. Hogg the Berkshire sow' (34). What appears to be nonsense is again asking its readers to make links: Mrs. *Hogg* is a *sow*, a link that may only be resolved at the level of allusion. Later, in Istina Mavet's question, 'bone china—why was it bone,' we cannot help but notice a transference from the passage just prior, in which she witnesses patients 'digging graves

on the lawn in the night.' Her play with language here is a premonition of her continued descent, as immediately afterward she moves to one of the lower wards, 'Four-Five-and-One' (92).

Overall, though, the novel does indeed step back from Frame's earlier work in its representations of imaginative 'treasure'. Where in *Owls* treasure is an emblem of the insight of those at the margins, in *Faces* the treasure of the patients is not privileged in the same way. Instead, it makes sense primarily within the inaccessible 'closed, private circuit' of this 'race apart' (*FW* 40, 39). Watching a 'midget woman' doing needlework, Istina Mavet reflects on how the products of such labour take on, for them, a special significance:

> They worked with the involvement and detachment of true artists; one could see how they cared for something that would be sold or given away and soiled into anonymity; they folded it neatly into the small bag where they kept their treasures. The midget woman had just such a small bag beside her. It held a magazine, knitting patterns, wool, needles, perhaps something to eat or a squashed chocolate at the bottom, or something to be picked up, that others might consider a trifle, but which she valued enough to keep and be unwilling, even roused to anger, if asked to discard. (93–4)

While the artists working on their needlework can value that which others do not, their tendency to hoard items that 'others might consider a trifle' generates pathos far more than it does imaginative insight. It is part of the diminished experiences of those in the ward, the 'small tall fat thin deformed mongoloid dwarfed' who carry their 'little bags of treasures in their hands' (95). They may work with the 'detachment of true artists,' but that does not mean that they produce true art. There is rather an echo here of Sargeson's 'intellectually mediocre zany scribbling away to amuse herself.'

The novel is ambivalent, then. At the very least, Frame pulls back from the clear endorsement of madness as a form of higher knowledge in *Owls Do Cry*, even if in *Faces* there are passages in which madness seems to speak itself, and with it impound a valued way of looking. Frame, it seems, cognizant of how her work would be read through biography, could not determine whether she wanted to endorse the view that madness delivers abnormal powers. Where the novel is clearly decided, though, is in its political implications. This is nowhere clearer than in the passage in which Mavet provides theoretical commentary upon her own narration. She

explicitly rejects the 'romantic popular idea of the insane as a person whose speech appeals as immediately poetic.' Looking back, she suggests that the true tragedy of the mental hospital was that it was 'forgotten that [the patients] too possessed a prized humanity which needed care and love, that a tiny poetic essence could be distilled from their overflowing squalid truth' (119). This, in the end, is the text's representation of madness, and the novel's oscillation: Istina Mavet is variously witness and medium, truth and death, 'mad' and 'sane', and it is unclear whether it is within madness or indeed within all people that there lies a 'tiny poetic essence,' an 'overflowing squalid truth.' Whatever the case, the novel suggests, we must treat these people with far greater compassion.

Frame's first published autobiographical piece, 'Beginnings', printed in *Landfall* in 1965, sealed the reputation with which she would later take issue. In the short piece she tenders the origin of her fiction as something like the experience of madness:

> Are there 'pockets' of poetry in the world as there are 'pockets' of depression and wealth, […] areas breeding poetry like a rare plant which the nation eats to satisfy an extra appetite, enjoying the pleasant taste without thinking too much of the dangers of the 'insane root'? (40)

The leaves of 'pleasant' fiction are here connected to the transgressive subterranean roots of insanity. Frame links this with her own life through what she called her 'background of poverty, drunkenness, attempted murder and near-madness' (44). Most importantly she then unites emotional turmoil, specifically her own, with artistry. She describes the breakdown that led to her committal to Seacliff in 1945 in the following terms:

> I said,—Excuse me, and walked from the room and the school, from 'this' world to 'that' world where I have stayed, and where I live now. At first it seemed a lonely disastrous choice. I tried to kill myself, and I was sent to hospital for six weeks […].

Despite its difficulties, however, this decision to 'walk out' led to her slow, halting attempt to write the stories that became *The Lagoon* ('Beginnings' 45). The price of escape from the banalities of 'this world,' into the world of the artist, 'that world,' was emotional collapse, struggle, and anguish.

'Madness' and the desire to create art, readers were again invited to believe, and despite the contrary thoughts in *Faces in the Water*, are inextricably linked.

Switching genres from fiction to autobiography assisted biographical interpretations of her work, and the impact of this transition was felt across early Frame criticism. Essays from *Bird, Hawk, Bogie* (1978) – the title itself referring to a story she recounted in 'Beginnings' – made extensive use of the piece. Anna Rutherford draws from it in her paper, using 'this world'/'that world' to power her reading: 'this world' is sane and blind, 'that world' is seeing and insane, she argued. Donald Hannah finds in 'Beginnings' evidence that *Faces* is both case-history and fiction. Patrick Evans in his 1977 study entitles the first two chapters, 'Life in "This" World,' and 'Life in "That" World,' organizing his criticism through the lens of biography, distilled both from her piece in *Landfall* and from rumours he gathered around Oamaru. The overall effect was to solidify the relationship between madness and art that Frame's early writing had considered, albeit this time in an autobiographical mode. It is perhaps little surprise, as King reports, that she came to regret the support she gave to the '"insane writer" scenario' (*WA* 269).[6] Much of the rest of her writing responded to the interpretive context established by her early work and reception.

II: Interruptions

The composition of Frame's fifth novel, *The Adaptable Man* (1965), published in the same year as 'Beginnings', was interrupted by what Michael King calls a 'roots crisis.' This crisis led her to write a short book that tells the story of a weekend she spent with 'Philip Thirkettle' (Geoffrey

[6] Michael King writes that 'Beginnings' was 'conditioned by Charles Brasch's efforts to secure her a [government] pension and his intimation that her case would be strengthened if the essay established that her background was exceptionally disadvantageous and that she needed to be able to sustain her writing career if she was not to be a permanent drain on the public purse as a hospital inmate' (*WA* 268). He cites no evidence for this claim, suggesting that it may have arisen from his interviews with the author.

Moorhouse) and his family in the north of England (*WA* 245). The result, *Towards Another Summer*, was published posthumously in 2007; Frame wrote it while she was living in London in 1963.

The novel opens with Grace Cleave, a shy, struggling female New Zealand writer living in London, performing what she calls 'literary surgery to free her characters for their impelled dance or flight.' These characters are not from the text we are reading, though. She explains:

> She […] was a writer, self-styled, and it was between the second and third parts of her novel 'in progress' that the weekend intruded itself; it stuck in the gullet of her novel; nothing could move out or in, her book was in danger of becoming a 'foster-child of silence'.

A page later Cleave sits 'typing her novel':

> End of Part Two.
>
> Part Three, page one, page two, page three, 'they told me you had been to her, and mentioned me to him' …
>
> Page four. (*TAS* 11–12)

Cleave is here writing Frame's *The Adaptable Man*. The quotation from *Alice in Wonderland* ('they told me […]') appears on page three of the third part of the 1965 novel, and a version of the same quotation also appears in the last chapter of part two, in a shortened and much darker form, which in the text is called 'another playful verse with sinister implications' (see Cronin, *FF* 173; *AM* 365). *Towards Another Summer* is the act of 'literary surgery' she describes.[7]

Towards Another Summer is more sceptical than 'Beginnings' about the relationship between fiction and life. Where in 'Beginnings' art arises out of the 'mad' root, here the production of art

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[7] Reading the two texts in parallel reveals many other connections. The 'bus ticket' that floats over Grace Cleave's wall and into her garden in *Towards Another Summer* seems to have been thrown from *The Adaptable Man*, where Unity Foreman, a writer, watches a 'bus ticket drifting over the garden wall' (*TAS* 23; *AM* 260). The Southern Cross which Russell cannot see in Little Burglestatham in *The Adaptable Man* is the same constellation that 'cuts through [Grace Cleave's] heart instead of through the sky' in *Towards Another Summer* (*AM* 314; *TAS* 17). The highly-paid television and film writers Cleave imagines being better candidates for rental homes appear in *The Adaptable Man* too, in the latter case as instances of the arrival of the 'Overspill' from London (*TAS* 18). The 'witch-novelist' described in the 1965 work is also Cleave, who is imagined in *Towards Another Summer* as an 'old frustrated witch dancing around the cauldron'; the 'clergyman of my novel' to whom Cleave plans to return is Aisley Maude of *The Adaptable Man* (*TAS* 28, 191; *AM* 211; see Cronin, *FF* 173). The 'migratory bird' of the prologue of the work published in Frame's lifetime is the name which Cleave calls herself throughout the posthumous volume.

is a process of conquest and unsettlement, which subsequently opens up the realm of madness. One passage stands out for the way that it lays out a path familiar from Frame's earlier fiction:

> Now journeys were not simple matters for Grace; nothing is simple if your mind is a fetch-and-carry wanderer from sliced perilous outer world to secret safe inner world; if when night comes your thought creeps out like a furred animal concealed in the dark, to find, seize, and kill its food and drag it back to the secret house in the secret world, only to discover that the secret world has disappeared or has so enlarged that it's a public nightmare; if then strange beasts walk upside down like flies on the ceiling; crimson wings flap, the curtains fly; a sad man wearing a blue waistcoat with green buttons sits in the centre of the room, crying because he has swallowed the mirror and it hurts and he burps in flashes of glass and light; if crakes move and cry; the world is flipped, unrolled down the vast marble stair; a stained threadbare carpet; the hollow silver dancing shoes, hunting-horns…
>
> It's no use saying Freud, Freud. People do, you know. Like squeezing a stale sponge.
>
> Nothing was simple, known, safe, believed, identified. Boundaries were not possible, where nothing finished, shapes encircled, and there was no beginning. (*TAS* 13)

The connections with 'Jan Godfrey' are clear at the beginning of the passage: the mind, which is self-contained, acts of its own accord, while nonetheless annexing that which is external to it. The problem for Cleave is that when the 'furred animal' returns to the 'secret house in the secret world,' it discovers that the otherwise inaccessible realm has either 'disappeared' or expanded into public view. The entry of the 'food' into the 'secret house' leads to the upending of her vision, as she is overwhelmed by a series of disconnected images. She explicitly rejects Freudian approaches to her interior life, though – they are akin to 'squeezing a stale sponge' – and we are left instead to appreciate that Cleave lives in a vertiginous, illimitable world. Art takes place in a private space, which is corrupted even through composition; yet a psychoanalytic understanding of this is disbarred.

