

# The Unharnessed World



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*Janet Frame  
and Buddhist Thought*

By

Cindy Gabrielle

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The Unharnessed World: Janet Frame and Buddhist Thought

By Cindy Gabrielle

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## FOREWORD

The complexity of Janet Frame's created universe is such that it has over the years invited numerous critical approaches, themselves informed by multiple theoretical frameworks—whether feminist, psychoanalytic, postmodern, post-colonial... Also, her philosophical turn of mind has been amply documented, not least by critics like Jan Cronin and Simone Drichel, and she was shown to have been conversant with such different thinkers as Plato, Heidegger, Kant, Jung, Freud, Sartre, Levinas... In view of her preoccupation with the matter of survival, often thematized in the work in terms of a life after death, the subjacent question of Frame's religious persuasion had to be asked also. Thus Mark Williams pointed to a possible influence exerted by the Christadelphian beliefs of her mother—herself fictionalized as Amy Withers in *Owls Do Cry*—while Judith Dell Panny tackled the novels as allegories encoding a Christian or Biblical message. None of this seemed irrelevant, especially since Michael King, Frame's biographer, reveals that the author experienced a spiritual crisis, taking the form of a conversion to Roman Catholicism, at least for a brief period in the late 1970s when, as she expressed this, she “exchanged [her] old habit of sitting quietly in cemeteries for sitting quietly in churches”. In view of all this, there is no immediate reason why Cindy Gabrielle's intervention, which explores the possibility that Janet Frame may have been inspired in significant manner by a lifelong interest in Buddhism, should be thought incongruous or unduly speculative.

Indeed the argument of a “Buddhist Frame” is vindicated first of all through a factual investigation, based in large part upon an examination of the writer's personal library and of several important, probably formative, personal connections with diverse Buddhist personalities. But the demonstration is then importantly conducted further, in the light of a careful scrutiny and exegesis of those among Frame's novels and short stories which seemed best illustrative of this particular dimension of the work. The upshot is an undeniable gain in understanding of some of the more elusive passages in the corpus, examined by Gabrielle from a Buddhist perspective which throws new light—for example—on the implications of the protagonist's exposure to “first” and then “second silence” in a novel like *A State of Siege*; or, further down, on what is really meant when another character embraces blindness, as she claims to be

doing in *Scented Gardens for the Blind*. The textual resemblances between these passages and some key tracts from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, as explored in Chapter 3, prove no less than confounding. Clearly, quite apart from uncovering astonishing intertextual filiations, Gabrielle evinces a rare ability to enter into the spirit of Frame's oeuvre, and to provide subtle and exciting close readings of the texts under consideration. An excellent case in point is the centrality seen to characterize the cage metaphor in *The Edge of the Alphabet*, a dimension of the novel hardly identified in earlier criticism, and one which finds an extension in further metaphors of imprisonment as they percolate into *The Adaptable Man* or *Living in the Maniototo*, where they are seen to denote humankind's enmeshment in a limited conception of reality tied to an excessive attachment to "divisive" modes of perception.

One is reminded of Roland Barthes's famous incipit to his *Camera Lucida: Essays on Photography*, where he, too, invokes some of the concepts of Buddhism when pondering the paradox that the art of photography, albeit a mode of representation that is governed by its own discursive rules and principles, nevertheless appears to provide an unmediated rendering of reality in its "sovereign Contingency." Thus, what makes Photography different from other art forms is that the Photograph, as apprehended by the French semiotician, seems indistinguishable from its referent, by all means as if the language mobilized by the medium—its "photographic signifier"—were imponderable and invisible. Consider this explanation, in Richard Howard's intelligent translation:

In order to designate reality, Buddhism says *sunya*, the void; but better still: *tathata*, as Alan Watts has it, the fact of being this, of being thus, of being so; *tat* means *that* in Sanskrit and suggests the gesture of the child pointing his finger at something and saying: *that, there it is, lo!* But says nothing else; a photograph cannot be transformed (spoken) philosophically, it is wholly ballasted by the contingency of which it is the weightless, transparent envelope.

It may not be coincidental that Cindy Gabrielle refers to the same Buddhist story of the finger pointing at the moon which is confused with the moon itself, to circumscribe the reductiveness of most, perhaps all, systems of representation—with the notable exception, presumably, of Buddhism itself. Thus Buddhism in turn acquires value by dint of the credence granted to the myth of a "pure" body of reality, unrepresented through any mental construction or discursive alignment of culture. This



“Ur”-experience of the world may be no more than a fiction but, arguably, it is one that seems especially congruent with Frame’s singular poetics.

Now many readers, myself included, may well feel sceptical of any critical procedure that would appeal to transcendence as a guarantee of interpretation, precisely because the literary writer must exercise demiurgic freedom and remain as the origin of her own meaning(s). In this sense, we materialists can rest assured when opening this new study of Janet Frame: Cindy Gabrielle’s Buddhism is no religion, nor is it a mysticism. As I see it, it operates above all an allegory for Frame’s conception of authorship, which is seen to determine the work through and through. Indeed one of the defining characteristics of the Framean text is often its own propensity for revising itself, often by way of an “infinite rehearsal” achieved thanks to subtle metafictional strategies which point to so far unheard of ontological dimensions, now revealed as a faint promise. It is not only, then, that Frame’s books derive from an imaginative, primary transformation of the author’s own reality and life experience—what Gabrielle, in her personal critical idiom, would call “the full reality of the profane”—but also that the latter is in turn subjected to further prospective mutations engendered metafictionally, so that even the fictional “real” is in turn displaced in favour of some preferable alternative. One of the fascinations of Gabrielle’s Buddhist scheme of explanation is that it provides her with a suggestive vocabulary apt to conceptualize this utopian drift in the work, one that was previously identified but probably remained under-described in the extant corpus of Frame criticism. Thus the notion of “nirvana” can now be understood aesthetically, in terms of “a radically other condition of being and of knowing”, or a form of reality variously designated as “asymbolic”, “non-conceptual”, or “unharnessed”. Thus, by making sense of the work through the prism of a Buddhist language and sensibility, Cindy Gabrielle inscribes her own analysis within that most contemporary branch of Frame criticism which, rather than approaching the texts from a biographical or a social-realist perspective, seeks instead to make sense of the writer’s more philosophical elaborations, thus grappling openly with what is most challenging in the books of this difficult author.

