LIVING DEATH:
THE HAND OF DEATH
IN FIVE OF
JANET FRAME'S NOVELS

A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
of Master of Arts
in English
at Massey University

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1993

ABSTRACT

Who is alive and who is dead within a literary text is the result of the discretion or point of view of the narrator. The narrator has the power to act as the hand of death to create and destroy as they write characters in or out of the novel. This process is demonstrated through the actions of individual characters. By judgments which come solely from their point of view, they are able to declare other characters dead, while they themselves remain alive. This thesis examines this theme in five of Janet Frame's novels: Owls Do Cry, The Rainbirds, Intensive Care, Daughter Buffalo and The Carpathians.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank
my supervisor, Dr. Doreen D'Cruz,
Mum and Dad,
and my friends,
without whose support
this thesis would not be done.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> "Of course it is Death," he said. "What else is there to tell stories about? Did you never learn, when working fractions, to find the common denominator?"[1]

So spoke Uncle Blackbeetle to Erlene, in Scented Gardens for the Blind, when she asked him if he was about to tell yet another story about death. After reading all of Janet Frame's novels, Uncle Blackbeetle's philosophy seems evident in all her works. As all of Frame's novels arguably, have a theme of death, my selection of works for examination in this thesis has been on chronological grounds. In this way a development of the theme can be traced over time.

Her first novel, Owls Do Cry, and to date, latest novel, The Carpathians, are the subjects of the first and last chapters of this thesis. The three middle chapters consider three novels that were published at about the mid-point of Frame's writing career as it stands. They are The Rainbirds, Intensive Care, and Daughter Buffalo published consecutively in the years between 1968 and 1972. The concept of death is treated in a consistent manner throughout the five novels this thesis considers. However, the language and metaphors used to describe this concept varies from novel to novel.

One major influence on Frame is that of the poet Rilke, who has special relevance to the topic of death. Rilke is a poet whom Frame herself obviously enjoys. In his poetry he shows death and life to exist in union with each other. Rather than seeing them as opposites, he perceives them to be complementary parts of one whole. Frame shows the influence of Rilke on her work in the way she defines life and death. Rather than seeing them as separate or exclusive categories, a character's life or death is often constructed from the highly subjective realm of individual perceptions.

The poet, Rilke, thought that by acknowledging death to be part of your life you would be able to live more

fully or 'authentically'. Because you had faced your own death, he thought you would also face your own life. As explained in the following chapters, some critics have felt that Frame's novels give us examples of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' characters. However, this thesis disagrees with their precepts. Rather than the narrator making moral judgments, it is often the characters who judge each other. Very often these judgments touch on whether they think other characters are metaphorically alive or dead. However, rather than life and death being a judgment of the narrator, it highlights the processes of fiction-making, which involves the supersedence of points of view. One character's point of view can supersede another by describing others through their eyes, therefore having their judgment foregrounded.

This connection between point of view and death shows the closeness of the concepts of creation and destruction. The creation of fiction involves the destruction of the points of view of the characters being written about, as ultimately all points of view are perceived through the eyes of, and controlled by, the narrator.

This thesis also disagrees with the argument that if people would simply face the inevitability of their own death they would be 'authentic'. Although it is advantageous to see death as a part of life, on another level it also has to be acknowledged that death is ultimately unknowable. The boundaries of our knowledge as humans about death is limited to our speculation about it while we are still alive. Once we are dead we no longer possess a language that could communicate our experience to others. Therefore inherent in acknowledging death in your life is the willingness to contemplate the unknown. Although Frame writes about death, she does not come to a set definition of it, because it is always unknowable. Rather, death is always considered from the perspective of what contemplating it can add or take away from life.

In Owls Do Cry, Frame's first novel, the Withers family is introduced. Each of the main characters has their own

section where their point of view is presented. Through their individual perspectives they judge each other to be alive or dead. These judgments blur the distinctions between the categories of life and death. For example, Toby judges his sister Chicks to be dead because he thinks her life is based on shallow materialism. However, Chicks judges from her perspective that her sister Daphne is dead because of her lack of material goods. This fluidity in the use of the concepts of life and death reminds us of Rilke's idea that life and death are not opposites but complementary parts of a whole.

Just as life and death cannot be divided into separate categories, neither can the characters be divided into those that are authentic or inauthentic. The characters all acknowledge death in their lives to a certain extent. They also all judge each other to be alive or dead. However, we cannot conclude that this makes some characters authentic and others inauthentic. All characters show varying degrees of authenticity, rather than some being superior to the others in some way. All characters have the power to construct the others, and judge whether they perceive them to be alive or dead.

In The Rainbirds, Frame's seventh novel, characters also construct each other to be alive or dead in a way which seems to bear little relation to another's physical life or death. When Godfrey Rainbird is pronounced dead, he is merely wrongly diagnosed, and awakens from a deep coma only days later. Although he is still alive, many other characters judge him to be now some kind of representative for all dead people.

The Rainbirds uses the concept of death as an instrument of judgment, as does Owls Do Cry. However, unlike Frame's first novel, The Rainbirds explores what this concept might actually entail, rather than taking for granted that the reader knows what death is supposed to represent in a particular context. Godfrey's experience shows us that although it is important to acknowledge death in your life, it is also important to acknowledge that

death is unknowable. When Godfrey awakes from his coma he has no special knowledge of what death might be like, although many around him assume that he has. Language, and the processes of fiction making are used to construct preconceptions of death. However, death itself is beyond language.

Intensive Care demonstrates the difficulty of arriving at any set definition of death. As shown in the preceding chapters, although death can be an existential fact, it can also be used as a means of describing or constructing others. However, in this novel the process is intensified to a more extreme extent. For example, Tom, a major character in this novel, dreams of drowning his wife in a slurry pond. Through his constant dreaming he denies the existence of the people around him, therefore he denies them the right to their own point of view. Other individuals in the novel can symbolically kill other characters in this way. The futuristic third section of the novel demonstrates how political propaganda is capable of enacting this process on a wide scale. The Human Delineation Act shows a group of people's dreams, or points of views being inflicted on others.

Inherent in this process is death. Just as Rilke points out the union of life and death, so creation and destruction are closely related. In Intensive Care, the creation of dreams entails the destruction of the point of view of the person who is being dreamed about. Existential death can result when the person dreamed about asserts his or her point of view to the dreamer. Tom kills Ciss Everest who he dreams about, when the 'reality' of her existence does not match the dream of her he was living with.