The entry of Frame's interpreters into the writing itself is one of the most notable features of *Towards Another Summer*, and the way that this develops across the two novels into a condition of writing occupies the remainder of this section. The opening chapters of *Towards Another Summer* deal in large part with Cleave's developing fame, through the somewhat unexpected image of the 'stain'. The second chapter introduces the image for the first time: 'Being a writer, and returning

home tired after every venture, you are so surprised to find on yourself a slowly spreading stain of publisher, critic, agent':

> You turn in panic to the household hints in *Pears Cyclopaedia* […]. You wonder which stain and which remedy would apply to publisher, agent, critic. […] Then you realise there's nothing, you can neither identify the stain nor remove it. Feeling resigned, depressed, you set out on your new venture, returning once more through the paddock of paspalum; and the stain spreads. (18–19)

The passage is unambiguous: 'publisher, agent, critic' leave an indelible yet unidentifiable mark on the otherwise clean garment of her writing. Resolving herself to continue working (returning to the 'paddock of paspalum'), this presence spreads. The image recurs in chapter six, in which 'another stain unexpectedly mar[s] Grace's progress through her field […] of ventures,' namely an 'interview recorded for the Overseas Service of the BBC' (35). The interview does not go well – Cleave repeats 'Sorry, Sorry in a whisper' to the interviewer – which leads to a reflection on the destructive relationship between various readers and Cleave's work:

> She wondered whether these accumulated stains that seemed so much a part of her essentially private ventures would in the end spread over most of her life, sink deeper and deeper, be absorbed as a poison which could be removed only if she swallowed a violent medicine which would force her to vomit her whole life – all her treasured experiences and dreams – and be left weak, unable to digest more of life, sitting, cramped with pain and lassitude, in a bed or wheelchair until she died and was buried here, in London […]. (37)

The 'stains' – publishers, agents, critics, and now interviewers – that affix themselves to her work, her 'essentially private ventures,' come to demand more and more of her, eventually wanting 'all her treasured experiences and dreams.'

The visceral disgust of Frame's avatar, Grace Cleave, towards publishers, agents, and critics, represents autobiographical space as a form of pollution. It is a purity fantasy, no doubt, one that is incommensurate with the very fact of being read. Cleave reflects that she wishes most all to be left alone to send 'noisy signals to herself,' signals which are her 'style and intention in writing' (46). She both quarrels with readers and dedicates herself to writing from within the terms of her private view (the 'secret house in the secret world'). The problem, of course, is that this private view is always corrupted in the process of composition – the purity she seeks is impossible.

These stains have another life in *The Adaptable Man.* The way that stains circulate in the novel shows that they both derive from and contribute to a metaphysics in which reality is the private preserve of the gifted artist. In this system everything else (paradoxically including writing itself) is shadow, myth, veil, and corruption. Critics have recently suggested as much: Patrick Evans argues that Frame in her work seeks to 're-enchant a world […] disenchanted by modernity, through the reintroduction to it of magic, the imagination, and her own distinctive brand of linguistic nostalgia' ('Uncreating' 65). For what is often thought of as a distinctive literary form of postmodernity, metafictional returns to autobiographical space are here being put to ends that are more familiar from a kind of Christianized Platonism. (Cronin to this end draws on Augustine in her reading of the novel (*FF* 9)). Further, Frame's views of language and the visionary artist in *The Adaptable Man* demonstrate the extent to which her particular understandings of these issues were always at odds with the cultural nationalists. She, unlike them, was suspicious of common language and public forms of the good. Having sought the approval of Sargeson and others in earlier works, here she marked her distance from their more worldly ways of thinking.

The primary action of *The Adaptable Man* is clergyman Aisley Maude's crisis of faith. He wakes one morning with his 'Christian faith set strongly behind' him, only to find that 'the picture was blurred, that God had moved, that the steadfast landmark, feature of all [his] maps, routes, views, references, had become an unidentifiable shadow.' He continues:

> A cynic might have said that neither God nor I had moved; that what I needed was a new camera; that I had lived for too long using an obsolete instrument to capture my view of God, that I might undertake a little research to discover if the formerly accepted mark (soulmark, mindmark) were indeed *God.* (214)

The 'mark' becomes a 'stain' later in the novel, when Aisley, spurred by thinking about his recently deceased wife, reflects on two people coming together in marriage. Such a couple may, 'in their apparently self-contained complementary world,' come to 'perceive a tiny speck at the most distant outer edge of their vision,' and 'quarrel over the nature of the speck.' Some 'say it is a spark, a drop of poison, a stain, others that it is a tiny shadow whose substance must remain forever invisible to

man […]. Spark, poison, stain; and some said God.' Aisley Maude, in his own life, comes to say 'not indelible God but indelible stain' (321).

The movement of the stain or speck is crucial to the Platonic imagery of substance and shadow that organizes the book's reflections on writing and reality. This is clear in the description of the movement of God: this movement has caused everything to become 'an unidentifiable shadow,' and the stain to become a 'tiny shadow' with always invisible 'substance'. Aisley Maude's quiescent tuberculosis leaves him with 'shadows on lungs,' which, like 'shadows on souls,' cannot be smoothed away 'by trowelling with a God-cement' (456). Vic Baldrey, who dreams of nothing but Australia, would upon emigration have to make an 'adjustment in the art of looking' in order to see 'both substance and shadow […], not the shadow only' (349). In the logic of the novel, the stain is affiliated with shadow rather than substance, with absence rather than presence.

In contrast with the 'shadow' or stain that fails to express true meaning there is the language of substance – unlike in *Owls Do Cry*, though, this language is permanently out of reach. Aisley Maude dreams of a language of 'earliest praise' (*AM* 223), which is here the Anglo-Saxon verse that he reads throughout (verse which Jan Cronin notes is itself serially corrupted (*FF* 2–5)). The differences between the two versions of the Bible that Aisley consults, the 'Authorised Version' and the 'New English Version' (which are the same versions that Cleave finds in her room in *Towards Another Summer*), provide theoretical commentary on Aisley's linguistic nostalgia. He reads from 1 Corinthians 13:7–12 in the Authorised Version: 'we see through a glass darkly,' and 'we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' When he reads the New English Version, he finds that seeing 'through a glass darkly' has been translated as seeing 'puzzling reflections in a mirror,' a change which Aisley considers to be 'nothing more than a linguistic fun-fair, or a disappointing glimpse of incorrectly applied religious cosmetic.' The two elements of the quotation come together when Aisley asks about the 'group of scholars' who translated the work: 'What had been their feelings when they shattered the "glass darkly" into so many pieces that they could not restore it, could merely hastily

rescue a few fragments which gave, as some small comfort, a "puzzling reflection"?' (*AM* 272–4). The translation has moved us one step further away from the real, here, which is itself in the nature of the rhetoric of reality and representation contained in the quotation from 1 Corinthians: 'The partial vanishes when the wholeness comes.' This belief in a language that will recreate reality impels the representation of Daphne (and the appearance of her bicycle) in *Owls Do Cry*; in *The Adaptable Man* the representative of true wholeness is St. Cuthbert, who preaches to the waves at Lindisfarne and brings out the seals. The failure of Aisley's quest to return God to where the stain now lies is evident in the very translation he cites, however: glasses and mirrors enact the distances and distortions of representation. The shattered 'glass darkly' leaves only fragments, in other words, and the seals remain at sea.

The distance from the real that the novel thematizes is enacted in its characters, Alwyn Maude in particular. Writing a novel himself, he seems to be the product of clichéd genre fiction, Greta Maude's 'series of echoes' (*AM* 264). No clear account of Alwyn's motivations for murdering farmworker Julio Botti are given. Instead, after Botti recites a series of phrases from his book and Alwyn strangles him, there are a number of puns on writing, ones that stand in place of explanation. There is nothing but 'the final blotting country darkness, reversing the writing of trees and quill-grasses, with the faintly gleaming surface of sky providing no mirrors, no means of interpretation.' The event is more absence than presence; it is in this vein that Botti is labelled 'a ghost in our story' (284, 231). The incest between Alwyn and his mother – a 'fairy tale' in the terms of the text – similarly seems to take place in a metalanguage. A 'garden shed was a conventional place for it to happen,' we are told, not at all like the 'myths and fables' that might have given us 'some understanding' (352–3). The only consequence of Greta's resulting pregnancy is the new meaning given to a riddle involving fathers and sons, which Alwyn reconfigures, telling his father that '*my son's father is the father of your son*' (496).

In the final section, 'The Chandelier,' Frame's commitments with the thematic of shadow, sun, stain, reflection, image, and reproduction finally become clear. Throughout the novel the

chandelier has taken on an outsized significance. Muriel Baldry imagines that it will complete Aisley Maude's search. When the time comes, though, the metaphors of representation are literalized. The glass darkly shatters into fragments, falling onto the assembled dinner party guests and killing all but Vic Baldry, who is so badly injured that he is consigned to his bedroom, to live 'his life in a mirror,' seeing forever into its 'star-shaped crack' (*AM* 526, 525). The final paragraph brings together Russell Maude's dentist mirrors, Botti Julio's phrasebook (with its 'underexposed' cameras), Greta Maude's chandelier, Aisley Maude's image of God, and Alwyn Maude and the act of writing, when Frame asks whether 'imposing our own […] limits of reach and touch, our own star-shaped irreparable flaw,' we in fact 'all live in mirrors, for ever' (526). The transcendent remains inaccessible at this last moment, in other words.

Read in a certain way at least, the set of relationships across the novels imply that Frame's linguistic nostalgia here sits in close relation to her readers. In *Towards Another Summer* the 'stain of public opinion' enters Grace Cleave's life and her writing, while in *The Adaptable Man* the 'stain' marks the movement of God, and subsequently the inaccessibility of the transcendent (*TAS* 134). The practical conditions to which the author relents in the earlier work emerges as an ontological condition in the later one. Yet the coincidence of a stain left by Frame's interpreters and a stain left in the place of substance or reality is enough to suggest that her readers too may be part of this condition, frustrating her project of achieving the kind of expression that would speak in St. Cuthbert's language of truth. As I have suggested, this desire for an uncorrupted, private language was at odds with the cultural nationalists, whose vision was always much more firmly in the world than Frame's.