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## PREFACE

### FEAR AND TEMPTATION<sup>1</sup>

LIKE MANY OTHER LITERARY EXPLORATIONS, this study struggles to express in words what is beyond description: a heightened heart pulse and mind pulse in moments of contact with a haunting universe that is not one's own. As in many other works of criticism, the intuitions gained through a year of analysis and writing led to a discovery that became so enthralling that this initial work was set aside, though not forgotten. There is some mystery, I must say, in the fact that my gathering of just a few articles on John Keats prompted an entire reassessment of my research, which I was now going to conduct from the perspective of Janet Frame's so far unacknowledged engagement with Buddhist thought. I still cannot explain why, among the dozens of available articles, I specifically clicked on "Keats and Zen."

Because of the commercial misappropriation (and invalidation) of the word "Zen" and the negative reputation of Buddhism in the rational West, gesturing towards the East is always a bold move, and has proved a risky endeavor indeed. Therefore, it would have been safer, and it was certainly tempting, to replace Buddhism by e.g. Heidegger, Jung or Nietzsche (all of whom owe an intellectual debt to Buddhism) but I could never accept that fear may transform my work into an instance of cultural appropriation.<sup>2</sup> What is more, one hears often enough, in the field of postcolonial studies, that writers or social phenomena from the (former) colonies are too frequently interpreted in terms of European (i.e. westernized) models and that the need for other discourses exists. This state of affairs has prompted me to resist the appealing safety of a Buddhist-free approach. Common sense further guided me in my use of a Buddhist epistemology which served not as a box into which all the author's production could be clumsily fitted but, quite simply, as a tool occasionally helpful so as to understand certain aspects of the Framean text. As the Zen student must move beyond the Buddhist concepts of, say, enlightenment and freedom in favor of the experience of enlightenment and freedom, so this work, as Buddhism would also put it, has tried to eat the dinner, and not the menu.

Finally, it has proved rather troublesome to negotiate the inescapable presence in Janet Frame studies of my supervisor. Fearing his reaction but, perhaps even more, my own daring, I was sometimes tempted to obliterate my moments of disagreement from his work on Janet Frame. But he would not let me and encouraged me all through, whilst acknowledging my indebtedness to his analyses and teachings, to do justice to my growing sense of independence from his views. For this, I am grateful to Marc Delrez.

I am also immensely grateful to Janet Wilson who, however uncanny it seemed to others, proved a resolute supporter of my approach from its very first moment of inception. It is mostly she who incited me to pursue this line of enquiry and publish on the topic. Together with David Callahan, Janet Wilson played an inestimable role in the publication of the present manuscript. I also wish to thank Claire Bazin who gave me precious feedbacks to correct my work. Outside the academia, my special thanks go to Michaël Garrais for making me keep what Frame would call “a sense of proportion” and to my faithful mother, Marianne Ansay to whom I dedicate this work.



## INTRODUCTION

### JANET FRAME IN EAST-WEST ENCOUNTERS

THROUGH A CLOSE SCRUTINY OF THE LIFE AND WORK of New Zealand's best-known author Janet Frame (1924-2004), I discovered that Buddhism had proved an irresistible magnet for the author's inquisitive spirit and that it played an important part in the shaping of her poetics.<sup>1</sup> In this introduction, I will try to circumscribe the circumstances under which Frame's encounter with the East took place and the extent to which notions such as the empirical mind or knowledge, the Great Death of the ego and the non-duality of the world have permeated her oeuvre from her early fiction to her later work. Despite this apparent profusion of themes, my underlying concern in the first part of the introduction will be to show that Frame constantly seeks ways through which the infinite and the Other can be approached, though not corrupted, by the perceiving self, and that she found in the Buddhist epistemology a pathway towards evoking such alterity.

Thus, possibly against the grain of mainstream criticism which maintains that "one cannot explore *beyond*,"<sup>2</sup> a Buddhist navigation of Frame's texts leads one to the preliminary statement that the unharnessed world (or the infinite) which human beings are often unable to apprehend and embrace has always been, so to speak, right under their nose, so that, between 'this' world of limited perceptions and 'that' world of the beyond, the boundary is as thick or as thin as the walls of a self-made conceptual prison.<sup>3</sup> Saying this, I have in mind Frame's "Beginnings," an essay in which she states that, "as it was becoming impossible to reconcile 'this' and 'that' world, I decided to choose 'this' world, and one day when the Inspector was visiting my class at school [where Frame was teaching] 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."<sup>4</sup> In early criticism, Marc Delrez explains, Frame's retreat into 'that' world "sometimes led to the conclusion that she despised her fellow countrypeople, developing her themes of loneliness and alienation in response to a sense of felt superiority or inbred elitism."<sup>5</sup> Nowadays—that is, nearly fifty years after its publication—"Beginnings" has become

Frame's most "infamous"<sup>6</sup> essay, presumably on account of the too trenchant distinction it suggests between the world of the artist and that of, so to speak, the swarming masses. No longer taken at face value, the "old distinction" between 'this' and 'that' world has made way to, in Jan Cronin's and Simone Drichel's words, a "much more complex negotiation of 'being in the world', one that is bound up (though not necessarily synonymous) with the interplay between the physical and the metaphysical."<sup>7</sup>

Adding grist to this mill, a posthumous publication of Frame's essays, letters and short pieces of fiction and non-fiction includes comments made by Frame on the 'this' and 'that' world controversy; she ponders:

When I talked of this world I was referring to the world where one lived as one was expected to, that is, a job of whatever kind, possibly marriage, children, the conventional happenings of that time. That world referred to the world where I might live as myself, doing what I had chosen to do, i.e. writing. My reference to this and that world has been taken to be a reference to this world as the so-called 'real' world and that world as an unreal world. I have never lived in a so-called 'unreal' world. I hoped only, with the help of elusive imagination, to transform 'this' world into my 'that' world.<sup>8</sup>

Not only does the author rebuke critics who, to quote her interview with Tony Reid, "seem to think [she] look[s] down on ordinary people," presumably because "they have seen these things in [her] work," but she further intimates that metaphysical readings of her texts are not in keeping with her belief that "there is just the world, this solid base, but there is some sort of abyss for all of us and you can shiver suddenly with the apprehension of it."<sup>9</sup> In almost exactly the same terms, Frame would repeat in *The Carpathians* (her last novel)<sup>10</sup> that, "star[ing] down at the spinning earth" or "upwards at the stars," anyone is susceptible to "shiver with a sudden inkling of eternity."<sup>11</sup> As the eternity Frame refers to is linked in the novel with a heightened awareness of the immensity of time and space, it may well be that what the shivering self suddenly apprehends is simply the full scope of what already exists.