As in the other novels, we see that merely acknowledging your own death does not make characters authentic. Tom faces his own death, but this leads him to be a destructive rather than a creative person. Rather than showing one point of view to be authentic, the text shows many different points of view. The end of the novel shows us that one perspective can never suffice for all

people. Although the H. D. Act is successful at first, it is only a matter of time before divergent points of view reappear.

In Daughter Buffalo we see how the expectations we have affects our reading of a text. Daughter Buffalo is in many ways different from the other novels and does not fit neatly into the model this thesis promotes. However, the chapter on it discusses the ways it does or does not fit into the model already in place.

Firstly, we must note that the novel does not fulfill other expectations we might have, as well as not treating the topic of death in a way that relates to other novels. It seems to be more like a collection of anecdotes than a novel, and a significant portion of the text is written in poetry. The two main characters, Talbot and Turnlung are on a quest to find 'death education'. They construct each other's lives and deaths as a way of trying to arrive at this. However, the characters are extremely inconsistent, making it hard to fit them into any model or make any definite statement about them. They want to get to know death, but they often turn away from their best opportunities to learn more. They want to know death, while they realize that this is not possible. Like in other novels, this one attribute does not make any character 'authentic'. It seems at this stage time to wonder if Frame has any message or any character she totally endorses.

Talbot and Turnlung proceed through the book unable to make any genuine relationships that will hold their memory beyond their own deaths, that is they make relationships with animals. As memory is one thing that prevents death from being complete, Talbot and Turnlung draw from memory in their reminiscing of their death education, while with typical inconsistency wish death would come to complete their lives.

In The Carpathians, Frame's latest novel to date, the links memory has to the concept of death is developed more fully. The legend of the Memory Flower and the scientific discovery of the Gravity Star are closely

connected to the processes of memory and death. The Memory Flower 'grows from the dead' because it has the function of symbolizing people and events that now do not exist physically because they are in, and belong to, the past. The Gravity Star distorts memory and the destructive element of death, by making the past become present. What was far now becomes near because time has been distorted.

This conflation of things which were once considered opposites reminds us of Rilke and the effect of his writings on Frame's work. In The Carpathians we can see that his influence continues. Other 'opposites' which are merged in the novel are creation and destruction. Fiction making encapsulates the processes of creation and destruction through the manipulation of point of view. Through point of view the author creates a character and also destroys that character by stealing his or her unmediated point of view.

When the Gravity Star works its effects the disruption it causes means people no longer exist because they have had their points of view taken from them. However, rather than this being a judgment on the people who 'die' it is a reflection of who was holding their points of view as they are being described. Mattina escapes the Gravity Star with her point of view intact, mainly because she was in control of describing others. However, Mattina's possession of her own point of view is not permanent. When she returns home to U. S. A. her husband is able to take over her point of view as she dies.

This process of characters taking over others' points of view has been intensified throughout Frame's works until it is shown very clearly in The Carpathians. However, even in Owls Do Cry, Frame's first novel, the beginnings of this theme can be observed. Although the point of view of the narrator seems overriding at first, individual characters can negate each other's points of view.

NOTES

[1] Janet Frame, Scented Gardens for the Blind (New York: Braziller, 1964) 172.

CHAPTER ONE

Owls Do Cry

Frame's first novel, Owls Do Cry, was published in 1957. The Withers family, which it describes, bears many striking resemblances to the family Frame describes in her autobiographical trilogy. The untimely death of her siblings, described in the first volume of her autobiography To the Is-land,[1] appears to be a major formative event in her life. The death of Francie, the eldest daughter in the Withers family, reminds us of the tragic early deaths of Frame's sisters, and the effect in had on the family.

However, as well as death being a physical fact in the novel, the concept of death is also widely used in a metaphorical sense. If a character disapproves of the way another character is living, she or he will often think of that character as dead, rather than accepting that they are in possession of a differing point of view. Death, therefore, is used in a metaphorical sense by characters who wish to judge other's ways of living.

Before considering the concept of death in the text of Owls Do Cry, it is useful to explore influences on Frame which are pertinent to the topic of death. When Frame entered mental hospital, it was widely recognized, that she took with her only two books. One was a copy of Shakespeare's Complete Works, and the other was Sonnets to Orpheus, by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke.[2] The Sonnets were written following the death of Rilke's friend's young daughter. Orpheus was a mythical figure who combined the seemingly opposite forces of life and death. Central to the work was the concept that by facing death rather than denying its existence, people are able to enjoy more 'authentic' living. Used in this sense, authenticity is the paradoxical concept of 'living' by facing death, rather than being 'dead' by ignoring death. By confronting death, we confront our existence and as a result live more fully. The concept of 'authenticity' also implies the concept of truth. However, rather than dictating that there is one truth that can be obtained, it implies that to be

'authentic' is to be constantly in the process of uncovering layers of experience to reveal what lies beneath.

The concept of 'authenticity' in Frame's work has become problematic within the corpus of criticism on her work. "Death as a Gateway to Being"[3] by Jeanne Delbaere considers how the topic of death has been used in Owls Do Cry, then extends this theme to show how it has been developed in Frame's later works. Noting the echoes of Rilke's philosophy in Frame's work, Delbaere argues that in Owls Do Cry facing death forces characters to come to a realization of the 'essence' of their lives. Recognizing that life and death are part of a union rather than separate entities allows the characters to grasp the 'totality' of their existence. That death precipitates characters to come to realizations certainly seems the case in Frame's first novel. All the characters face and respond to death and the concept of death in different ways and come to different realizations because of it.

However, Delbaere goes on to split the characters into a harsh dichotomy between those who face up to death, and therefore are 'authentic', and those who ignore death and are therefore judged to be 'inauthentic' or 'adaptable'. By examining the characters carefully we can see that while the concept of 'authenticity' might hold true in theory, the actual characters are much more complex than this. Different characters, rather, show different levels of 'authenticity' and self awareness. Dividing the characters into two categories goes against the precepts of Rilke and those of the novel which demonstrate that things cannot be judged in such strict opposition.

Rather than grouping the characters into categories, the structure of the novel allows key characters their own space to convey their point of view. The novel is set out in a three part structure. Part One introduces us to the family life of the Withers, and recounts the story of the death of the eldest child, Francie. Part Two is itself set out in a three part structure. It tells the stories of the Withers children twenty years after they

were first introduced. Toby is at home with his parents, working as a second hand dealer. Chicks is married and living in suburbia 'up North'. Daphne is in a mental hospital where she has a 'personality changing' leucotomy. The Epilogue briefly speculates about what 'becomes of these characters.