In the light of the two novels' statements on writing and the institutions of literature, Patrick Evans's various comments about her idealist metaphysics over the years take on a new life. He wrote in 1993 that only Frame's 'project against history, against time itself, something deeply personal to her and to her ability to survive' could explain 'the intensity of her resistance to interference from outsiders who, by trying to document her life, really do seem to touch the ark'

('Disappearing' 16–7). Whatever we make of her apparent 'project', *Towards Another Summer* certainly stages this resistance: publishers, agents, critics, and interviewers – those who seem to believe her to be mad – threaten her writing at the very deepest level; they are psychic wounds which become or already are metaphysical wounds too. Evans was prescient when he noted in 2004 that Frame enters into a 'basically adversarial' contract with her 'readers' (although perhaps we would now say 'publisher, agent, critic'): 'private ventures' are impossible when her interpreters leave such stains on her work ('Frame Effect' 13).

What would it mean, though, to access a form of writing beyond stains, mirrors, and reflections, and to be able to write with true directness of vision? In *The Adaptable Man* an unfragmented world, however much desired, would amount to annihilation, ending writing itself. This is a crucial reversal. Numerous characters in *The Adaptable Man*, move out of the 'shadow' of language and into the sun (or substance) of reality. Aisley, looking at the glowing bulbs of the chandelier, a moment before they come crashing down on his head, thinks that they look 'like a stirred yet sparkling river flowing from the sun.' Muriel, watching Aisley, sees his face 'change from delight to fear' as he seems to recover, for the first time in the novel, from his crisis of faith (519). Botti's death leaves no mirror and no 'means of interpretation,' while his repeated phrase, 'I am wounded, see I am bleeding, can you send for help?' ceases to be nonsense only at the moment of his death. There is a clear trajectory in the novel: after stains, mirrors, and glasses there are no words and no meaning, just, indeed, 'the final blotting country darkness, reversing the writing of trees and quill-grasses.' Frame hints – perhaps despite herself – that the stain that 'publisher, agent, critic' leave is part of what allows her to compose. To write in full view of the 'sun', beyond shadow or stain, would be to speak in an impossible, final language. As she writes in *Towards Another Summer*, reaching the 'boundless billionaire coastline of eternity,' where there is (as after Botti's death in *The Adaptable Man*) 'no wind in the trees – no trees; no sky or people or buildings,' requires 'the extreme discipline of breathing: that is, death' (*TAS* 171).

When we turn back to *Towards Another Summer*, we see how Frame stages both how an author may be made up by those surrounding her (how she may be a rough assemblage of other texts) and her distrust of that dialogical condition. The title of the volume is drawn from Charles Brasch's poem, 'In These Islands,' which Frame also cites in an epigraph to the novel: 'The godwits vanish towards another summer;/ […] Shadow of departure; distance looks our way.' The poem is collected in the volume that Cleave picks up at the Thirkettles, Curnow's *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923–45*. Opening the volume, she glances through the 'long introductory essay, a self-conscious loving dedication to "these islands",' and then begins to read the poems (*TAS* 7, 58). The image of herself as a migratory bird, which she derives from Brasch's poem in the collection, organizes her longing for a home both in body and in mind, 'some place out of the world'; this is perhaps the novel's most humorous yet disturbing feature (79). She bursts out almost at random with words from cultural nationalist poetry. Cleave reflects that man must 'learn to stand upright,' echoing Curnow's 'Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum,' one of his best-known poems – it concludes, 'Not I, some child born in a marvellous year,/Will learn the trick of standing upright here' (*TAS* 118; Curnow, *Selected* 89). Her much longed-for view, some transcendent reality, is likely a ramification of Brasch's 'A View of Rangitoto,' which is quoted in the novel (see *TAS* 62–3). The citations only increase in frequency towards the conclusion: '*Distance looks our way*' irrupts into her mind as she prepares to leave the Thirkettles' house, and the novel finishes with Cleave in bed, 'turning sometimes and moaning,' as '*Distance looks our way; the godwits vanish towards another summer and none knows where he will lie down at night*' (197, 203).

Her audience, the literary coterie involved in the publication and reception of her work, is affiliated with both shadow and sun, both motivating her composition and impeding, we could say, her flight into a language of meaning. It is no accident that discovering herself to be one of Brasch's migratory birds finally allows her 'words' to 'flo[w],' even though such words can never amount to the 'one perfect sentence' for which she longs (*TAS* 25, 203). Frame's consideration of the cultural production of literary nationalism is hence telling in this novel: she gives it the same

treatment as she gives the condition of all writing, as writing out of the shadow. In a text that is concerned with the homesickness of a New Zealand novelist in England, she in effect links the cultural nationalists both with publisher, agent, critic *and* with home – indeed, this is the kind of writing which creates the inaccessible home. Perhaps this should be no surprise. For Frame, the literary nationalists *were* publisher, agent, and critic as well as the progenitors of a local literature: she found herself speaking in their language even when she did not want to. They both enabled and corrupted her writing.

The anxieties about being read and interpreted in *Towards Another Summer* participate in the development of the idealist vision of *The Adaptable Man*, one in which she could simply send noisy signals to herself. In this sense, *Towards Another Summer* helps to unravel some of the mysteries of *The Adaptable Man*, namely why Frame came to be quite so invested in visions of historical and linguistic purity in that novel. Yet, despite her ostensible rejection of readerly enquiry, she simultaneously depended on it, as this rejection motivated the linguistic nostalgia that structures the 1965 novel. Her relationship with readers was hence central to her writing practice, as she became concerned with rejecting common language and public goods in favour of a private, Platonist view of writing and truth. This distinctive attitude is remarkably involuted, of course, prioritizing as it does resisting incorporation in any terms whatever. This is a metafiction directed against the public and toward a different – and necessarily inaccessible – realm.

III: Distractions

In the decade and a half between the publication of *The Adaptable Man* and *Living in the Maniototo* (1979), Frame became even more concerned with her critical reception. Michael King records her speaking to critic Victor Dupont when she was undertaking her tenure as the Winn-Manson Fellow in the French town of Menton in 1974. Frame hoped to 'steer [Dupont] away from some of the inaccurate views he had expressed in print, such as references to her "diseased mind", her

"recurring suicidal impulses", and his conviction that she had "never recovered from the shock of seeing her sister burned in a rubbish fire".' After their meeting, Frame sent Dupont away with a letter she had sought out from Robert Cawley:

> Miss Janet F. Clutha has told me that a number of literary scholars and editors of anthologies are publishing biographical comments which refer to her previous state of mind as sick or disordered. I understand that some people are going so far as to suggest that her creative ability is in some way related to a history of mental illness. […]
>
> I have told Miss Clutha that in my opinion any writer who publishes comments referring to her 'disordered mind' or 'mental illness' is running two risks. One is of public ridicule at the hands of scholars more knowledgeable and informed about these matters. The other is litigation. (*WA* 388–9)

Frame sent out many copies of this letter over the years. Patrick Evans was one of the recipients. He wrote to her in 1974 to inform her that he had a commission from Twayne to write what would become his 1977 book, and asked whether she forbade the project. Her response, in King's words, was 'both warning and smokescreen.' She wrote:

> In many of my stories, and in *Owls Do Cry*, I invented a childhood, which I am almost persuaded to believe was my own childhood, because others believe it and I believed it while I was writing the stories and the book. […] Unfortunately my 'Beginnings' in *Landfall*, necessarily concentrated, helped perhaps to strengthen a myth.
>
> I find myths very useful. I'm rather troubled, though, by the suggestion that I myself … have been 'insane.' […] I shan't go into details … because writing fiction (and not writing my autobiography) is my pastime.

The letter had two postscripts, the first registering her dissatisfaction with Evans's *An Inward Sun* (1971) (it contained 'facts about my life which are not true'), and a second explaining the origin of the name 'Istina Mavet.' Enclosed was a copy of the letter from Cawley that she had already given to Dupont (*WA* 394).

A letter from 1978 shows these endeavours in a slightly different light, however, familiar from the reversals of *The Adaptable Man* and *Towards Another Summer*. After an academic sent Frame a note with biographical information sourced from Evans's book, she sent an angry letter to the University of Canterbury lecturer: 'Perhaps you feel that inaccuracies of fact don't matter? … Perhaps you feel that writers should inhabit as well as write their fiction? Or perhaps in a subtle way you are making a comment on the everlasting topic of capital-lettered Life and Art? One of

the Porlock people, maybe?' King invokes both Samuel Coleridge and Stevie Smith to explain what Frame meant:

> Mention of the 'Porlock people' referred to the person who interrupted Samuel Taylor Coleridge when he was trying to write 'Kubla Khan', and seemed to imply that activities such as Evans's critical writing interfered with Frame's own ability to work, and hence with the artistic process itself (although Frame was also aware of Stevie Smith's poem 'Thoughts about the Person from Porlock', which suggested that Coleridge *wanted* to be interrupted).[8] (*WA* 419–20)

Frame's letter to Evans hence simultaneously disavowed readerly attention and suggested that the wish to be scrutinized is a necessary condition of writing. The focus of this section is the writing that arose out of Frame's entanglements, imagined and real, with the set of literary guardians who increasingly began tapping at her door – and all centring on the theme of a writer distracted.

Frame wrote much of *In the Memorial Room* in Menton. While she was never sufficiently satisfied with the text to submit it for publication, she was never able to bring herself to completely abandon it either. It was published posthumously in 2013. King records her reading the 'novel she had begun in Menton' after she arrived back in New Zealand in late 1974. She wrote to Bill Brown, 'I now don't feel "related" to it, yet I don't feel, as I have done with other interrupted work, that I'll cast it away … [It's] the stirrings of something…' (King, *WA* 393).