On another level of reading, Frame's statement conveys the idea that the focus of the artist is just one of the possible realities that constitute the world, but is not beyond it. If so, it would seem rather illogical for Frame to consider imagination as the pathway to the transcendental—which is why, in her view, the task of the artist is to invest the conventional with a new significance or to transform 'this' world into 'that' world. Naturally my hypothesis, that Frame's utopian beyond is in fact within 'this' world,

and the related idea that it is for instance possible to dismantle the discriminating consciousness in order to exist authentically, will have to be buttressed in each of the 9 chapters that constitute this work. A summary of the latter is provided in the second part of the introduction, together with a few comments on the reception of Frame's Buddhism in the field as well as, finally, a few methodological and lexical considerations.

## 1. A Buddhist Exploration

In one of her rare essays, New Zealand's "literary pioneer"<sup>12</sup> expresses her concern that most cross-cultural encounters of a literary kind tend to be determined by the wish to engender best-sellers—"set in the mysterious world of Malaysia, Japan, China, India"<sup>13</sup>—which provide "no dramatic before-after change in the reader's mental or emotional growth" but reinforce "prejudices and differences between cultures."<sup>14</sup> To explore some more "unfamiliar recognitions,"<sup>15</sup> it is in her view preferable not to embark on a vessel steered by Captain Cook or other travel writers. One must join instead the pirate ship and its crew of renegade translators and unfashionable authors, the former often scouting for the latter. This fertilization of the writer by the translator is of the subtlest kind and so,

besides the fashionable exchanges and the exchanges of fashion, there do remain the invisibles which can only be pointed out by a writer in a definite statement—"That, whether you believe me or not—is the result of my reading of an early Japanese novel in translation."<sup>16</sup>

In keeping with the tongue-in-cheek quality of her literary teasing, Frame here hints at the fact that discrete links connect her work to other cultures, though she never goes so far as to actually "point them out in a definite statement," and ends her essay by assuring that she

had hoped to give a detailed account of my own experience in cross-cultural encounters in literature, but after the preliminary examination of recognitions, eyesights and mindights, atmospheres and materials, garden plants and water-carriers, I think I shall have to leave [it] to another paper.<sup>17</sup>

Naturally, the promised essay never came into being, so that the task of delineating the author's experience of cross-cultural encounters now devolves on the critic.

To venture an elucidation of the issue, it is fruitful to remember that the 1977 Honolulu conference where Frame presented her paper was hosted by the East-West Centre in Hawaii, well-known for its willingness to promote contacts between western and eastern philosophers and writers.<sup>18</sup> Also, for this conference, the contributors had been asked to think about “the encounter between East and West; the nature of literature in relation to its roots in language and ethnic groups; the role of the English language” and so forth.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, my suggestion is that, had Frame ever delivered the promised paper, she may well have disclosed her indebtedness to eastern philosophies, and to Buddhism in particular; while it can also be inferred from the above quotations that, if this insight of mine is justified, such a Buddhist dimension is bound to have become ‘invisible’ on account of the author’s transformation of her foreign material when fitting it to her own “eyesights and mindsights.”

As it turns out, Frame did mention her eastern encounters to Pamela Gordon, her niece and literary executor, who confirms that her aunt’s papers and personal books testify to her knowledge of Buddhism. Her library included the *Buddhist Scriptures*<sup>20</sup> which “still has the bookmark from the shop where it was bought, in Norfolk, near where Janet’s friend Peter (Elizabeth) Dawson lived,” *The Way of Zen*<sup>21</sup> as well as the Dalai Lama’s *Advice on Dying and Living a Better Life*,<sup>22</sup> published two years before Frame’s death.<sup>23</sup> Next to E.P. Dawson, Frame counted among her friends at least four other Buddhist sympathizers: the poet Ruth Dallas; the American artists Paul Wonner and Bill Brown; and John Baxter, the son of the poets Jacquie Sturm and James K. Baxter, who identified as a Buddhist round the time when he and Frame grew quite close in the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> In his biography of Frame, Michael King further recounts that the author spent three weeks in California in 1970 with Paul Wonner and Bill Brown, two of her closest friends in the second part of her career, and that “all three of them had meditated before meals (Brown and Wonner were Buddhists).”<sup>25</sup> Of Ruth Dallas it is said that, although her texts are rooted in the landscape of New Zealand, “much of her work has been influenced by Chinese poetry and thought.”<sup>26</sup> Commenting upon Dallas’s fascination for Asia, Frame writes to the Californian artist Bill Brown: “I have a friend, a poet whom I shall see about once in ten days [...]. She has a leaning to Buddhism and she speaks Japanese (having recently learned it) and lives entirely for her garden, poetry, music, art” (5 February 1970).<sup>27</sup> In the same volume of letters, an excerpt from Charles Brasch’s journal dating from December 1966 reads: “Jim Jacquie [Baxter] & Janet to dinner. Talk mostly about meditation.”<sup>28</sup>



According to Michael King, Frame's biographer, the author was a guest of Dawson for several weeks in 1956—that is, one year before she published her first novel<sup>29</sup>—and she met Ruth Dallas in 1965.<sup>30</sup> Other clues indicate, however, that the original moment of contact occurred even before Frame's meeting with Dallas or Dawson, and before the publication of her first book (a collection of short stories, *The Lagoon and Other Stories*). In her autobiography, Frame interestingly reminisces the time when

in my anxiety to be thought the perfect boarder, [...] I had explained to Aunt Isy that I ate very little, that I was a vegetarian (I had been studying Buddhism), and would be content to have my small meal on the sink bench in the scullery.<sup>31</sup>

This, to me, sounds like an important piece of information wrapped in a misleading joke-package and may well be a hint that Frame became acquainted with Buddhism as a student at university. Yet again confirming this, Pamela Gordon adds that:

Whenever the topic of Buddhism was raised, as it often was, because I myself also have identified as a Buddhist, or at least as a sympathiser, Janet would remind me: "I used to be a Buddhist." And at least once in her last years she continued, "And I suppose in a way I still am."<sup>32</sup>