However, the space given to each of the main characters in Part Two does not exist independently of each other. Other characters can override the subject's point of view by 'intruding' into a section which is not their own with their point of view. Ultimately all points of view are controlled by the narrator who translates everyone's stories into third person narrative.

Part One features the death of Francie, the eldest of the Withers children. Francie constructs what she perceives life and death to be. The ambivalence she shows towards her perception of the concept of death reflects her ambivalence towards what she wants to do with her life. Her physical death signals the final judgment by the narrator of her life and the direction it was taking.

Francie feels that growing older and entering the adult world is a kind of death. She still values the imaginative life she had as a child. She still goes to the town dump with her younger brother and sisters to find 'treasure' in what the adults have thrown away. She is self-consciously aware that growing up means the end of this, and that being an adult means being afraid of 'nice things'. However, Francie is also drawn to the adult world and desires to be integrated into it.

Francie's ambivalence towards her entry into the adult world is shown in her mixed feelings about the possibility of her working at the Woolen Mill. Working at the Mill is seen as a type of death to Francie and her sister Daphne because of the grasping materialism of the women who work there and the conditions they work under:

Francie and Daphne knew that over and over again

> the hundreds of girls. . .were bewitched into a dark room filled with wool. . . .Some of the girls choked with the colours and died.[4]

However, although she is fearful when her father tells her she has to go and work there, when she gets a reprieve and has to do housework instead, she is disappointed:

> The wool had become real, a being that threaded and tangled its way through their waking and dreaming lives, and now here was their father coming to cut their monstrous dream and murder their so loved and longed-for fear. (38, 39)

Their father demonstrates what he feels is his prerogative to construct and destroy their dreams as well as decide what Francie should do with her life. In this way he is denying her a point of view, and symbolically killing her.

Francie's death comes when she tries to clarify her own point of view. When she is down at the dump with her siblings, she sees Tim Harlow's father. Her friend Tim had told her that his father was a Brain Surgeon. When she sees him tending the fire in the capacity of a council worker, she takes a step forward to check if she had seen correctly, and she falls into the fire and meets with her death. Her metaphorical step towards the adult world is not motivated by wanting to be part of it but by disbelief at its untruths.

Francie shows 'authentic' traits because she is trying to uncover the layers of experience that we use to construct our lives and the truths we believe in. Tim Harlow, on the other hand, shows 'inauthentic' traits because he purposely tries to cover up what he knows in order to fit into the values of the adult world.

Francie's death causes the other characters to face the harsh event of death, whether they want to or not. When the doctor comes to inform the family of her death, Amy, her mother, mistakes him for a commercial traveler

who has come to sell her something. She tries to turn him away as if she were trying to deny death's part in life. However, he cannot be ignored:

> -No, he said aloud, he didn't want to sell anything.
> But he sold death, the terrible way, on the never-never, though Amy tried to keep him out. (53)

Amy has to exchange some of her pleasure of living in return for the knowledge of death, something she does not want. To face the truth or to live 'authentically', she cannot deny this person entry into her house, or deny the knowledge he brings.

The lack of choices about what to do with her life and, as a result, the lack of credence given to her point of view makes us wonder if Francie would have been able to continue living 'authentically' in the world she was in with the amount of curiosity she possessed. Her sister Chicks' life demonstrates one option or role she might have been able to fit into. The link between Chicks and Francie is demonstrated by Chicks marrying Francie's old boyfriend, Tim Harlow. As we can recall, Tim Harlow was indirectly, yet crucially involved in Francie's death.

Although Chicks seems to demonstrate the life Francie would have led if she had given up her imaginative point of view, she paradoxically has the most explicit opportunity of any of the characters in the novel of revealing her point of view. Chicks' section in Part Two is in the form of a series of diary entries, which are discovered and read by her brother Toby while he is visiting.

As we have direct access to Chicks' point of view, rather than knowing about her at second hand, through the voice of the narrator, we can see how she constructs herself as well as the people around her. As a housewife, Chicks

realizes that her role demands that she acts in a particular way. By fitting into a role, she denies herself certain aspects of her own self, and in some ways dies to herself. When thinking about the progress her diary is making she observes:

> . . .I said I would give a record of my inner life. I begin to wonder if I have said anything about my inner life. What if I have no inner life? (126)

However, as we did with Francie, we wonder how many other options for living would be available to Chicks if she publicly displayed her point of view and refused to fit into the role she occupies. The novel sets up a paradoxical no win situation for Chicks. If she does not fit into the role of housewife, as Dr. Bessick's wife does not, she might suffer the same fate. Dr. Bessick is a publicly respected gynaecologist who is an acquaintance of Chicks and her husband. He murders his wife when he judges that she was not providing him with satisfactory meals. Because she does not fit into the role expected of her, she is actually killed. Chicks, on the other hand, fits into a role, but partly dies to herself.

Chicks' relationship with the concept and the event of death shows how she denies parts of her inner life to fit into a role. Chicks thinks about death, but she always sees examination of this topic as an aberration from what she should be thinking about. When she gets a letter from her mother, she reflects on her mother's imminent death. This leads her to think about her own eventually impending death. Although this is a topic of obvious concern to her she turns away from these thoughts, dismissing them as 'morbid' (120).

When her mother does die, she says she is unable to attend the funeral by making an excuse of the children. She sends an expensive wreath, but material goods and their dispersal do not help her come to terms with death:

> Is she dead? I have not cried yet, it all seems so far away. . . .I do not believe she is dead, yet I am glad, I am glad of her death. (141)

By ignoring or trying to ignore death, Chicks appears to be 'inauthentically' turning away from the 'reality' of death. However, death can never be completely ignored. Delbaere, in "Death as a Gateway to Being", judges Chicks to be totally 'inauthentic' and an embodiment of the 'false attitude'.[5] But on closer examination we see that the characters in the novel have different levels of vision rather than being totally blind or totally seeing. Death causes Chicks to re-evaluate things as it does to other characters, only not to such a great extent. When Chicks considers her mother's death, her dialogue changes into the poetic mode which has been associated with Daphne. Chicks quickly disowns this, hinting that considering death is a 'mad' thing to do, she comments:

> Oh, I am half Daphne in writing this, it is not my usual way: as if a spell had come over me. (142)

By acting as a housewife, Chicks has to deny things about herself and her past. This includes how she views her sister Daphne, who is in a mental hospital. Although she privately worries about Daphne, she publicly goes along with the status quo. When considering Daphne's impending leucotomy, in her private diary she writes, 'How terrible to be deprived of one's personality' (131). However, then in a letter to Daphne she encourages her to have the operation so she 'can live the sort of life I am leading, happy and free' (189).