Like *Towards Another Summer* and *The Adaptable Man*, *In the Memorial Room* and the novel Frame wrote immediately afterwards, *Living in the Maniototo*, share a number of features. Jan Cronin in her 2014 article on *In the Memorial Room* noted that 'portions' of it are 'repeated, lightly edited, in *Living in the Maniototo*.' The Watercress family and Margaret Rose Hurndell are the subjects of the novel that Mavis cannot write in the 1979 work, as she finds herself constantly distracted; Harry Gill in the posthumous volume is also unsuccessfully attempting to write a novel, in this case about a professor of Shakespeare – the text is the composite of 'notes in between writing a

[8] Smith writes: 'I am hungry to be interrupted/For ever and ever amen/O Person from Porlock come quickly/And bring my thoughts to an end' (446).

novel' (Cronin, 'What is't' 101; *MR* 18). The unsigned preface to the novel notes, 'the Menton novel waited while Frame went on to write *Living in the Maniototo*, a novel interlaced with some of the same characters, events and places' (*MR* n.p.).

Critics and reviewers have argued that *In the Memorial Room* is not a novel in its own right. Peter Simpson wrote in the New Zealand *Listener* that the text seems incomplete: 'I doubt if Frame considered the abandoned novel "finished"' ('Riviera'). C. K. Stead found that it is 'difficult to believe Frame could have thought the novel was finished, or that she would have wanted it published in this unsatisfactory state'; worse, there is some 'irony,' he suggested, 'in the fact that a novel about the memorialising of a dead writer, which is in part a satire on such pieties, should be posthumously published as itself an act of memorialisation […]' (178). Cronin in her article in *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* was more willing, albeit with some qualifications, than either Stead or Simpson to see the work enter Frame's *oeuvre*. Like *Towards Another Summer*, she finds that *Memorial Room* has a 'different status,' functioning more as a 'tributary, and indeed subsidiary' of work that was published in Frame's lifetime. '*In the Memorial Room*'s concerns with the writing life and the production of fiction,' she argues, 'find their fullest articulation in *Living in the Maniototo*' ('What is't' 101).

'[W]riting life and the production of fiction': these are indeed major concerns of *In the Memorial Room*, coded in the same kind of hostility we have already seen in *Towards Another Summer*. The narrator in this later work is gradually effaced behind an image, one over which he has little control. This begins with Gill's worry that he lacks specificity. 'I have already described my face; you will have found nothing particular in it; you may have concluded that I am a mere generality,' he writes; worse, he shares his name with a character from another text, Wordsworth's 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' (*MR* 22). Those who fit the image of the author come to stand in his place. The writing fellow is frequently mistaken for the Watercresses's son, Michael, who is a 'handsome richly bearded young man,' the 'perfect stereotype of "the young writer"' (30). At a reception, the mayor of the city approaches Michael Watercress, shakes his hand, and has a photograph taken

with him. Three days later the photograph appears in the local newspaper, with the caption '*The Mayor shakes hands with this year's Watercress-Armstrong Fellow*'; Gill is somewhere in the background, 'holding his hand in a mimicry of the bearded young writer's pose' (34). Deaf and struggling with his vision, Gill by the end of the novel is barely able to communicate with those around him: the effacement is complete.

Alongside Harry Gill and Michael Watercresses's struggle for the title of writing fellow, Frame shows another author being written over by those who seek to associate themselves with the writer's work. The novel follows a group who affix themselves to the memory of a dead novelist, Margaret Rose Hurndell (a thinly-veiled Katherine Mansfield). The group of literary hangers-on, in Gill's words, is more interested in keeping 'alive [Rose Hurndell's] death rather than her work'; he reflects that the author's death renders her 'harmless', and that her fame now provides 'unscreened warmth' for those who bask in her 'reflected glory' and 'flouris[h] in her fame' (45, 40). Local families, the Fosters, Watercresses, and Lees, feed 'on the death of Rose Hurndell, nourishing themselves with the power of permanence which death has and which they so much desire.' The Trustees' project is hence not one of memorial – the room itself is not even the one in which Rose Hurndell worked – but of slowly replacing her. Gill finds Rose Hurndell to be 'as much a danger as the living writers who did not play the game of, as it were, fitting the garment that had been cut and sewn for them, particularly when they learned how closely it resembled a shroud' (65, 185).

The antagonism of the novel is directed against those Frame knew well. It is this malicious element in particular that makes *In the Memorial Room*, as Stead found, a 'looking-in-darkly rather than a looking-out-bravely novel' (178). Perhaps the most stinging attack is Gill's: 'Being nothing, then, am I to join the ranks of the poverty-stricken bad poets who cry, "I am the dawn, the wind, the sky", an assertion which has not even the properties of logic, since the cry is not also, "I am a parking lot, a jet plane, a shark, a vulture"' (*MR* 140). The lines of the 'bad poets' recall those of a poet very well known to Frame: Charles Brasch. After Brasch died in May 1973, Alan Roddick,

Brasch's literary executor, sent Frame 'a copy of a poem that Brasch had written, literally, on his death bed.' Entitled 'With You,' and dedicated to Janet Frame, the poem told her: 'Listen to your seas, listen to your tides.' The last three stanzas read precisely as the writing of one of the 'bad poets' that Frame mocks:

> I am there, under the waters,
> In the winds, in the leaf that sighs
>
> I am there, sleeping in the rocks,
> Under the houses, below the promontories.
>
> I am the sea, I am the wind,
> Everything and nothing, with you. (King, *WA* 375–6)

The timeline, wording, and thematics make clear that she is ridiculing the sentiment of a dying friend (and patron) in *In the Memorial Room*; 'I am the wind' is in fact directly imported from Brasch to Gill. Stead in his review wrote that Sargeson 'used to say that helping Janet was a risky business; you were as likely as not to be punished for it in her fiction' (172). Sargeson knew of this first-hand from his fictionalization as Turnlung in *Daughter Buffalo*, which led him to comment in a letter to Philip Wilson in June 1973 that she collects 'items about people she knows,' and 'apparently has no second thoughts about using' them (Sargeson 499). The Vogts and Mansons, who provide models for the Fosters and Watercresses, as Stead notes, 'would have been deeply hurt' by the merciless lampooning to which they are the subject in *In the Memorial Room* (Stead 172). Brasch too no doubt would have been. The point here is that the satire of certain literary figures in the novel arose out of Frame's relationships with those who assisted her writing – as Sargeson told Wilson, 'in her time she has taken bits of hide off her sister, Karl Stead, Ruth Dallas, and (now) Charles Brasch or myself' (Sargeson 500).

Frame in *In the Memorial Room* insistently examines the origin of novelistic discourse when she writes against these real-life figures – the theoretical material is seemingly motivated by these quarrels. The 'nothing-nature of a novelist' becomes clear, for example, when the Fosters undertake an intrusive series of improvements on the flat in which Gill is living: 'while I

condemned the strategy of the Fosters, to possess me, to alter me, to obliterate me, I understood their fears, for I had the same fears myself, but it has been my weakness or my strength or both that I am an observer, a nothingness' (65, 139). The most disconcerting metafictional strategy of the novel is Gill's retreat into his own novel, brought about by the overbearing attention of the Watercresses who seek the 'annihilation' of Gill and 'replacement of [him] by their son.' Hiding from the families of Menton, he suddenly becomes, over the following two chapters, 'the retired professor' of his novel in process, beneath whom we are told we will 'find Harry Gill, living his pure life, unadjectived, unadverbed, fully nouned and verbed, and numbered' (80–1).

Even more than *Towards Another Summer*, then, *In the Memorial Room* manifests a hostility toward readers and a defended attitude toward the purity of literary expression. Any form of incorporation seems to threaten, in Evans's words, to touch the ark; dialogism is repeatedly rejected. Gill writes: 'In authorship, the author is not the tree scattering his books like leaves; the books are the tree; the author is shed, blown away, dies to make compost for other leaves and other trees.' Rose Hurndell's 'tree' – that is, 'her work' – becomes 'shelter' for the mediocre hangers-on of Menton, who are concerned not with developing their own trees, but rather with finding 'golden fruit left, up there, away near the sky, for the picking, solid gold fruit' (113–4). It is not a surprise that Frame decided not to publish this work: it is largely determined by a set of squabbles and preoccupations that were within her own life. In a later and longer work, *Living in the Maniototo*, Frame attempted to develop the material in this unpublished manuscript into a fuller set of theoretical positions regarding artistry, language, and reality. As with *The Adaptable Man*, though, I suggest that her preoccupations with her reception and with an idealist metaphysics meant that her work became hostile to being incorporated by others. Metafiction again served rather narrow and defensive purposes.

Living in the Maniototo ended a seven-year gap in the publication of Frame's novels. This gap was largely due to the difficulty she was having in condensing her works-in-progress into a single novel.

Cronin in *The Frame Function* cites a May 1975 letter to Bill Brown in which Frame wrote that she was 'suffering from a kind of block,' due to either a 'lack of ideas' or a 'surfeit of ideas, all clamouring at once until one gives up and shuts the door fast' (186). The block did not resolve easily. In June 1976, Frame wrote to George Braziller that she had 'written a couple of works' since *Daughter Buffalo*, and would have a typescript with him by 'the end of September' (King, *WA* 403–4). No typescript was forthcoming. In March 1978 she told Sargeson that her 'pile of manuscripts grows'; around the same time she wrote to correspondents that she was working on 'two or three mixed-up novels' arising out of the work she had done in Menton (King, *WA* 417). It would take until the second half of that year for her to transform her 'two or three' manuscripts into one, which she eventually posted to Braziller in February 1979. She explained to him at the time that the 'theme of the book is not original but it is one that fascinates me – the process of writing a novel, given the manifold (Kant's definition) and all of the avoidances, interruptions, irrelevancies, and so on, plus the terrible everlasting substantiality of the manifold' (qtd. in King, *WA* 421–422).

In my reading of *Towards Another Summer* and *The Adaptable Man*, I followed through a set of images from the former novel, which arose out of intrusions into the life of writing, and suggested that they organize much of the latter novel's theoretical explorations. *In the Memorial Room* is more explicit than *Towards Another Summer* in its discussion of the treatment of authors by figures and institutions associated with literature. In *Living in the Maniototo* these intrusions are part of the scheme of the novel, which is organized, as Frame told Braziller, around the 'process of writing a novel.' Contained within a work of this kind (and, crucially, impelling the novel itself) is an idiosyncratic theory of composition – the 'manifold' – a topic to which I return below.