If Janet Frame discovered Buddhism while she was a student, we might wonder under which circumstances this cross-cultural encounter took place. Frame lets slip in her autobiography that she spent much time at the Dunedin public library where she read "modern poetry, James Frazer, Jung and Freud."<sup>33</sup> Jung, for one, never concealed his interest in eastern meditation practices which seems to date back to the 1920s (but still had not faltered by the 1950s) and inspired him to develop his own "Western form of yoga."<sup>34</sup> He wrote among other things an introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* in 1938 and took part in 1957 in a conference on Zen also attended by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, whose *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* Jung had commented on in 1939.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, King also reports in his biography that Frame's psychology lecturer and psychoanalyst (John Money) was at one time

keen for Frame to meet, though solely on professional grounds, [...] a refugee from Hitler's Europe who had emigrated to New Zealand in 1939. Grete Christeller had trained as a psychoanalyst with Carl Jung in Zurich and planned to open a practice in Christchurch.<sup>36</sup>

Whether it was through the mediation of Jung and of John Money that Frame was first drawn eastward is not certain. What is clear, however, is that she read a number of authors and philosophers who had ventured beyond the parochial limits of western thought/science, among whom are Heidegger, Thomas Merton, and W.B. Yeats.

Though an examination of these authors' East-West encounters falls beyond the scope of this introduction, suffice it perhaps to say that Heidegger, whose work is often called upon to make sense of Frame's texts, was acquainted with

the Taoist philosopher Chuang-tzu and saw the relevance of the latter to his own philosophy. When later he encountered Suzuki's writings on Zen he exclaimed that "if I have understood Suzuki correctly, this is what I have been trying to say in all my writings" (quoted in Schrag 1970: 295).<sup>37</sup> His search for an appropriate language in which to "think being" led him progressively away from the conceptualizing methods born out of European linguistic modes towards non-representational modes of utterance such as those found in Asian philosophical texts [...]. It is significant, therefore, that in 1946 he embarked in company with a Chinese scholar on a translation of the *Tao Te Ching* [a Chinese classic which forms the backbone of Chinese Taoism and Buddhism], a project which was never completed but which [...], according to his student Otto Pögel, [...] gave his thinking a new orientation.<sup>38</sup>

Thomas Merton, a religious writer and poet who "played a significant part in introducing eastern religions to the west,"<sup>39</sup> is also known to have aroused Frame's immense curiosity, as suggested by her personal correspondence:

I thought of you because yesterday I read Thomas Merton's biography (by Monica Furlong) which you have probably read. It's very moving, don't you think? I see also that his aunt whom he admired (Kit) died in the Wahine disaster while his own death (which I didn't know about) was 'unedifying', outwardly. I have always admired his poems. There are several of his books on the shelf here. The biography<sup>[sic]</sup> was given to Paul [Wonner] by a nun who was in his art class at Long Beach earlier in the year and with whom he became close friends (I suppose such people, like Father Tim, are 'planted' in the world to find thoughtful souls to share with).<sup>40</sup>

For his part Yeats, like Jung, became familiar with Buddhism through Suzuki's texts, and he was also deeply influenced by his reading of Arthur Waley's translation of Chinese poetry.<sup>41</sup> Here again, we see how translators open up new avenues of perception which authors then explore

at their own pace. It is no wonder, in that context, that Frame should in “Departures and Returns” praise the translators who have fed “literature into a whole language—think of Edwin Muir and his translation of Kafka, Arthur Waley and his translation from Chinese.”<sup>42</sup>

Thus, in the dense network of “invisible links” between Janet Frame and all the thinkers or authors named above, the East is an ever-present shadow and more. Because Frame’s acquaintance with eastern epistemologies was derivative as well as direct, Buddhist or Buddhist-inspired philosophies have an interpretative potential which must not be underestimated. Without wishing to deny that Frame’s western encounters are of course significant also (be they Buddhist-inspired or not), the fact remains that, while Plato, Heidegger and other western sources are constantly quoted e.g. in the latest volume of general articles on Frame (i.e. *Frameworks: Contemporary Criticism on Janet Frame*),<sup>43</sup> it is nowhere acknowledged that Asia may also have played a great role in the shaping of her poetics.<sup>44</sup> Hence, again, the relevance of a Buddhist approach to Frame, especially within a post-colonial context, which was also the author’s own. As my purpose is less to present an exhaustive picture of Buddhism than to claim the need for a new assessment of Frame’s oeuvre in the light of Buddhist principles, this introduction will not distinguish between the numerous, existing or past, types of Buddhism. Buddhist traditions, with their Taoist and Hinduist undercurrents, their grounding in faith or their rejection thereof, will then be seen as a kind of plate from which Frame picked whatever ingredients suited her taste, and with which she brewed her own fictional mixture.

If Buddhism has been of such interest to so many philosophers, psychiatrists, linguists and artists, there must be more to it than a kind of “mind-murder”<sup>45</sup> whereby the “moronic vacuity”<sup>46</sup> of a lump of wood is seen as an ideal to attain. A brief survey of Buddhist insights is therefore necessary at this point. Insofar as Alan Watts has been seen to have played a fundamental role in bridging the cultural gap between the Orient and the Occident,<sup>47</sup> and since his work has found a place upon Frame’s own bookshelves, I shall largely quote from *The Way of Zen*, but also from Jung, Davis or Keown (among other sources), to give a flavor of some typical Buddhist modes of thought. One point of entry into ‘eastern’ thinking is the central Buddhist notion that “phenomenal beings (forms; Sk. *rūpa*) are emptied of any reified substantial essence (Sk. *svabhāva*).”<sup>48</sup> To forestall any misunderstanding, Keown emphasizes that the Buddhist doctrine “teaches that phenomena are devoid of inherent existence, not that they are unreal or non-existent.”<sup>49</sup> Watts, for his part, explains at

length that reality's nothingness of being points less to the existence of a beyond than to the porousness of human categories:

Certainly the world of nature abounds with surfaces and lines, with areas of density and vacuity, which we employ in marking out the boundaries of events and things. But here again, the *maya* doctrine asserts that these forms (*rupa*) have no "own being" or "self-nature" (*svabhava*): they do not exist in their own right, but only in relation to one another, as a solid cannot be distinguished save in relation to space. In this sense, the solid and the space, the sound and the silence, the existent and the nonexistent, the figure and the ground are inseparable, interdependent, or "mutually arising," and it is only by *maya* or conventional division that they may be considered apart from one another.<sup>50</sup>