The 'normal' life Chicks leads is defined by herself to be strongly connected to material goods and money. This equation of money with life and lack of it therefore with death is shown by her attitude towards Daphne. When Chicks

is thrilled because her husband has bought her a new steam iron, she thinks of giving Daphne her old one as a 'material basis for her new life' (119) when she gets out of hospital. Although she thinks Daphne has no life in materialistic terms, Chicks' vision is not so limited as to judge her to have no life at all. When she thinks of Daphne in the mental hospital, she muses, 'What a strange world she must be living in' (124).

It is not only Chicks who questions whether she herself has any inner life or not. Toby, who frames her narrative, as we have mentioned before, constructs her as symbolically dead because of the way he judges her values. Although Chicks seems to be giving us her point of view directly from her diary, this is mediated by Toby. It is through his reading of the diary that we have any knowledge of it, and he decides at what point he stops reading. He also passes his judgment on what he thinks he has read, whether or not this corresponds with the likely interpretation of the reader.

Toby constructs Chicks as symbolically dead in two ways. He throws her diary, which is meant to be about her 'inner life', onto the fire, and does not finish reading it. He then leaves the house because he has read that from Chicks' point of view he has 'no part' in her life. Wandering around town, he says to a woman he stops in the street:

> Only it's just my sister. . . .I found her dead and I don't know what to do. (150)

However, by declaring Chicks to be 'dead', Toby ignores his own ambivalence towards wanting to fit into the role society expects of him. He wants to be part of society but at the same time he feels this would cause him to sacrifice part of his point of view. Toby knows if he marries Fay Chalkin he will be 'condemned' to a circumscribed life in suburbia. However, he can see the

advantages of being within society as well:

> Oh marry Fay Chalkin and not ever be on the outside of the circle that whirled round and round faster than any light and letting no part break for a man to squeeze in and be warm. (77)

Unfortunately for Toby, all thoughts of whether or not he should marry Fay are merely constructions of his own, since she is not interested in Toby. He also constructs Fay's life, or her half-life, through the filter of his own values, in this way denying her her point of view. He muses about her wedding, constructing it to be a type of death:

> And now the two marry, the imprisoned man and the white as milk woman, and they will die. (90)

But Fay, like Chicks, is not totally 'inauthentic', and therefore she is not totally unaware of her symbolic death at the hands of her Mill job and her imminent wedding. After Toby's visit, she is 'frightened' of the wedding she was before excited about. Through Toby's attitude to the Mill she begins to feel that it has 'captured' her and wound her up 'like a mummy' (94). Toby's construction of her has altered her point of view, when he judges her by his values.

Although Toby presumes to be able to judge Fay and Chicks, this does not mean he is totally 'authentic' himself. Toby is just as interested in money, if not more, than other characters. His section of the novel begins with him sitting at the table counting his money. Toby himself equates money with life:

> And I'd like to give you some money Dad, but I've got to get going in life, and money's something to hang onto, otherwise you sink. (71)

The community Toby lives in perceives him as half alive and half dead. Toby, throughout his childhood, has always been made to feel he does not fit in because of his epilepsy. As an adult he exists within the community only because of the concessions he feels it has made to him. As he drives his car down the street, he imagines the mayor thinking he is pleased he has 'allowed' Toby to get a license, because he drives more carefully than people without a disability.

Toby's state of existing as a medium mark, half within and half without the community, is reflected in the way he acts as a medium between the extremes of Chicks and Daphne. Although this essay puts them out of the order in which they appear within the text, it could be argued that he fits in between his two sisters, showing some of the traits or points of view of each. He is like Chicks because he wants to have money and fit into the community. He is like Daphne because he is partly ostracized from the community, and to a certain extent still values the imaginative world of their childhood which they shared.

Toby's connection to Daphne is shown on the day he and his father go to visit Daphne in the Mental Hospital after their mother's death. On the train they discuss Daphne's imminent 'personality changing' leucotomy. Toby shows he values things other than fitting into society when he questions his father: 'Do you really think Mum would have approved?' (191) When Toby has an epileptic fit at the hospital, Bob Withers is worried that although he is only a visitor, Toby will be hospitalized as well. This demonstrates that all illness and disabilities can be seen as reasons for not being 'allowed' to live in society.

Daphne's 'disability' does not allow her to live in society. Because she has been institutionalized she does not exist, or is 'dead' to the community. Her point of view is no longer heard by the general population. However, in the terms of the novel, this ostracism does not limit

her from retaining her own values. She still appears to keep her point of view.

Society constructs Daphne as mad, because she does not conform to the role and behaviour that is expected of her. However, Daphne, in turn, constructs those who run the Mental Hospital as mad, and therefore in some ways dead, or not living their lives to the full. Just as they inflict their values on Daphne, she judges them by her values of imagination and therefore 'authenticity'. When thinking about them she decides:

> They are mad. They are frauds. They are thieves who sneak through the night and day of their lives, exchanging their counterfeit whys and hows and wheres...(161)

That they are 'frauds' is shown in their treatment of the topic of death. They try to 'sneak' past it rather than facing it as an integral part of life. Although Daphne is out of society, she is aware of its conventions of how we are expected to behave in the face of death, and therefore is expecting news of death when she observes the Matron's behaviour:

> It was death. You have to hide behind a screen to talk of death, the way you cover your face with a handkerchief, ashamed, to hide your crying. Daphne knew it was death, and her mother was dead, and she waited for the matron to tell her. (182)

In a type of defiance of their values, Daphne decides to do the total opposite of what convention requires when 'facing' death. Instead of crying or sitting numbly, she gets up and dances the dance her dead sister used to do.

Daphne values the way she is living because she does not shut herself away from experience and thought as she sees society doing. She values her childhood experiences

of sitting thinking about the world and does not want to grow up and forget about these experiences as she sees other people doing. She remembers the time spent with her family as a child:

> And we sat, didn't we, Toby, Chicks and Francie, as the world sits in the morning, unafraid, touching how and why and where, the wonder currency that I take with me, slipped in the lining of my heart, to hide it because I know. (162)

Daphne displays the 'authentic' trait of questioning things rather than thinking things can be 'known' as certainties. Daphne does not have barriers between herself and the 'truth', as she sees it, as the people around her appear to construct.