Making sense of the 1979 work is no easy task, and this is by design. The text is about writing a novel; the novel itself arose out of two or three manuscripts that were constantly interrupted and avoided, one version we now know is about the interruptions and intrusions of various well-meaning but domineering figures from a literary estate, who in turn make the novelist

disappear. The result is a labyrinthine text. Patrick Evans's account of the novel sums this up. What are we to make a work, he asks,

> […] which has an authorial narrator called, variously, Mavis Halleton, Mavis Furness and Mavis Barwell, who creates fictional characters called Roger and Doris and Theo and Zita while writing in a house left to her by two dead people called Irving and Trinity Garrett who at the end of the novel turn out to be alive after all though still fictional; plus an imposter narrator called Alice Thumb who is telling us about Mavis telling us about the fictionally real Irving and Trinity and the really fictional Roger and Doris and Theo and Zita; plus a ventriloquist narrator, Violet Pansy Proudlock, who tells Alice what to tell Mavis to tell us about the fictionally real Irving and Trinity and the really fictional Roger and Doris and Theo and Zita? ('Book' 24)

There is indeed, as the narrator Mavis (Halleton, Furness, or Barwell) writes, a 'strong tendency and urge toward mischief' in the novel (*LM* 140).

The 'nothing-nature' of the novelist in *Living in the Maniototo* seems to have been imported directly from *In the Memorial Room*, although in the later novel it is further developed. In *Living in the Maniototo* the many and shifting Mavises offer nothing like the centring of Gill, providing instead a mere simulation. The last lines of the prologue make this clear:

> And I, Mavis Furness, Mavis Barwell, Mavis Halleton, perhaps, in a world peopled with Madges and Mavises and Peggys, the penultimate Mavis, yet remaining, as all good stories satisfy us by saying "to this very day", just Alice Thumb, or Ariella, Lokinia, or Maui's sister, or mere Naomi, Susan, Ngaere, Belinda. Or Violet Pansy Proudlock, ventriloquist.
>
> Alice Thumb.
>
> Instant traveller, like the dead, among the dead and the living; an eavesdropper, a nothingness, a shadow, a replica of the imagined, twice removed from the real.
>
> Alice Thumb.
>
> Violet Pansy Proudlock? (29–30)

The narrator is made up of a series of proliferating names, restricted only by what makes up 'all good stories.' The key is the theoretical commentary on the novelist, who is here an 'eavesdropper', 'shadow', 'replica of the imagined,' and 'twice removed from the real.'

As a number of critics have pointed out, the Platonism of the novel ('twice removed from the real') is not systematic, but rather particular to Frame. Mark Williams argues that Frame uses 'Plato against himself' by deploying the rhetoric of original and replica to contribute to her theory

of composition (one that eventually verges on narcissism) (47). This Platonism is in keeping with the reading I offered of Frame's earlier fiction. Writing is yet again undertaken under the shadow. If there is an important point of difference, though, it is that here writing under such conditions is less the subject of pathos, and rather an opportunity for play.

Once freed of the requirement to tell a story of substance, reality, or originals, and to instead tell one of shadows, imagination, and replicas, Frame then paradoxically attempts to re-engineer our trust, writing much of the novel in the voice of a character who models the reader's bewilderment. When Mavis and Brian visit Tommy, an artist, they watch as he bleaches himself out of the story with 'Blue Fury,' a cleaning product. 'There was a flash of light, a smell of laundry and the penetrating fumes of a powerful cleanser, then a neutral nothing-smell'; all that is left of Tommy are 'two faded footprints on the floor.' Afterwards, Mavis writes that both she and Brian were 'shocked by the sudden plague of unreality,' and, because no one will believe that Tommy has been 'erased before our very eyes,' they agree to 'keep the matter secret.' Mystifying incidents of this kind, 'sudden plague[s] of unreality,' are throughout the book, and they are usually left to one side by our momentarily confused guide (57). When the Garretts die (or are said to be dead), Mavis finds herself 'believing the news […] simply because it was a coincidence that fiction would never have allowed': the 'reality was that they were dead and I was living in their house.' 'Writers tend to be afraid to misbehave,' she writes, 'and I am no exception' (even with her 'strong tendency and urge towards mischief') (139–40). And so on: the unlikeliness of the events is routinely remarked upon, and then quietly ignored by our equally baffled narrator.

As Cronin argues, Mavis's role in all of this is to model 'the reader's desire for […] an anchor' (*FF* 180). This desire does not serve us well as we attempt to make sense of the novel's many reversals and incongruities, of course, as is clear from the outset. The sentence that fascinates Mavis at the beginning of the first chapter of the novel, which she hears 'in bus queues, shops, in the street: "I've buried two husbands, you know,"' ends up becoming her own story, repeated throughout the novel (*LM* 29). The whole novel, in fact, seems to be spun off this phrase. We

should not be surprised when we find that the Garretts are 'alive after all though still fictional,' in Evans's words, even if, despite ourselves, we may well be. Frame has produced a narrator who is as life-like as her many replicas, mirrors, and twins, and no more an origin than any of the other figures in the novel. As Mavis realizes, there may be a 'centre of activity elsewhere,' like a 'motionless yet turning world' (138).

Structuring the imaginative *topos* of the novel is the element that has received the most critical explication, the 'manifold', a term which Frame borrows from Kant. Frame referred directly to the Kantian manifold in her letter to Braziller about her typescript, and her interest extended back to at least the 1960s (Frame comments in 'Beginnings' that she 'could never be a poet without having studied Kant') (44). The 'manifold' forms part of Kant's model of the subjective conditions of judgment. Roger Scruton in *German Philosophers: Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche* (1997) explains the model in the following terms:

> There are two sources from which our knowledge is drawn: sensibility and understanding. The first is a faculty of intuitions […]: it includes all the sensory states and modifications which empiricists think to be the sole basis of knowledge. The second is a faculty of concepts. Since concepts have to be *applied* in judgements, this faculty, unlike sensibility, is active. (31)

The manifold is part of the first source, referring to the multiplicity of sensations (intuitions) that are passively received. As Scruton finds, it is crucial that the judgment that arises out of sensibility and understanding working together in a synthesis does not mean that a prior intuition has been incorporated into subsequent concepts:

> This synthesis is not meant to be a psychological fact; it is a 'transcendental' as opposed to an 'empirical' synthesis. In other words, it is *presupposed* in (self-conscious) experience, and not derived from it. I do not lay hold of my experience and then subject it to synthesis. For the very act of 'laying hold' presupposes that this synthesis has occurred. (32)

The significant points for our purposes are that intuitions are inaccessible in themselves, and remain so when they are synthesized with concepts; concepts are only intelligible in light of their applicability to experience.

Kant's manifold is different in a number of respects from Frame's. While the possibility of conceptual thought is written into Kantian intuition – experience is fitted to receive categories, which makes judgments non-arbitrary – the manifold is inaccessible. For Frame, though, the manifold is something more like a source. In *Living in the Maniototo*, Mavis draws 'dreams from the manifold,' but holds 'no responsibility for them until [she] could interfere with or change their shape and direction' (50). Cronin defines this Framean manifold as,

> […] some reservoir of enduring interests, concepts, terms and memories: a designated pool that [she] goes on supplementing but consistently drawing from throughout her writing career. The basic model of transformative process applies, but with the added twist that the repository worked with is not limited to (although it includes) actual remembered instances. (*FF* 176)

The departure from Kant is significant. In Frame's handling, the manifold is not part of judgment, but rather a way of describing composition; it also involves an agent. Cronin in *The Frame Function* argues that Frame introduces a typically skewed Platonism into the manifold, as she in effect equates higher reality with the imagination/reservoir (177). The difficulty in accessing the manifold means that all writing is failed in some sense, twice removed from the real – here we return to the terrain of *The Adaptable Man* and its vision of linguistic purity.

Frame developed the concerns of *In the Memorial Room* – writing out of distraction – through her version of the manifold. In the earlier novel the attentions of those associated with the literary estate make one kind of writing impossible while opening up another, namely the work that we read, what Gill calls 'my new kind of novel' (*MR* 5). In *Living in the Maniototo*, Mavis draws from the manifold to write her fiction. What is emerging out of the manifold is distraction, specifically the overbearing attentions of those who live with her at the Garrett's house while she is attempting to write. The material that arises within Mavis is hence what we end up reading – the novel she writes is the novel of being distracted, of the experience of failing to write.

There is a twist late in *Living in the Maniototo*, though, when it is revealed that she has been avoiding the actual death of Brian. Mavis returns to Baltimore and finds Brian's sister, Gloria, in his house. 'I sent you a telegram,' Gloria tells Mavis, 'I thought you'd come at once, and then when

you didn't come I thought you hadn't been able to face it, that you were avoiding it' (260). Mavis's invention of the Garretts' death and the set of characters who have been distracting her throughout the novel – that which we presume has been emerging from the manifold – are all part of a yet larger structure of avoidance. The 'centre of activity,' it turns out, was elsewhere. Recalling the apparent death of the Garretts, she writes: 'Had I known them, I might have turned away from, avoided, the possibility and responsibility of feeling, by going at once to another, a private fictional world' (257). It is suggested that this is precisely what she has done, but with Brian.

In a repetition of the structure of avowal and disavowal from *Towards Another Summer* and *The Adaptable Man*, Frame's letter to Evans, and the Watercresses and Fosters in *In the Memorial Room*, Mavis's avoidance of Brian's death and her failure to write her 'Watercress novel' are what also allow writing to take place. The narrator of *Living in the Maniototo* explains, 'we who are replicas and live in the house of replicas cannot exist until we have shaped what we have discovered within the manifold' (137). Creating worlds of her own – even if they are at some distance from presence, substance, or reality, and even if they are structures of avoidance or distraction – allows her to exist, in whatever form she does.

Frame in *Living in the Maniototo* recognizes the limited scope of the fiction that emerges out of this writing practice. At the novel's end she emphasizes that Mavis had retreated into a 'private fictional world,' and it is only the arrival of the Garretts that finally transports her back to a 'shared, unprivate world' (257). Battles over autobiographical space and recursive returns through metafiction are hence serving purposes that tend to close down interpretive possibilities rather than open them up, hostile as she is in such moments to public language and forms of public good. The writing becomes directed towards this private world, namely Mavis's distractions from writing the 'novel about the Watercress family and Margaret Rose Hurndell' (*LM* 234). The effect is a novel in which it is unclear precisely what would make writing valuable. Even within her scheme, it is not its capacity to access the Word, or even its registration of that failure. Rather, literary value seems to relate to her idealist sense of the process of composition itself, and the way that attention

may be paid or not paid to the materials of life, including the material of being a writer known by an interested public. The problem is attempting to wrest this into a meaning beyond Frame's metaphysics and into a shared world.