Significantly, much of the impetus of Janet Frame's *The Carpathians* (1988) derives from the slow fissuring of "the iron bands that once made rigid the container of knowledge"<sup>51</sup> as a result of which "lost became found, death became life, all the anguished opposites reverted to their partner in peace yet did not vanish: one united with the other; each two were lost and found."<sup>52</sup> In keeping with this, Mattina, the main protagonist here, discovers that a video game can be "more real than real,"<sup>53</sup> that there exist such things as "real synthetic velvet,"<sup>54</sup> that memories of imaginary encounters sometimes become more vivid than "real" memories,<sup>55</sup> and so on. She who always was so intent on gathering neat facts about people and places, the flora, fauna and the sky, finally grasps that the possible and the impossible intersect at a common crossroad, or that the "truth" is always "split."<sup>56</sup>

Although the world in *The Carpathians*, as in Buddhism, is seen to be a-symbolic (or non-dual) by nature—i.e. it is made up of elements that are linked to one another in a continuous whole but "contains no classes and no symbols which signify anything other than themselves"<sup>57</sup>—most consciousnesses dwell in a fixed place of being which they chart by means of symbolic knowledge. Safe and snug in a reality of their own making which never touches down to the world, these selves forget that, to use Suzuki's paraphrase of a famous Buddhist saying, "the finger pointing at the moon remains a finger and under no circumstances can it be changed into the moon itself."<sup>58</sup> The Buddhist approach, then, touches upon a rather sensitive nerve in any conceptual architecture, for how can we understand the world without forming symbols about it? Jacques Derrida after all said that nothing exists outside the text, echoing the assertion made by the Yogacara followers (a Buddhist school) that "the world is mind only," that, "when understood as classified," the world is "a product of the mind,

and as the sound ‘water’ is not actually water, the classified world is not the real world.”<sup>59</sup> Despite “postlapsarian human limitation,”<sup>60</sup> Frame, for her part, maintains “the possibility for subjective arrival”<sup>61</sup> within the unharnessed reality, a possibility which, because it has “less to do with the world around [the individual], and more to do with how [the individual] perceives the world around [him or her],”<sup>62</sup> is “lodged within the self.”<sup>63</sup> However astute Michell’s reading of Frame’s migrant poetics, it does not quite explain how the self can get rid of representational thinking, which is problematic since, to Frame, any intellectual understanding of the non-dual nature of things is difficult to sustain once the self falls under the duress of some existential angst. Yet, as we shall see, Janet Frame advocates no less than the “end [of] the analyzing intellect,” a process which, in Buddhism, is known as “The Great Death” of the ego.<sup>64</sup>

More so than in any other text by Frame, the opposition between symbolic knowledge and a genuine apprehension of the real is key to “The Birds Began to Sing,” a two-page long tale which appeared in *The Lagoon* (Frame’s first published volume) and which focuses on the fruitless attempts of a narrator to dispossess twenty-four singing blackbirds of their song. Well aware of the narrator’s agenda, the birds simply disclose that “we are singing and we have just begun, and we’ve a long way to sing and we can’t stop, we’ve got to go on and on. Singing.”<sup>65</sup> As a result, the narrator has no choice but to strain every fiber of her being in order to identify the song: “And I listened,” she says, “I listened with my head and my eyes and my brain and my hands. With my body.”<sup>66</sup> Although both her body and her mind have been subordinated to the task of categorizing the real, what the narrator concludes from her intense listening is that “the birds began to sing.”<sup>67</sup> That the woman is unable to jettison her empirical consciousness in her efforts to apprehend the real is further visible when, turning her back on the birds, she takes a stroll in the surrounding hills and provides the exact name of every single animal or vegetal species she comes across. Also, she “tried to sing but [she] couldn’t think of the song.”<sup>68</sup> What this signifies is that, as early as in *The Lagoon*, Frame’s texts sustain a sense in which the blockage of all recognitions and the attempts at coding the real with names and symbols go hand in glove, as though reality indeed were unfathomable within the orbit of conventional knowledge.

The indictment of the symbolic which underpins “The Birds Began to Sing” marks the tale as a kind of blueprint for Frame’s later production— notably *A State of Siege* and *Living in the Maniototo*. For instance, the narrator’s cognitive and intellectual submission to symbols in “Birds” and her related inability to get in touch with a reality which, at a deeper level

of awareness, she already knows (“the birds began to sing, they were four and twenty blackbirds” correspond to words from a well-known nursery rhyme) invites a comparison with Roger’s failure in *Living in the Maniototo* to grasp that his preconceived ideas about the real separate him from his own experience. Said to be “controlled [...] by his image of the ‘real’ desert,”<sup>69</sup> Roger considers that his journey to the Californian desert is only a rehearsal for a long-planned encounter with “utter” wilderness. However, a step or two in the “unreal” desert, where he then shares a shadow with a “quivering hare,”<sup>70</sup> prove sufficient to catalyze an unexpected, but no less radical, breakthrough by virtue of which the protagonist grasps, to quote Michell, “the interdependence and interrelationship between one and the other and between subject and context.”<sup>71</sup>

Naturally, this begs the questions of *why* and *how* for, as Roger himself is cognitively unprepared for this perceptual reshuffling, the incentive for his progress is necessarily located outside himself—in the desert itself. Literally struck a blow by the sheer force of the sun Roger, who until now had been dreaming of a first-class desert (his “above”), is forced to account for the physical reality of the *hic et nunc*. Powerless indeed to resist the “shadowless noon,”<sup>72</sup> the would-be explorer constantly moans that he is “too tired to think;”<sup>73</sup> he has the impression, even, that “the heat pressed his body deep into the rock and soil until he might have become a shadow,”<sup>74</sup> and it is precisely at this juncture that Roger sees the world, *this* world. Arguably, then, his breakthrough is conditioned by the heat-induced offsetting of his discriminating consciousness, an idea which is confirmed by the uncanny fact that, the more Roger distances himself from the desert, the better he remembers his former hierarchies—as though his empirical mind had indeed been stupefied by the intensities of the sun. Without further ado, the protagonist then advertises a renewed intention to “test the reality of his dream” in another “real journey”<sup>75</sup> to a real desert.