Because of her 'authenticity', Daphne is able to keep her point of view, and live up to the values that she defined for herself as a child. When talking to Francie, who we have seen was ambivalent about entering the adult world, Daphne says that when she grows up she will never 'marry or die or be rich' (34). In the Mental Hospital she retains these values by refusing to do the occupational therapy tasks they suggest. The handiwork reminds her of what she thought working at the Mill would be like, which she had vowed she would never do.

By retaining her values, Daphne retains her point of view. Her italicized poetry-like discourse informs much of the text, often interrupting the point of view of other characters. In Part One she is the only character who speaks directly about herself by assuming first person narrative. Her poetry begins Toby's and Chick's sections in Part Two. Ironically, although she does not exist to society, and therefore we might assume that madness might imply some sort of death or silence, the narrator's voice repeatedly observes that she is singing 'from the dead room' (11). In this way, through Daphne's priority in the text, we

can guess at the values of the narrator who is controlling the characters' points of view.

As Daphne has her own point of view, and it is what is judged to be an 'authentic' viewpoint, she can see very clearly that life and death are not opposites but are very closely related sides of one whole. As she observes the people and happenings at the Mental Hospital, she perceives the simultaneous existence of the concepts of life and death. When she watches the other patients she is able to construct them according to her point of view:

> Daphne sat all morning in the corner, and spoke to no one, only stared at the people hopping and skipping and dancing and crying and laughing and screaming and fighting and dead. (165)

Although these people exhibit all the signs usually associated with life, Daphne still judges them to be part of the 'long-dead mad' (158).

Many things in the hospital that would usually indicate life are inverted in this way to indicate death. Christmas is usually associated with new life, as it is the occasion of the birth of Christ. However, in the hospital, Daphne associates it with death. Daphne notes that the Christmas tree dies on the third day. This is an inversion of Christ's death and resurrection, associated with Easter Time. Once the season is over, Christmas is described as being put to death and 'buried'.

Just after Christmas the patients go on a picnic in the 'outside world'. The people in charge forget to take the tea with them so Daphne and a nurse walk up to a farm house to see if they could buy some. When they get there the find no one home and no furniture, although the house has every other appearance of being lived in. The nurse asks Daphne what she makes of it, to see what a 'crazy' person would say. Daphne thinks to herself but does not reply:

> If I travel a hundred miles to find treasure, I will find treasure. If I travel a hundred miles to find nothing, even if I bring money to lay down in exchange, I will find nothing. (176)

Daphne is alluding to the way people can be alive or dead, depending on the constructions we put on to them from our own point of view.

Daphne can perceive that her own symbolic death is imminent when she is about to have a leucotomy, which is like losing her point of view or personality. She thinks:

> . . .I die tomorrow when snow falls criss-cross to darn the believed crevice of my world. (205)

The Epilogue shows Daphne to live in a way that she would have constructed to be a metaphorical death, if she had retained her old point of view. When reading the paper, the Mill manager's wife reads of a woman who, after recovering from a mysterious illness very quickly, is promoted to be assistant forewoman. Then italicized narration informs the text:

> And the name was Daphne Withers, though the paper said another name. (210)

This outcome dictated by the narrator makes us question the value of Daphne's 'authenticity', when it seems to lead her only to die a metaphorical double death. She dies to society by being ostracized as 'mad', then she dies to herself by having a leucotomy and working in the Mill.

This also makes us question the privileged position Daphne has been given by some critics. In his article, "Beyond the Alphabet: Janet Frame's Owls Do Cry", W. D. Ashcroft links Daphne's madness to her ability to possess, what is judged to be, superior vision, as he observes:

> Daphne is the mad one. She is the only one who fully accepts the responsibility for the journey into self.[6]

Delbaere judges her to be an example of some one 'truly authentic'.[7] However, despite her 'madness' and 'authenticity', her story does not point to there being any extrinsic value in this. If she has 'true' vision, there is nowhere for her to exist with this.

As the novel concludes, the narrator implies that other characters die a kind of death, along with Daphne. Using this technique of vaguely saying the paper had used different names, it reports the fates of these people. As the Mill manager's wife reads the paper, we find out that Fay Crudge committed suicide after her husband, Albert, was caught embezzling money from his Social Security job. The narrative goes on to report that Teresa (Chicks) was found shot and her husband, Tim, was arrested for murder. Toby is reported to have been convicted for being a vagabond. The only person left 'living' who is not 'news' is Bob Withers, who is pictured sitting in the sun at the Waimaru Old Men's Home.

This almost arbitrary handing out of outcomes at the end of the novel demonstrates the latent power of the narrator in judging who will live and who will die in any text. Although the characters judge each other to be alive or dead, according to how much credence they give each other's point of view, ultimately the narrator has the power to cancel all points of view.

NOTES

[1] Janet Frame, To the Is-land, An Autobiography: Volume One, (Auckland: Hutchinson, 1982).

[2] Patrick Evans, Janet Frame, (Boston: Twayne, 1977) 33.

[3] Jeanne Delbaere-Garant, "Death as the Gateway to Being in Janet Frame's Novels," Commonwealth Literature and the Modern World, ed. Hena Maes-Jelinek (Brussels: Didier, 1975) 147-55.

[4] Janet Frame, Owls Do Cry, (Christchurch: Pegasus, 1957) 33. All subsequent page references in this chapter are to this edition.

[5] Delbaere-Garant, 148.

[6] W. D. Ashcroft, "Beyond the Alphabet: Janet Frame's Owls Do Cry," Bird, Hawk, Bogie: Essays on Janet Frame, ed. Jeanne Delbaere-Garant (Aarhus, Den.: Dangaroo Press, 1978) 39.

[7] Delbaere-Garant, 148.

CHAPTER TWO

The Rainbirds

The Rainbirds was published in 1968, and is set in Dunedin, the location where Frame wrote it in 1965 when she held the Burns Fellowship at Otago University. As in Owls Do Cry, she writes about a place very familiar to her. There are many similarities and differences in the two works. In her first novel, characters use death to judge the lifestyles of the people around them, but the question of what death actually entails is never fully explored. In The Rainbirds death is also used as a judgment or a label. However, the large element of the unknown inherent in the concept is confronted. Godfrey's experience of being judged as dead, then appearing obviously to be alive highlights the unknown aspect of death. The people around him who wish to cover over the unknown impose their own preconceptions about death on Godfrey whom they assume has gained extra knowledge because of his experience.