As ever in Frame's world, *Living in the Maniototo* was received in terms that emphasized its apparent 'madness'. It is perhaps not difficult to see why. The novel retains claims from earlier in her career about artistry and reality, namely that pure vision is the special preserve of the artist who sees differently (even if here she inserted this into a tangled and forbidding metafictional structure). R. Z. Sheppard wrote in his review in *Time* in August 1979, 'The Diary of a Mad Widow,' that the narrator has a 'wonderfully deranged mind,' suggesting that Frame's writing confronts 'the isolation and private logic of madness' (59). King records Frame's frustration. In a letter to John Money she wrote that the headline would worsen her relations with doctors, 'for their first idea is my "reputation" of being dotty.' It was around this time that Frame began to think about writing a more extended work of autobiography. Cawley proposed that Frame write 'a series of essays,' which would be followed by documents in his possession, effectively a life story in the form of a notebook (*WA* 427, 429). The idea was that it would both clear away misconceptions and generate income for her.

Frame instead wrote three volumes of autobiography, published 1982–5: *To the Is-Land*, *An Angel at My Table*, and *The Envoy from Mirror City*. They are by some distance her best-known works, and the sales outstripped any of her novels. By mid-1986 the three volumes had sold more than 52,000 copies worldwide (King, *WA* 470). Prizes followed: both *To the Is-Land* and *The Envoy from Mirror City* won the Wattie Book of the Year Award in New Zealand, while *An Angel at My Table* won the non-fiction prize at the New Zealand Book Awards. Further income and recognition came from the 1990 Jane Campion film of the three volumes, which was broadcast on television in New Zealand and shown in cinemas around the world.

Patrick Evans in his obituary for Frame in the *Journal of New Zealand Literature* argues that the autobiographies are constructed 'on the theme of forgetting, or at least its corollary, false recollection.' In the place of memory, Frame decided in her autobiographies that she would '*remember remembering*' ('Book' 25). Evans cites the episode after Frame's sister dies and the family searches for a memorial photograph; in the most recent image Myrtle's arm had been hidden behind the back of the person standing next to her. This led a local photography studio to re-member her by airbrushing an arm back in. If 'Myrtle can be artificially re-membered so that she seems just as she really had been,' Evans writes, 'then surely Janet too can be re-membered by the same means, made into a plausible whole by the addition of prosthetic devices.' The author that arises out of this process of re-membering is seemingly so real that she replaces the woman holding the pen, leaving the 'material author […] safely elsewhere' ('Book' 26).

Suspicious readings of the autobiographies, however prominent in academic writing, have been far from their dominant treatment. The other kinds of reading, credulous ones, are part of how Evans's students came to call the author 'Janet', the woman that we know. Such approaches have tended to be more common in reviews than in criticism. Helen Bevington in the *New York Times Book Review* wrote in a piece entitled 'Not Insane After All' that *An Angel at My Table* allows readers to 'know the real Janet Frame' (26); Fleur Adcock commented in the *Times Literary Supplement* that the book is 'commendably honest' (1281). Beyond reviews, as I pointed out in an article in the *Journal of New Zealand Literature* in 2011, Michael King makes extensive use of the autobiographies in *Wrestling with the Angel*, largely treating Frame's work as a transparent, non-literary form of truth-telling (Dean, 'Reading' 57–62). And there is Sarah Abrahamson's notorious 2007 paper in the *New Zealand Medical Journal*, in which she claims that 'Janet Frame fits within the diagnostic criteria for high-functioning autism, based on an analysis of her autobiographies' – a conclusion that satirizes itself (67).

For some the autobiographies are the honest account of the real Janet Frame (who may or may not be autistic), while for others they are another one of Frame's fictions (which may or may

not produce a life-like stand in). I argue that the autobiographies are undecided on whether they wish to endorse the first reading or the second. This indecision relates to Frame's desire, as she wrote in a letter to the Vogts in December 1982, to 'set the record straight,' coming into contest with her knowledge that such a task is 'impossible, that records are born crooked and twisted' (qtd. in King, *WA* 449). Another way of describing how the autobiographies work are in Frame's comments from two different interviews with Elizabeth Alley, five years apart. The autobiographies were the 'first time I've written the true story,' an 'ordinary me without fiction or characters,' she said in 1983; in 1988 she reflected that she is 'always in fictional mode, and autobiography is found fiction' (*IHOW* 114, 116, 137).

Frame was interested in producing the apparent 'ordinary me' in her account of her diagnosis with schizophrenia and her experience of mental institutions. There is little doubt that that Frame's project here was to write her own reception, to show that she was 'Not Insane After All.' This prescriptive drive is clear in her account of her sessions with 'John Forrest':

> When John Forrest learned that I was writing poems and stories, he was delighted. He suggested that as I wrote each I should give it to him to keep, and I, therefore, began to bring him my stories and poems. I kept pure schizophrenia' for the poems where it was most at home, and I looked forward to John Forrest's praise of my efforts […] I was playing a game, half in earnest, to win the attention of a likeable young man whose interest was psychology and art […].

The passage is unambiguous: Frame's real experience had nothing to do with schizophrenia, and any of her writing from the period that may appear schizophrenic is simply a reflection of her desire to impress her analyst. If she believed that she may have in fact been schizophrenic that is because of the way the definition of the illness pathologized the elements of her personality that made her an artist: being 'shy', preferring 'to write, to explore the world of imagination, rather than to mix with others' (*AA* 201). Her only madness was naïve infatuation and the insanity of wanting to be an author.

Frame directed her account of her experience in mental hospitals to similar ends. Immediately after she is first committed to Seacliff in *An Angel at My Table*, she explains how *Faces* relates to her life:

> In my book *Faces in the Water* I have described in detail the surroundings and events in the several mental hospitals I experienced during the eight following years. […] The fiction of the book lies in the portrayal of the central character, based on my life but given largely fictional thoughts and feelings, to create a picture of the sickness I saw around me. When one day a fellow patient, seeing workmen outside digging drains, said to me, 'Look, they are digging our graves,' I knew she believed this. Her words are an example of the words and behaviour I used to portray Istina Mavet. (*AA* 194)

The interior life of Istina Mavet is not Janet Frame's, even if the events that befall them are similar; Frame uses other patients' sickness in *Faces*, rather than her own, to assemble a believable first-person narrator. As clear as this may be, however, the novel offers a different perspective. There is a disclaimer on the verso of the title page of Part One of *Faces in the Water*: 'Although this book is written in documentary form it is a work of fiction. None of the characters, including Istina Mavet, portrays a living person' (*FW* 27). The novel is a factual account of life in mental hospitals, in which the narrator is a composite of the patients that Frame observed; the novel is entirely a work of fiction, in which there are no connections with living people. While there is significant disagreement between the two statements, there is one clear point of connection: in neither case is Istina Mavet simply Janet Frame in disguise, a point the author laboured throughout all three volumes of autobiography. It is telling both that Frame's agent, Tim Curnow (son of Allen Curnow), had to convince her to remove an appendix to *An Angel at My Table* by Bob Cawley '"testifying" to her sanity,' and that he suggested that such an appendix was 'superfluous' (King, *WA* 459). The text does all the testifying required.

Even in these moments of prescription there are elisions, though, ones that seem to enact the process Evans described as 're-membering'. Frame's reference to *Faces in the Water* leaves what Peter Simpson in his 1984 review of *An Angel at My Table* calls 'vast *lacunae*' in the author's writing and life ('Speaking' 10). The gaps were Frame's actual experiences of mental hospitals, as instead of writing at any length about these periods, she writes primarily about when she was out on

probation, variously from Seacliff, Sunnyside, and Avondale, or the events that surrounded her committals. Go to the novel, we are told, if we want to know about her time in hospital itself; on doing so, however, we cannot find her experience there either. Frame performs an act of prestidigitation reminiscent of *Living in the Maniototo*, as she substitutes what being in a lunatic asylum *was like for her* with what being in a lunatic asylum *would be like*. Just as Myrtle is made whole by imagining her as she may have been, we find, the Janet Frame story is only rounded out by the grafting on one of her very own fictions.

Frame then leaves behind hints that 'Janet' may be no more trustworthy than Mavis in the novel published a few years earlier. This is in the ongoing pattern of Frame's simultaneous dependency on others (anticipating a particular reception) and her rejection of that very dependency (demolishing the foundations of that reading). Evans has discussed the meaning of the mystifying names across the three volumes, such as 'Nora Bone,' a name that links with 'the motif of bones that recurs throughout [*To the Is-Land*]' – the name so frustrated him that he ended up contacting every Bone family in Oamaru 'to ask them if they had a daughter called Nora' ('Book' 27–8). There are other examples of this practice, too. A young Janet Frame tells Forrest of her '*guilt over masturbation*,' a guilt she discovers when reading Freud; soon afterwards she leaves Dunedin, abandoning 'a tiny black kitten, supposedly male but actually female,' which she named 'Sigmund, later changed to Sigmunde, known as Siggy' (*AA* 202, 204). The unreliability heads into more theoretical terrain. *To the Is-Land*, after all, begins with Frame asserting that her record is a 'mixture of fact and truths and memories of truths,' directed 'always toward the Third Place, where the starting point is myth' (*AA* 7). As Frame's letter to the Vogts indicates, beyond her interest in setting the record straight, her interest also lies in memory itself, the possible irretrievability of the past and of her place in it.

The result is a remarkably inconsistent text, its contradictions driven, I have suggested, by incommensurate desires. On the one hand, the popular reception of Frame testifies to the texts' success in replacing the '"insane writer" scenario' with her choice of self-representations. On the

other, though, critics have contested Frame's narrative, incorporating her work into their own. Given the markedly different political projects of those in the 1993 special issue of the *Journal of New Zealand Literature* on Frame, their treatment of the status of the autobiographies is surprisingly similar. Vanessa Finney sums up a number of critics' views when she writes that by the 'end of the autobiographies we are left with a myth or figure of Frame as author that is no more substantial than the one we started with. The difference is that this author-figure is of Frame's own making and firmly in her control' (202). Pointing this out, of course, entailed the loss of control itself – and, I would suggest, participated in the decision to license the next round of retellings of Janet Frame's story – film and biography in particular.