Roger transforming his real experience into a disposable replica greatly puzzles Mavis (the author who plays “host” to her fictional Roger) who, pondering this question, concludes that it is “in trying to test the reality that one met all the problems and failures, not only of the thing itself but of the mind that is occupied obsessively with dualism.”<sup>76</sup> If considering the real as the replica of something “better and beyond”<sup>77</sup> is the mistake of the mind that is occupied obsessively with dualism, and if the a-symbolic real is known or knowable but is simply concealed underneath the noise of representational thinking, then the upshot is that what lies beyond human “makeshift”<sup>78</sup> realities should not be construed as a transcendental sphere of experience. Thus, the scene of Roger in the desert and other similar episodes in *Living in the Maniototo* indicate quite crucially that, in

insisting on using a Platonist grid of reading to account for the novel's treatment of the real, the unreal and the replicas,<sup>79</sup> one does little justice to Frame's radical revalidation of the profane. Such a Platonist framing indeed gives the impression that "the untouched, undescribed, almost unknown plain"<sup>80</sup>—also termed by Marc Delrez Frame's "manifold utopia"<sup>81</sup>—is an unattainable '*beyond*' which, by definition, "does not exist anywhere but is purely imagined."<sup>82</sup> If Frame's utopia cannot ever be accessed, Drichel comments, it is rather logical that "the inevitable result of the struggle of [her] characters is emptiness, silence or death."<sup>83</sup> Though I agree with Drichel that one must "think utopia otherwise"<sup>84</sup> (and discard Plato) to circumscribe a Framean "beyond," my suggestion however is that this "beyond" could be equated with something like the Buddhist 'Void'<sup>85</sup> (i.e. the nonconceptual or a-symbolic real) which, though "it lies directly underfoot,"<sup>86</sup> cannot be approached save in "nakedness of thought"<sup>87</sup>—that is, without the usual means of formal categorization, or without what the Perpetual Snowflake in Frame's novella "Snowman, Snowman" calls our "weapons of personification."<sup>88</sup> Again, if the manifold is simply the nonconceptual world, a realm devoid of second-class realities, it is perhaps simply there.

Despite appearances, ceasing to be controlled by concepts is no easy venture for the thinking individual, for we form symbols not only about the world, but also, constantly, about our very identities. According to Buddhist wisdom, our true self is unborn in the realm of the symbolic and it is usually concealed by its perfect antithesis, the symbolic self which we could indeed term "the replica." In the eyes of a Buddhist, as Jung explains, the unborn self is at one with "a nature which has not been divided up by any discriminating conscious<sup>[sic]</sup>,"<sup>89</sup> so that it is "simply a total consciousness of life."<sup>90</sup> Watts further emphasizes that, since we have "no other selves than the totality of things of which [we] are aware,"<sup>91</sup> this entails that our true self is as fleeting and intangible as the remainder of the real. "Our problem," Watts goes on,

is that the power of thought enables us to construct symbols of things apart from the things themselves. This includes the ability to make a symbol, an idea of ourselves apart from ourselves. Because the idea is so much more comprehensible than the reality, the symbol much more stable than the fact, we learn to identify ourselves with our idea of ourselves. Hence the subjective feeling of [...] an inwardly isolated subject to whom experiences involuntarily happen.<sup>92</sup>

To put this differently, the usual relationship between the knower and the known is that of the controller and the controlled whereby the real is

“divided up by [a] discriminating conscious.”<sup>93</sup> If to become the real is to cease controlling it, this means quite crucially that we must jettison our discriminating consciousness and lose whatever control we have on our knowing and somehow on our identity. Pinpointing the excruciating aspect of the *satori* in Zen Buddhism, Jung describes it as “a breakthrough of a consciousness limited to the ego-form in the non-ego-like Self.”<sup>94</sup> In the light of such a description, we understand why the brand of self-abandonment that is essential to the Buddhist experience, the process of cutting off “at the root and source all discriminating fancies” so as to let “our true nature”<sup>95</sup> appear, is often seen as a leap into death, or at least a death to the ordinary self.

Because breaking through the discriminating consciousness to embrace her “non-ego-like Self” is what Vera attempts to achieve in *Scented Gardens for the Blind*, we will continue our exploration of Frame’s East-West encounters through a reading of this particular novel. *Scented Gardens for the Blind* centers on Erlene who has renounced using language but who is flanked on both sides of the narrative by parents hovering between an awareness that “all begetting is from silence”<sup>96</sup> and a conviction that Erlene’s silence must be breached as she may be withholding capital information for the survival of mankind. Disoriented by her daughter’s stubborn muteness, Vera decides to deprive herself of her senses, an act which has been described rather negatively by the critics who saw it as an attempt on the woman’s part to shield herself from invasion by Erlene’s silence.<sup>97</sup> In fact, she may well accomplish the contrary, as we shall see if we subject Vera’s self-inflicted blindness to further scrutiny. First of all, it is significant that when Vera, whose life is otherwise fully governed by boundaries, forsakes her sense of sight, she loses control over her knowing:

It was I who was blind. I was threatened by the dreadful mass neighbourhood of objects which acquire a power of mobility as soon as one loses one’s sight, as if it were only the fact of being seen which keeps them in their place and now that they are free from the supervision of human eyes they may swoop, sway [and] dance.<sup>98</sup>

When “even the concept of power, as if it had been a solid substance, [has lost] its proportion and ruling,”<sup>99</sup> Vera becomes powerless and she reaches a first darkness; this is described as

a primary darkness, the first layer, the first condition of light, its foundation; it is a darkness which gives birth to a light that does not suffer



the stain of human vision; a pure light resting, like a bandage, close to the deepest wound of the dark.<sup>100</sup>

The fact that this “first darkness” is unadulterated by human vision suggests that it emanates from, or is something akin to, the nonconceptual. This impression is confirmed by a similar passage in *A State of Siege* when the main protagonist, Malfred, is literally and metaphorically sucked into the eye of a storm where she encounters utter silence:

It was first silence, emerging from emptiness, from nothingness [...]; a tyrannical, cunning silence subject to change because it had the essence of knowing that all attributes and objects change, it simply could not be caught out in its perfection. It did not bring fear or pleasure or wonder; it brought itself. Malfred [...] [could not] exclaim in the uproar: “it is Sound! Silence is but a facet of sound.” She had learned to beware of the telescopic, fashionable, so-called poetic thinking that calls the beginning the end the end the beginning, that marries opposites in order to unite them and decrease the effort to understand their separate natures. Surely, there was never any such silence on earth or in the sky, and if there had been no one had been willing to recognize it [...]. There was an obsession of man to prove that everything uttered had language, patterns of sound.<sup>101</sup>

Not unlike “first darkness,” “first silence” defeats any attempt at understanding its separate nature, dumbfounding the kind of knowledge which imprisons living and inanimate creatures in sealed empirical containers so that they may not “swoop and dance.” Desperate to retain some stable grounds of meaning, Malfred demotes her perception of the non-dual to the rank of a dubious poetic thinking, and she goes so far as to question the existence of a reality where “lost became found, death became life”<sup>102</sup> although, amusingly, she is in fact immersed in just such an order of existence. In keeping with the notion that the non-dual is subtended by a free-flowing interpenetration between self and world, when “first silence” descends on Malfred she and her house cease to be invasion-proof, “as though [the trespassers] were borne on the last wave of silence.”<sup>103</sup> Similarly, in *Scented Gardens for the Blind*, as Vera reaches “first darkness” she discovers that this is only a facet of light and must now accommodate what she had previously blotted out by virtue of her selective blindness.