Death is a prediscursive reality which language can attempt to describe, but a phenomena which can never actually be 'known', or totally described. A fundamental problem of discussing death is that no one alive, and therefore possessing language, has yet experienced death, as the text of The Rainbirds acknowledges:

> Birth was a past experience Death lay in wait. Any news that could be gleaned about it was received hungrily as news from an isolated longed-for world yet it was seldom first hand news for the dead themselves never gave it.[1]

The unknowable nature of death leaves the writer wishing to discuss it in a paradoxical position. How can you discuss something which can not be known? One response could involve conjecture about what death entails. This can take the form of reflecting on society's rituals and beliefs for coping with death. As nothing can be known, society constructs a definition of death to fill the void

created by uncertainty. Another option for a writer discussing death is that of silence. As nothing can be known about death, nothing can be written about death. A solution to this problem is to say nothing on the topic.

Frame exploits both of these responses in her novel, The Rainbirds, which explores the issue of death. Godfrey Rainbird, the central character of the novel, is 'pronounced dead' when he is struck by a car. As his family prepares for his funeral he appears to wake from the dead. It transpires he has been wrongly diagnosed and was actually in a deep coma. The rest of the novel explores society's preconceptions of death by portraying people's reaction to someone who cannot help but remind them of their own mortality. Just as other characters construct their own meaning of the concept of death, also they construct from their own points of view whether Godfrey is alive or symbolically dead after his accident.

When Godfrey awakes from the coma, he is completely unaware of his 'death like' state of the last thirty six hours. Rather than returning to consciousness with a knowledge of the process of death, his experience is even less sensational than coming out of a dream. He is only able to describe the present sensation of waking, rather than having any recollection of the past:

> He lay still, feeling warmth awakening in his body, wondering where the warmth had been that should awaken him only now and be different from the warmth imagined (for he could not remember) that he had known before. Before what and when? (36)

Godfrey only has knowledge of a vaguely remembered 'before' and a confusing 'now', thus indicating that death is a wordless blank, that he can't attempt to describe.

The amazed and horrified reaction Godfrey is subject to from the people at the hospital only adds to his confusion about what has happened. However, their unspoken

reaction does not 'enlighten' Godfrey. Although they obviously have preconceptions about what has happened to him in his near death experience, they are unable to express the substance of their preconceptions:

> It seemed as if someone were delivering to him, under the door of his mind, a special thought in a foreign postmark that he could not translate, not knowing the grammar, the syntax, the vocabulary, nor even the common phrases of the language - Please, thank you, hello, goodbye, Will you kindly show me the way? - that are stock passports from strangeness. Taking up this special thought he slit it open to extract the essence of it and was alarmed to find that the essence had disappeared. (37)

Although no one at the hospital actually says anything, before long Godfrey is picking up and feeling the symptoms conventionally associated with death, such as feeling cold and stiff. The origin of this feeling does not come from within him, but rather from without when he picks up other people's construction of what they think his encounter with death is. A woman at the hospital

> gave Godfrey a swift horrified glance that made his bones go chill and the tips of his fingers and toes set like ice. He knew his face had gone pale. Why had she looked at him in that way? What was the mystery surrounding him? (40)

The reactions of the people around Godfrey show they have constructed what they think 'death' means and are inflicting this onto Godfrey. Although Godfrey has asserted his life, by 'dying' and returning to it, some people still insist on thinking of him as dead. Godfrey is surprised when the doctor examining him asks him what it is like being alive. This inquires into our understanding of the nature of life

and death. Godfrey reflects upon the doctor's question:

> Godfrey detected the envious note in his voice, as if the doctor himself were not alive, yet how could that be, how could it be that one had to die, to be resuscitated, before one was alive? (51, 52)

Godfrey's wife, Beatrice, responds to him as she thinks one should respond to the event of death. Before Godfrey is bought home from the hospital she is crying, not because he was dead and now he is alive, but because everything will now change. She thinks:

> Perhaps she would live the rest of her life with her heart in a widow's shape. (61)

Godfrey's fellow workers at the travel agent where he is employed also have the attitude that Godfrey, though alive, is a sort of representative for dead people. They see death as something which is unknown, and therefore undesirable. Rather than constructing anything in particular about the concept, they categorize Godfrey as dead. Mr. Galbraith, Godfrey's employer, thinks that when people see Godfrey, they will be alerted to the possibility that they themselves might die on holiday:

> It's touch and go as it is who dies and who doesn't return from the annual holiday. We don't want it thought that we employ corpses to recruit corpses. (118)

This demonstrates how the two concepts of the unknown capacity of death, and the reluctance to let death be a part of their lives, are related concepts in the minds of the people around Godfrey.

Shutting death out of their lives, and trying not to dwell on the unknown, demonstrates how some people in

the novel do not follow what the poet Rilke thought would lead to more 'authentic' living. As seen in Chapter One, Rilke thought by confronting the inevitability of your own death, you have to realize your own existence or life. Only by doing this can one live life meaningfully, or as Rilke puts it 'authentically'.

Godfrey's experience shows that the people around him do not always follow Rilke's precepts of how to live more meaningfully. Although death cannot be known, it is the willingness to contemplate the unknown that can lead to greater acceptance of death as a part of life. Some characters do not want to contemplate the unknown, so they try to cover up the existence of death, when it intrudes into their lives.

While it should show them the tenuous boundaries between life and death, Godfrey's death only serves to make them more adamant about rejecting death in their lives:

> Godfrey's death had upheaved layers of life that no one desired to remember; the deepest layer of life - the blanket of death. As long as Godfrey were to live and work among people each one would be faced constantly with the fact of his own death. (157)

By avoiding the unknown of death, the people of Dunedin avoid facing any intensity of life which may disrupt the settled, regulated way they know the world around them. Godfrey recognizes that in Dunedin 'fear of death' is equated with 'fear of intensity' (158).

Before the accident Godfrey felt he fitted in very well with Dunedin society and their values. He avoided intensity by concentrating on gardening and lawn mowing in his spare time. Although he was an immigrant, who had made a new 'life', he thought he was accepted and popular. However, his accident, and the reaction of people around him, made him see that some things were missing in the way he used to live. This realization causes Godfrey change

within himself. The main difference Godfrey finds in himself is that he is now willing to contemplate things that are unknowable, such as death. He finds that he is not so interested in his previous weekend occupation when he was a 'normal' resident of Dunedin. Godfrey muses:

> A few enjoyed occupations that might have helped them to face death and resurrection, to give them and take from them a meaning that Godfrey felt, he could not find in the front and back lawn. (58)

Now that he has gone through the experience of being pronounced dead, he finds he can no longer turn his back on the idea of death as the people around him want to do. He thinks to himself:

> He would keep the thought of death. Like the body's functioning it could not be put aside. (79)

Unlike her husband, Beatrice does not wish to contemplate death. This causes the distance they feel in their relationship after Godfrey's accident. Beatrice thinks that by ignoring the subject of death, things will return to normal, but paradoxically, ignoring the subject creates a situation in which things can never return to normal. She thinks everything will change because of her intention to censor death as a topic for conversation:

> Already she was hiding from him, planning to tell lies so as not to embarrass him. (61)

In this way Beatrice shows the 'inauthentic' trait of wanting to cover up experience and avoid questioning the things that might upset her.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, no character can be totally 'authentic' or 'inauthentic'.