IV: Afterlives

In this final section I address the way that Frame's premonitions of the author 'shed, blown away' from *In the Memorial Room* have played out in the battles for the control of her memory, battles which are themselves continuations of the antagonism toward dialogic incorporation that I have identified across her *oeuvre*. In a 2013 article in the *JNZL*, Jane Stafford explains how it was that the work of one of New Zealand's most significant writers came not to be included in the anthology she co-edited, *The Auckland University Press Anthology of New Zealand Literature* (2012), an account she centres on the difficulties she had with gaining permission from the Janet Frame Literary Trust to republish selections of Frame's work. Explaining that the author has 'always had an embattled relationship with her own biography,' Stafford suggests that the literary estate 'see it as being within their jurisdiction to police Frame's ongoing reputation, both in terms of her writing and in terms of her biography. The Trust will castigate anyone who says anything they deem to be negative or misleading about Frame's work, or about Frame herself' (152). The decision to refuse permission for republication was in Stafford's view more related to the agenda of the Trust than to any of the complaints that it may have had about the organization of the anthology:

> They seemed [to] be urging on us a number of pieces that they themselves had published in their posthumous collections, and to be fighting a number of battles that we were only dimly aware of, and totally uninterested in, about the brilliance of Frame and about the 'myth-making' surrounding her life story—that is, not Frame's myth-making or the Trust's myth-making but other people's. (155)

It is not difficult to guess who one of those other people was, as the Trust sought to ensure that it, not he, controlled Frame's reputation. When Patrick Evans's 2010 novel *Gifted* was performed as a play in Christchurch in 2013, Pamela Gordon, Frame's literary executor, told a journalist that Evans 'portrays Janet Frame as someone who was gifted in a feral mad way,' and that 'his agenda is patronising and there is a sexist component to it' (Gates). These comments were more measured than those featured on her blog after the novel's publication, part of what Stafford called the Trust's 'campaign of scorn and denigration' against the book (153). In July 2011 Gordon wrote, '[*p*]*reposterous* and *wrong* are two words that in my opinion are two excellent words describing the pseudo-academic writings of that notorious Frame parasite Patrick Evans'; in October 2011 she described *Gifted* as 'an act of cultural sabotage,' and as 'a deliberate attempt to distort the documented facts of Frame's life and work on the part of an academic in order to promote his own theories' (Gordon, 'Preposterous and Wrong'; 'Cultural Sabotage'). Denis Harold, another member of the Trust, wrote in a review of the book on its website, 'if [Frame] were alive' it would be 'a slander': Evans 'grossly misrepresents the recently dead Janet Frame' (Harold).

According to Stafford, the Trust's behaviour merely continued the longer history of attempts to determine the meaning of 'Janet Frame.' She traces this back to Frame's relationship with her own life story. 'From the semi-autobiographical fictions of the 1950s and 1960s to the artful autobiographies of the 1980s to *Wrestling with the Angel*, the carefully managed Michael King biography of 2000, New Zealand readers have been offered variations on the life of Janet Frame that have been embedded in the national literary narrative,' she concludes (152). The latest 'variations on the life of Janet Frame' now additionally include the Jane Campion biopic *An Angel at My Table* (1990), and some of the edited and posthumously released material.

Stafford's view that the biography was an attempt to control Frame's reputation is one King himself gave some credit in his various reflections on the project. In *Wrestling with the Angel*, King recalls that Frame's desire to authorize a biographer arose out of frustration with the heightened interest in her life that came alongside the Campion films and the success of the autobiographies. These works 'provided new texts on which commentators, whose ranks included some of the would-be biographers, could base speculations on her motives, on whether or not she had been "truthful", on whether she was intent on concealing as much as she revealed, and on the supposed relationship between her life and her art.' Having an authorized biography would be 'the best way to deal with such anxieties,' Frame, her publisher, and then executor all believed (*WA* 511, 512). The decision to allow King to write the biography was strategic in this regard. As he said in an address to the Tasmanian Readers' and Writers' Festival, he was more than comfortable with Frame's request that he did not explore the meaning of her writing itself, but rather 'just the facts' ('Compassionate'). The result, in Stafford's words, is a biography organized around the following themes: 'famous writer overcomes adversity to become famous writer; unloved becomes best loved; art through suffering' (152).

If the Trust has participated in a project of gaining control over the idea of Janet Frame, there has been no greater or more transparent intervention than the publication of *In Her Own Words* (2011). This volume, as Pamela Gordon writes in the preface, seeks to 'allow Janet Frame to speak for herself about herself and her life and her work,' to let her speak 'in the first person' ('Preface' 5, 6). Some of the editorial interventions are clearly manipulative, though. The Alley interviews are broken up with editorial signposts indicating what we are to learn from each section: we are instructed to notice, for example, that Frame 'has an extraordinary memory for detail,' an explication which sits uncomfortably against the quotation which concerns her desire to take back control of her own story, 'I just write and that is my telling, but in order to set down a few facts, and *my* story' (*IHOW* 114). It is this kind of strategy to which Stafford is referring when she writes of the 'Trust's myth-making' as it participated in the very practice that it protested, namely selecting

and organizing Frame's words and then explaining what they mean, just as many literary critics have done over the years – even if it claimed for itself an inherited legitimacy to do so. In the end, Frame herself is perhaps the Trust's most trenchant critic, such as when Harry Gill in *In the Memorial Room* reflects that the 'tree' of Rose Hurndell's work 'was beyond the reach of those who seek to prune or spray or retard blossom – but what shelter the tree was providing' (113–4). Even more darkly ironic is the comment from the other posthumous novel, *Towards Another Summer*, when Grace Cleave questions the very project that is implied in *In Her Own Words*. Believing in one's 'own country,' Cleave reflects, is 'as illusory as a piece of writing which claims to express "in my own words" – whose words?' she asks (*TAS* 133).

Even as one kind of Janet Frame was being fixed in place, another was being manufactured by those less interested in 'just the facts.' The book to which the Trust took such exception, *Gifted*, stages a reading of Janet Frame. Evans in the author's note suggests that at the centre of the book is his 'interpretation of Frame's use of Rilke's theory of language, and particularly of naming,' what he calls in the *JNZL* a 'spiritual, transformative process of re-enchantment' (Evans, *Gifted* 302; 'Uncreating' 80). This theory is in action throughout the novel, especially when the Frame character's view of language comes into contest with Sargeson's literary nationalism. He emphasizes that 'the task of the artist' in New Zealand is to '*[i]ntroduce the landscape to the land*,' to which Frame responds, '[w]ords aren't little donkeys' that 'go out and bring back a load of facts for us' (*Gifted* 52–3). Instead, as Frame gradually coaxes Sargeson to learn, words can transform the world, they are able to impound and recreate reality in some primary way. Part of his education comes from the mystifying notes Frame delivers to Sargeson across the novel: '*a fruit in the middle of its location*,' '*[m]eaning all volume satisfies*,' and '*[k]ind hawks kill*,' for example (150, 178, 262). Each resolves into a solution, like 'crossword clues': the fruit turns out to be a 'loquat,' which has seeds in the middle of 'its location,' while the 'kind hawks' suggest that Sargeson's on-again-off-again partner Harry Doyle 'harries' him, taking part of Sargeson away when Doyle swoops off to other lands (40, 217, 285). It takes until the book's final pages for Sargeson to recognize the significance

of all of this. He tells his friend: 'if you learned to think and see like this, according to Janet the world became a book itself, a world that you could read' (297). This Janet Frame is something more like a textual condition, a lesson in linguistic nostalgia – the one we have seen in *The Adaptable Man* and *Living in the Maniototo*. And, in this moment, of course, the conditions created by Frame's own writing take her over, replacing her with what it is like to read her work.

Throughout this chapter I have developed an account of an author who became so concerned with her autobiographical space that she wrote against readers, producing an idealist theory of language that doubles as a defence against those who would sully what she called the 'clean proud ship moving through unknown waters' (*IHOW* 119). In this last stage the battle for her writing shifted beyond her to other agents (some of whom were of her choosing), and in ways that she seems to have predicted, or even devised. I will conclude with Frame's comment to Alley in 1983, now memorialized in *In Her Own Words*:

> These critical references to me and my supposed personal views, I think they're simply a failure of the art of literary criticism. Well, they're an impurity of response which I suppose is natural, but who said literary criticism should be natural? The critic reminds me of that film *The Fly*, where the scientist, immersed in his experiment, doesn't realise that a fly has accompanied him to the cabinet. When he emerges, his work finished, he's part-man, part-housefly. (*IHOW* 116)

Frame, immersed in her experiments, did not realize that a fly had accompanied her into the cabinet. As we watch her emerge, her work finished, we see that her *oeuvre* is touched by that 'impurity of response' caused by her interaction with her many interpreters. Her purity fantasies never came true; they were, of course, never possible. Instead, her corpus became dedicated to eliminating the dialogic voice in her own work, and to developing on the idealist metaphysics which subtended this practice. In the process, her corpus, in its very hostility, became part-writer, part-fly.

Philip Roth and the Politics of Reading

[The chapter originally presented here cannot currently be made freely available via ORA.]

I. The Gift of Adversity: Towards *The Ghost Writer*

II. *The Anatomy Lesson*

III. *Operation Shylock*

IV. Ethnic writing?

Conclusion

Debates about self-reflexivity have endured. In a widely-shared and cited 2012 article in the *New York Times*, 'How to Live Without Irony,' Christy Wampole argues that self-aware irony, the apparent 'ethos of our age,' is politically quietist. 'People may continue hiding behind the ironic mantle,' she writes, 'but this choice equals a surrender to commercial and political entities more than happy to act as parents for a self-infantilizing citizenry.' The 'archetype' of this 'ironic living' is the hipster, he who 'harvests awkwardness and self-consciousness.' The necessary corrective for Wampole is cultivating the reverse of this sensibility. It is 'saying what you mean, meaning what you say'; it is seeking 'sincerity, humility, and self-effacement.'