Thus, quite in the line of *Living in the Maniototo*, *Scented Gardens for the Blind* and *A State of Siege* appear to be probing the potential of alternative modes of knowledge for bringing about a sense of an untrimmed real located beyond the self’s conceptual framework, for it is by virtue of their searching beyond the conceptual and other dualist

protocols of observation that Malfred and Vera cross over the threshold to the real. In both novels, empirical knowledge is presented very much as an obstacle to any re-union with the world but, in *Scented Gardens*, the reverse is also shown to be true, for the text actually stages the separation of the real (in this case, the unified identity of Erlene, Vera and Edward) by the symbolic order (i.e. the guardian of the night which forces them to exist as separate selves). This is what Erlene tries to convey when she says that neither she nor her parents exist in their own right:

It seemed as if the three had been given free passage to the world, emerging in the path of a dream from the mind of someone asleep, and preparing to fly on and on, as dreams do until they slowly dwindle to snowflake-size and nothing, when a strange guardian of the night had pounced upon them, seized them, forced them to account for their identity, in a way which dreams have no means of doing; they had been threatened, imprisoned as human beings and denied their rightful blissful fate of dissolution...<sup>104</sup>

In the light of this, it can be affirmed that, in blinding herself, Vera takes a positive step towards Erlene and the blissful state of “universal belonging.”<sup>105</sup> Presumably because the experience of dissolution, in which the knower becomes one with the known, is too frightening a prospect, Vera recoils from her perception of a shared humanity and declares that “there are such paper walls between myself and this outer world. Why should I accept less than a concrete membrane?”<sup>106</sup> In that, she comes to resemble her husband who devotes his time to a search for a perfect container in which to fit human beings, an occupation which betrays his distrust for a mode of being in which the human and the not-human would cease to be discontinuous.

Thus, in *Scented Gardens for the Blind* as in other texts, it is relentlessly suggested that the a-symbolic is a locus where the homeground of being is never individual and that, conversely, the no-man’s land separating the self and the Other is governed by the symbolic. The violence which underpins the consolidation of utterly private boundaries of being is usually conveyed with remarkable force, as in the following passage from *The Adaptable Man* where a would-be novelist, Alwyn, keeps reminding himself that

he was going to write a novel, to write it, not to live it. If you lived experience you were too easily drowned in it. Writing about it, you could flail and splash your way to the shore, thrusting away those desperate fools who tried to *cling* to you for survival; you could then clamber out alone

and sit, chilled, exhausted but alive. What is more—you got such a good view!<sup>107</sup> (First emphasis mine)

Alwyn's keenness to maintain some distance between himself and embodiments of otherness (here his creation) is perhaps spurred on by a natural impulse for self-preservation, but his "retreat into pure subjectivity"<sup>108</sup> is also presented as selfish to the extreme, and as an incentive for ruthless extermination. Pace Alwyn, however, authentic subjectivity encompasses the world rather than a selected segment thereof, although reaching a condition of balance between self and not-self requires a dissolution of the empirical ego and its conquistadorial modes of being and knowing.

Indeed, it is certainly no idle aspect of Janet Frame's *The Adaptable Man* (1965) that the place of subjective arrival, or private view, which the protagonist chooses for himself should be resolutely attached to high-tech modernity—"scientists, Alwyn thought, were so truthful in their masculine and feminine symbols—the circle, the arrow, the straight line"<sup>109</sup>—for it betrays his allegiance to an already large club of explorers, scientists and artists for whom to know is to control and (dis-)possess. Although André Malraux's depiction of the artist conquering his medium<sup>110</sup> fits Alwyn rather well, Frame herself clearly subscribes to a vision of knowledge, and so of art, which, as in Buddhism, overturns the slave-master relationship between knower and known or creator and creation. Having grasped the basic Buddhist tenet that, in retaining "no mind apart from what he [or she] knows and sees,"<sup>111</sup> the artist/knower allows the Other to be, Mavis, the author-figure in *Living in the Maniototo*, moves to what she calls "the terrible point of loss"<sup>112</sup> where, Juliet-like, she resides when the characters who "cling to her like a growing vine, or parasites"<sup>113</sup> 'decide' to occupy her point of view. In her opinion, a writer indeed is

a solitary carpenter bee [that] will hoard scraps from the manifold and then proceed to gnaw obsessively, constructing a long gallery, nesting her existence within her food. The eater vanishes. The characters in the long gallery emerge.<sup>114</sup>

The vanishing may or may not be temporary—in fact Mavis does re-emerge in the novel when her four unexpected guests-characters leave her house of fiction. If nothing else, the extreme polarity which Frame introduces between Alwyn's artistic pretensions and Mavis's art serves to underline that the not-self (the Other) cannot be seen unless s/he is approached in an indiscriminating state of mind, and this means, importantly, that Frame's Other is very much akin to an "untouched, undescribed, almost unknown

plain.”<sup>115</sup> If the Other as self and the Other as world are, as Frame constantly suggests, non-dual, then Marc Delrez’s astute perception that, to quote Jennifer Lawn’s paraphrase, “much Frame criticism fails to attend to the eclipsed existence of the other” by virtue of “what is, perhaps, a misplaced ethical restraint that sets limits upon what the Other can mean, or be, for the interpreting self,”<sup>116</sup> may apply just as well to Frame’s “unknown plain.” That which, in criticism, has been called the transcendental beyond and deemed to be indescribable given that “one cannot explore *beyond*,”<sup>117</sup> may in fact be nothing other than this reality which, indeed, is almost unknown but then only because it is ignored in favor of a so-called first-class elsewhere.