Beatrice's response to Godfrey's 'death' and resurrection is highly ambivalent because she is divided between her loyalty to Godfrey as his wife, and her wish to suppress the issue of death.

Beatrice demonstrates the processes of how her culture's ritual and convention cover up the unknown of death, and help people to avoid having to contemplate things they do not have the answers for. When the messenger comes bringing the news of Godfrey's death, Beatrice is alarmed that her reaction does not adhere to what she perceives are the conventions of society:

> Conventionally Beatrice should have clasped her hands over her breast and whispered, Godfrey? She had often wondered how she would receive bad news. Now she did not speak. (18)

Her silence shows the need for an individual response to death rather than just following society's 'rituals'.

Initially Beatrice's individual response is not in sympathy with the convention of hiding death from the living and refusing to see that life and death are not in dichotomous opposition, but two parts of a whole. She wishes life and death were not viewed as the unmixable opposites the people of Dunedin perceive them to be:

> Oh the ancient peoples knew what they were about when they allowed the dead to be part of the living, and the living to take their full part in dying and death! (33)

However, when Beatrice is presented with the ideal opportunity for integrating life and death, by living with her once 'dead' husband, she retreats into the accepted platitudes and cliches which allow the issue of death to be avoided:

> Borrowed thoughts and judgments conserved

> energy. The application of traditional beliefs gave comfort. (104)

Godfrey's sister, Lynley, also takes comfort from 'the application of traditional beliefs' in the event of death. Because of her familiarity and experience in customs and rituals of death, Lynley hopes she will be in a privileged position. As Beatrice has relatively little experience in such matters, Lynley thinks:

> It may be Godfrey's legacy to me that when I supervise his burial in the contracted room allotted to him I may be able to take both his and my space to make up for what I never had. (45)

Lynley was hoping that by moving to New Zealand in the capacity of organizer of Godfrey's funeral, she would be able to gain a new life for herself. In this way her new 'life' would be the direct result of someone else's death. This blurs the boundaries between the concepts of life and death. For Lynley, death can be constructed to mean life, while it remains as death to others such as Beatrice.

Lynley has already had one new life which was the direct result of the death of another person. Daniel Wandling, whom she nursed until his death, left her a generous allowance for the rest of her life. With this money she had planned on one day emigrating to New Zealand and living on her 'legacy for a lifetime' (41).

The news of Godfrey's 'death' precipitates this move, and she rings Beatrice to say she will be attending Godfrey's funeral. However, when she hears of Godfrey's revival, en route to New Zealand, she is not as relieved as she expected she should have been. In many ways she is disappointed that she would not be so important in the lives of Beatrice and the children now. She thinks:

> If he had stayed dead, she thought, I would have

been in sole possession of his early memories. (68)

As the 'sole possessor' of Godfrey's memories, Lynley feels she could have assumed the role of storyteller about the times of Godfrey's life which were unknown to Beatrice. In this way Lynley could construct stories from her memories which she feels are suitable for the time of dying and death. Through his death, she feels she would be able to enlarge her own life, by retaining her knowledge of his past.

Throughout the history of human culture, people have constructed stories, or fictions, to superimpose upon the unknowablity of death. In her article "Myths and Masks in Two of Janet Frame's Novels", Carol MacLennan comments on how this fiction making affects and influences the text of The Rainbirds. She observes in the novel

> . . .biblical and classical myths of the past are shown to cast light on the fictions of the present and the future. . . .knowledge of death gleaned from the past comes from our biblical and literary heritage.[2]

What we know about death has been created as part of the fictions which belief systems such as religion and folklore are constructed with. As no one can ever know anything about death, everything about it is a fiction. The people in the novel attempt to merge the fictions of the past with their present day experiences in trying to cope with the unsolvable problem of facing death.

Godfrey seems to be a type of Christ figure, because of the circumstance of his 'death and resurrection'. His waking from the coma is described dramatically, alluding to Christ's resurrection after crucifixion and entombment The narrator notes that it was as if 'he hauled two stones from the mouth of an unfathomable cave' (36) as Godfrey tries to lift his arms upon waking.

In her thesis, "Fictions and the Scope of the Artist in the Novels of Janet Frame", Carol MacLennan suggests Godfrey is not only a Christ figure set in modern day, but also a representation of the classical mythological figure, Orpheus.[3] As has been mentioned before, in connection with Rilke's poetry, Orpheus is the mythical figure who united the seemingly opposite forces of life and death. MacLennan notes the similarity between the two figures, because in trying to help Eurydice, Orpheus was suspended between two places, unable to get back from the underworld into the world of light. Godfrey is suspended between two states also, as he is defined by the people around him to be neither alive nor dead.

However, these fictions of the past are only of limited help to Godfrey and Beatrice trying to interpret their experience. Their references to Christian religion are characterized by unanswered questions rather than being regarded as authoritative advice. Instead of taking comfort from the knowledge that Lazarus and Christ had shared his experience, the Biblical stories are blamed for setting such a precedent. When Beatrice thinks of who could be held responsible, she muses:

> God was available - wasn't it His Son who had set the fashion for such miracles. (157)

Society's construction of language to describe the world around them is another kind of fiction. Like Biblical and classical stories, this has varying amounts of usefulness to different people in society. As stated before, death is largely an unknown concept so any language that tries to describe it is a construct in itself. This becomes paradoxical, however, when we consider that words cannot communicate the nature of death, yet any mention of death must utilize words and language.

The platitudes and cliches which people around Godfrey use to describe their experience of the world around them does not encompass any concept of the unknown. They use

words to create the illusion that everything is under their control and is conforming to the reality they have dictated. The 'borrowed thoughts and judgments' that Beatrice retreats into mean they share a construction of reality that a reservoir of cliches would describe.