In December 2016, in the wake of the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, Wampole published a follow-up article, 'How to Live Without Irony (for Real, This Time).' The 'Age of Irony ended abruptly on Nov. 9, 2016,' she argues, when the country 'woke up to the sobering news of Donald J. Trump's victory.' She recapitulates claims from her earlier work about political commitment and what she sees as the contemporary ethos. 'Ironic posturing' as it had been circulating around American culture in the days before Trump 'allowed many of us to feel superior to it all without making the commitment to repair anything.' Today, in a newly urgent political climate, we must engage a 'good kind of seriousness.' In the place of negation, what is needed is the 'steady,' the 'good-hearted,' and the 'good-willed.'

Jeremiads such as Wampole's are familiar from the introduction to this thesis, even if hers were a little late to the punch, and just as before they amounted to an attack on postmodern representative strategies that have been valued in criticism, and especially on the political affiliations that such strategies have been presumed to bear. In *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon finds that postmodernism 'takes the form of [the] self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement. It is rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said.' This expressive mode, she continues, is 'an ironic –

even "ironic" – one' (1). The hipster, in Wampole's terms, is the character of Hutcheon's postmodernism; the primary point of disagreement between Hutcheon and Wampole is merely whether or not this character is happy to settle for the world as it is. Recent scholarly work on postwar hipsterism has sought to navigate a path between Wampole and Hutcheon. Lee Konstantinou concludes in *Cool Characters* that the 'quest for hip' in the 1950s was part of a 'general postwar quest for criticality as such, which was neither at odds with the liberal "status quo" nor just another form of positivism' (102). Of course, the hipsterism Konstantinou describes predated most of the fictions Hutcheon reads in her work, and much too of the implied history in Wampole's account. This is further evidence of the problem of history that I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, as theorists of the postmodern have attempted to distinguish then contemporary writing or cultural tropes by way of reference to a set of representative strategies of long standing.

As Konstantinou further points out, attacks on the politics of hipsters and all that they represent have been around almost as long as there have been postwar hipsters. It is usual in this genre to refer, as Wampole does, to a better, more critical past for the ironic hipster and his favoured representative modes. David Foster Wallace adopts this approach in his 1990 essay on television and metafiction, 'E Unibus Pluram.'[1] In a well-known formulation, he finds:

> Irony in postwar art and culture started out the same way youthful rebellion did. It was difficult and painful, and productive—a grim diagnosis of a long-denied disease. […] So then how have irony, irreverence, and rebellion come to be not liberating but enfeebling in the culture today's avant-garde tries to write about? One clue's to be found in the fact that irony is *still around*, bigger than ever after 30 long years as the dominant mode of hip expression. It's not a rhetorical mode that wears well.

Irony – he elsewhere termed this 'postmodern cool'– had become its own kind of establishment by this time, lingering on, but now without much in the way of its earlier capacity for critique (695, 689).

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[1] Wampole refers to Wallace in her 2012 article, arguing that the New Sincerity movements 'positioned themselves as responses to postmodern cynicism, detachment and meta-referentiality.'

Part of Wallace's project in proposing such a history, though, is to imagine a successor to, or at least a different way of doing, 'postmodern Metafiction' (668). Wallace in this vein famously calls for a newly sincere literary rebel. Such figures, he writes, 'might well emerge as some weird bunch of *anti*-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles.' In the essay he seeks those who 'treat of plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction,' those who 'eschew self-consciousness and hip fatigue' (707). While for Wallace, of course, one could be simultaneously self-reflexive, serious, and even sincere, the reception of his call for a new sincerity has often missed this subtler point (as in Wampole). Whatever else we have seen in this thesis, self-consciousness has not been affiliated with the hip, the cool, or the fatigued. It has rather been serious-minded in its playfulness, and playful in its serious-mindedness.

The apparent value of self-reflexivity, both in writing and in life, has again become – or perhaps simply continued to be – the subject of hostile criticism. Wampole's articles, drained of Wallace's more complex thinking about self-reflexivity's continuing potential, draw on a reservoir of well-worn positions. Realism, for her, is the literary mode that can best describe the social world as it is, and hence can best mobilize political action to change it. For defenders of what Wallace called the 'great theoretical nemesis' of realism, that is, metafiction, the form wields a distinctive power to challenge the discourses of modernity, history, and literature (668). The primary interest of Wampole's articles is not in the arguments she makes, I suggest, but rather in the continued failure to resolve debates about form and literary value that have been taking place since at least the end of the war, if not longer. (György Lukács and Ernst Bloch, after all, were debating the aesthetic practices of modernism in the 1930s, divided on the political capacities of realism and surrealism.) The latest versions of these debates appear rather as parodies of Lasch against Waugh, or Jameson against Hutcheon.

The recent turn in criticism away from the examination of postmodern metafiction *per se*, in favour of history, institutions, or terms such as 'irony' that appear to cut across traditional

periods, has likely emerged out of a frustration with the limited rewards that the extensive work on postmodernism has thus far yielded. McGurl in *The Program Era* takes little interest in the questions Hutcheon and others were asking in the 1980s, just as he would take little interest in Wampole's recent claims. Konstantinou explicitly frames his study of irony – not a postmodern culture of irony, but irony since the war – around the exhaustion of battles about postmodernism and its legacies for contemporary writers. He seeks a way around these old battle sites by ignoring them, or, when that is not possible, by turning to history. 'Postmodernism as a literary style, set of theoretical claims, or socioeconomic phenomenon cannot simply be evaded, sidestepped, or wished away,' he suggests. Confronting postmodernism means recognizing how it hardened into its own kind of establishment from the 1980s onwards; Konstantinou finds that 'many theoretically attuned writers' have been attempting to move beyond it, tasking themselves with 'transcending irony' (6).

I too have sought to shift the terrain on which arguments about metafiction are made, addressing long-neglected considerations regarding literary value through a grounding in both the figure of the author and the broader literary field. There is something lost, I suggest, when we do not ask what metafictional writing can do and has done – what its distinctive values are and have been. Autobiographical space as I have adapted it has situated metafiction in the economies, networks, and institutions of literary production in the second half of the twentieth century, and centred readings on dialectical struggles for control over the meaning of literary texts and authors' names. The much-queried capacities of metafiction, including its political commitments, have emerged out of the particular and the iterative – and often the defensive and the resistive, too. I have not only shown how metafictional returns to autobiographical space can allow for expansive literary experimentation, but also how these returns can be used to insulate authors from readerly inquiry, to hector and prescribe; how they can become involuted and self-defeating practices as well as extremely inventive ones. In this thesis metafictional practices are ultimately responses to

the conditions of late twentieth-century authorship, ones that open possibilities for the novel form – but ones that carry no guarantees.

J. M. Coetzee's relationship with academic literary criticism led to an *oeuvre* that consistently attempts to resist being assimilated to critical discourse. That is not to say that this endeavour has been entirely successful, of course: he is one of the most studied and critically celebrated authors of our time. Rather, Coetzee, responding to particular academic environments and existing scholarship on his work, as well as anticipating future incorporation, has relativized critical paradigms in ways that criticism cannot, or at least struggles to. Inevitably, the argument I have made is at least in part about value. Coetzee's metafictional writing practices, in the era of the expansion of the university and its place in the literary field, invents in the novel form an intelligence about criticism and ideas that is less clearly available to existing academic discourses. The newly available archival material, I suggest, is only the latest intervention into the author's reception with which critics must grapple. We are only now beginning to seek ways of reading that will not so much get around Coetzee, but rather account for the experience and meaning of the archive itself and its relationship with the published corpus.

Janet Frame's battles with her reputation increasingly became the subject of her fiction. Literary nationalism in New Zealand was amenable to the 'romantic popular idea of the insane as a person whose speech appeals as immediately poetic,' as Frame had Istina Mavet say in *Faces in the Water* (112). Over time, rejecting this idea, along with most forms of readerly attention, was turned into a condition of writing itself. This account of Frame relies on relating her idealist metaphysics to her hostility toward critical and readerly intrusions. Metafictional practices were hence directed against reading, or at least reading of certain kinds. Much of the work I have done on Frame relies on posthumously released works, which provide alternative versions of later novels, albeit often in more explicitly autobiographical terms. As the restrictions expire in January 2019 on consulting archival materials held both at Pennsylvania State University, and, more significantly, the Hocken Library in Dunedin, New Zealand, it is almost certain that further insights will become

available about her compositional processes and her relationships with figures such as Charles Brasch, Robert Cawley, Patrick Evans, Michael King, John Money, and Frank Sargeson. The question remains whether the literary estate will allow critics to access Frame's 'own words' without its mediation.

Philip Roth's early reception led him to contest, through a distinctive metafictional practice, demands for responsibility. Roth introduces into the political that which is occluded or repressed, such as the body and its 'humble needs'; he returns to his critics in later fictions and develops often dazzling revenge plots, producing in the process a discourse on artistry and politics, determined as he is to destabilize the moral idioms and identities by which we banalize reality. *Operation Shylock*, I suggest, takes this material and these strategies to apply them to even more agonistic political situations, namely the Israel-Palestine conflict and the trial of Holocaust criminals. Bringing the comic into the heart of the most serious kinds of political thought, as he often does, stages longstanding arguments about political commitment and responsibility in the novel. In Roth's hands, the terms again shift, such that our high-mindedness is always itself under examination. There is an immensity and inexhaustibility about Roth's consistent returns to his autobiographical space, to 'Philip Roth,' I suggest.

As the history of literary fiction after the Second World War is written, what happened with that extremely diverse body of texts, rather clumsily grouped as 'metafiction', will endure as a central concern. Despite the significant critical labours expended on behalf of this term in the recent past, there is more yet to be done. It is my suggestion that the story of the emergence of large-scale metafictional practices is best told in conjunction with the lives that the authors lived, and the ways that these authors creatively responded to their introduction into networks of capital and meaning over which they had limited control. Lejeune's notion of 'autobiographical space,' extended and developed in the ways I have undertaken, provides a conceptual framework for thinking about metafiction after the war: it recentres our attention on that postwar phenomenon, the metafictional and autobiographical career writer. David Foster Wallace called Philip Roth one

of the Great Male Narcissists, but perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Roth, like many others, found within his own life and the environments around him the materials out of which he could construct a corpus and a world. The histories that we tell – personal, local – begin to look much like the literary field itself, and the *oeuvres* that we examine – defensive, expansive, hostile, critical – a response, sometimes inventive and sometimes not, to the conditions of writing in the late twentieth century.

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