In this introduction, it has been my intention to provide the grounds for a new assessment of Janet Frame’s oeuvre in the light of its proximity to Buddhist thought. At the risk of adding one more ‘-ism’ to the already long list of still proliferating labels such as (post-)modernism, post-colonialism, or surrealism, which have been invoked in connection with Frame’s work, the biographical, textual and intertextual evidence that has been highlighted seems sufficiently substantial to authorize the claim that, to fully understand the complexities of the author’s poetics, her eastern encounters must be taken into account. One may even venture the supposition that the oft-noted *avant-la-lettre* quality of her fiction can be ascribed in parts to its affinities with a system of thought which seems to have been “a constitutive element of the Modernism in the 1910s and 1920s”<sup>118</sup> but which possesses as well the definite deconstructing twist and tendency to decentre the human subject that were to become predominant in postmodernism.

However, as against what is often the case in postmodernism, when Janet Frame targets the conscious ego-like self and deconstructs empirical knowledge, she never does so for the sake of it, or of mere entertainment. The reason why she relentlessly condemns the discriminating ego is that he/she has such control upon the real as to be incapable of negative capability, with the result that one tends to select a time or place in the real that may be adapted to one’s singular needs, thus repressing whatever else may be clamoring for attention outside these fences of being. Nothing in fact is more remote from the Buddhist way of being in the world than the depiction, in *The Adaptable Man* and in *Scented Gardens for the Blind*, of selves registering in their world-proof minds no other reflections than their own. Nevertheless, it must be credited to Vera, Malfred, Mavis and a number of other characters that they attempt a dissolution of their egos into the flux so that, in that sense, they actually take a leap into the

nonconceptual. Even though this search for renewal almost always finds a termination point in “emptiness, silence or death,”<sup>119</sup> it seems to me that Janet Frame’s unrelenting interest in this sort of void is less self-defeating or nihilist than it has sometimes been said to be for, in Frame’s fiction as in Buddhism, the act of going beyond ossified epistemologies and ontologies is always at first a negating activity for the self.

## 2. Reception and Methodology

Gathering biographical data about Frame and her contemporaries, it occurred to me that there is room in (postcolonial) literary studies for an investigation of New Zealand authors in East-West encounters. Indeed, it is also with great interest that I discovered that Keri Hulme’s *the bone people* (1983) brings into play a Maori protagonist who returns home from a school of martial arts in Asia with fighting skills but without the related *Weltanschauung*. My impression is that the character only comes to terms with her community when all that she had hitherto shunned, including aspects of Buddhist wisdom, finally sinks home. Another author known to have approached Buddhism is C.K. Stead, especially in his pastiche autobiography, *All Visitors Ashore* (1984), in which Cecilia Skyways (aka Janet Frame) is depicted as a cheeky masturbator and Zen follower. Frame and the Steads met at Frank Sargeson’s place round 1955 and entertained a close relationship for about six months.<sup>120</sup> Naturally, in a radio interview where, at the back of his mind, was our personal correspondence on the question of Frame’s Buddhism (dating from March 9 and 10, 2010), Stead made it clear that this aspect of Janet Frame’s reconstruction was his invention; in his words:

Of course it is true that, to some extent, I drew on Janet Frame for Cecilia Skyways and I drew on Frank Sargeson for Melior Fabro but they became fictional characters and went their own way in the novel. [ ... ] I, very recently, had an email [ ... ] asking about Janet Frame’s interest in Zen Buddhism. Well as far as I knew, Janet Frame had no more than passing interest in Zen Buddhism. *I* was the one who has always had that interest and had it particularly at the time I wrote *All Visitors Ashore*. So these Zen Buddhist letters that Janet ... that Cecilia Skyways writes are entirely inventions out of my head.<sup>121</sup>

Doubtless my exposition of Frame’s eastern affiliations in the first part of the introduction is too summary not to run the risk of encountering a certain amount of resistance but I hope to have sufficiently intrigued the reader to prompt him or her to follow me in the meanders of a Buddhist

exploration of Frame's oeuvre. More ought to be said, at this juncture, on my choice of texts for this study. Re-reading the Framean corpus after my first few ventures into eastern philosophy, novels (or large tracts thereof) which had so far eluded me suddenly began to make more sense, and these I have included. Although the novels have, in general, proved an especially propitious ground of exploration, Frame's short stories are often blueprints for, or condensed versions of, larger texts. For this reason, and because I value the poetic intensity of the author's shorter pieces, I have selected a few (but not all) relevant short stories for scrutiny. Thus, neither is this study a round tour of Janet Frame's fictional oeuvre, nor has its contents, by consequence, been organized in chronological order. Rather, it has been my purpose to gradually unveil the centrality of Frame's unrelenting deconstruction of empirical thinking or, as Keown calls it, "discursive thought"<sup>122</sup> and its point of anchorage in the "discriminating awareness."<sup>123</sup> I have briefly described, in the first part of this introduction, the impact of the discriminating consciousness on the construction of the self, of places of subjective arrival, on perceptions and even on the world. Naturally, the interpretive patterns I have delineated need to be tested against the larger evidence provided by the full scope of Frame's narratives. Likewise, the scene of Roger in the desert, the passage on first darkness or first silence, and other excerpts, will be rehearsed again, and further commented upon, in the chapters to come because they are key moments in the texts from which I have here artificially excised them. No doubt they will appear in a different light once replaced in their original contexts.

The first three chapters will investigate at greater length the artistic egotism epitomized by the would-be novelist Alwyn Maude (as characterized in *The Adaptable Man*) in order to buttress the claim that authentic creation annihilates the discriminating consciousness and that it must coexist with lesser species of art (such as Alwyn's) precisely on that account. Each of the three chapters focuses on a reclusive artist who knows that her aesthetics of containment (which substantiates empirical thinking on canvas or paper) walls in her self and place of being against the otherness of the world. The idea explored in "Jan Godfrey" (Chapter 1), that the author-figure writes a story that is not a story as long as she hesitates to grant her (re-)created Other full access to the speaking position she occupies, will be interpreted as a hint that non-stories of avoidance are in fact narratives of ontological decimation. Confirming the suspicion that ficticides and genocides are on an equal footing in the author's universe, the intuited realness, and related dangerousness, of the created Other in "Jan Godfrey" will be shown to climax into mutiny in *The Edge of the*