However, these cliches do not serve Godfrey in describing the world he experiences after his near encounter with death. He realizes the discrepancies between their language and his experience, when he thinks 'Fair's not Fair' (119) on being informed by Mr. Galbraith that he has lost his job. As the 'real' words of society no longer make sense to him, Godfrey begins to perceive his own language which he describes as 'icy spelling' or 'the orthography of the dead' (129). That he perceives written words differently after his experience is reinforced when he notices his new language after he has lost his job, notably in the letter explaining to him why he has lost his job.

When Godfrey perceives the 'icy spelling', he is surprised but pleased that now he is able to see the 'lining' of words, rather than just knowing them as flat one dimensional entities as before. This means he now has a type of double vision which makes more sense to him. He comments:

> I now see the word and its lining; I never thought I would get inside the lining of a word. Beatrice has told me again and again it is the lining of a garment that causes it to keep its shape, gives it strength, durability. (135, 136)

The ability to see the lining of the words means that Godfrey now can see greater depth and substance in the meaning of language. This parallels the way Godfrey now is willing to contemplate the other side, or the lining, of life, that is death. Rather than being an opposite unrelated part of a garment, the lining is an integral part of a whole. As explained, the addition of a lining

to a garment gives it strength and durability, just as acknowledging death as part of life adds meaning to it.

Although Godfrey understands his new language, the reader is only able to make an informed guess at what most of it means. The impossibility of 'breaking the code' of the 'icy spelling' is not a failing of the book, rather it is a metaphor for the impossibility of describing death, because of its unknown nature. We can only contemplate death, as we can only contemplate the meaning of Godfrey's language.

In his review of The Rainbirds, Patrick Evans judges the book to be 'disappointing' and comments that its preoccupation with wordplay, such as the 'icy spelling', distances the author from the task of presenting the reader with convincing characters:

> Word association in interior monologue must have only secondary place to verisimilitude set up in the novel. Reality must dictate meaning in the long run, whoever owns the consciousness that perceives both the reality and the meaning. But too often, the meaning of this book is dictated by the word associations. . .[4]

The use of word associations in the novel shows the lack of a fixed 'reality' to dictate meaning, rather than catering to the readers, or this critic's, expectation of a singular reality. Conventional language does not describe Godfrey's 'reality' of a near death experience and its aftermath. Godfrey's life has changed and the 'icy spelling' reflects this. After reading his letter of dismissal, he comments that the 'icy spelling' makes more sense to him:

> How peculiar. . . .It reads more truthfully in the cold spelling. (137)

Godfrey displays 'authentic' traits not by knowing

the 'true meaning' of death, but by being willing to contemplate what the meaning of death might be. However, although Godfrey lives an 'authentic' life by acknowledging death, there is no place for him to exist within the society he lives. Godfrey could be taken to be a visionary, but his experience is not used to inform other members of the community. Rather his ostracism from society is a result of it. Ultimately the outlook for Godfrey is nothing but bleak. He lives out the rest of his life as a marginalized figure excluded from society, while he observes the destruction of his own family members which occurs as a direct result of his 'death in life' experience. The knowledge he possesses has no place in the society of Dunedin.

However, although we might then surmise that acknowledging death in life is not the answer to more 'authentic' living, the novel does not show that ignoring death is the answer either. Godfrey's wife Beatrice, as we have noted before, is highly ambivalent on the topic of whether death could be a part of her life. Her final judgment appears to be a desire not to have to contemplate death, the unknown. Rather than facing her problems, which she may think are unsolvable, she drinks to cover over thinking about anything. Unfortunately for her, she never overcomes her ambivalence, and this is symbolized by the 'Yellow Flowers' of the grave which bloom within her after she has been drinking. The Rainbirds was also published under the title of Yellow Flowers in the Antipodean Room. The Antipodean Room can be taken to be symbolic of the grave:

> Beatrice, warm with sherry and the still blossoming red, yellow or gold flowers, geranium, marigold, inside her. . .(200)

She drinks rather than having to go home and face her husband who no longer goes to work like his contemporaries. Finally, to avoid thinking or contemplating, Beatrice kills

herself.

In conclusion, Godfrey's story shows us the perceptions people have of the unknown experience of death in the society he lives in. Although Godfrey has no special knowledge of death, the reactions of the people around him to his near death experience cause his life to change. Whether people want to confront the unknowability of death or ignore it is linked to the Rilkean concept of 'authenticity'. Different characters show different levels of 'authenticity' by the way they perceive Godfrey's experience.

NOTES

[1] Janet Frame, The Rainbirds (London: W. H. Allen, 1968) 179. All subsequent page references in this chapter are to this edition.

[2] Carol MacLennan, "Myths and Masks in Two of Janet Frame's Novels," Kunapipi 9 (1987): 110.

[3] Carol MacLennan, "Fictions and the Scope of the Artist in the Novels of Janet Frame," diss., U of Waikato, 1986, 139.

[4] Patrick Evans, rev. of The Rainbirds, by Janet Frame, Landfall 23 (1969): 192.

CHAPTER THREE

Intensive Care

Intensive Care was published in 1970, directly after The Rainbirds. The two novels share a similar location, both being set in cities in the South Island of New Zealand. Both novels challenge what the definition of death consists of. In Intensive Care, as in other novels this thesis examines, characters construct the deaths of others from their own point of view. Characters use death to shape their dreams to correspond to their wishes of 'reality'. However, these dreams of creation and destruction of 'people' in the dreamers' mind are not shown to be a type of innocent day dreaming, as one of the poems in the novel states:

> In the dream in the dream
> want was get
> wished-for absence was death[1]

Many of the dreams are used by the dreamer to disregard the point of view of the person dreamed of. The dreamer constructs a dream of the life or death of the person dreamed about. These constructions highlight the solipsism of the dreamer because so often the people who are dreamed of have little relationship to their dream image. It is when the object of the dream does something that does not equate with the image the dreamer has created of them, that the dreamer breaks through into 'reality' and kills the person who was the object of their dreams. This process is explained by Milly, a character in the novel:

> Like the games we played when I was a child at the Occupational Centre and yew lined up and people were going to chop your head off but they wouldn't chop your head off if your dream was the same as theirs, so if you thought of a little gold jool or a pearl and they thought of it too they said you could live, but if you thought something foreign, something they had never

thought about, then they were entitled, it was the game, to chop your head off. . .(253)

The novel demonstrates this process in two ways. Firstly, individuals deny others their own point of view by creating images of them in their minds and then destroying the person they dreamed of when they show they are not synonymous with the dream image. Secondly, nations and groups of people pursue a similar strategy through war and radical social reform. The ideology of one group is inflicted on another, denying the other its own point of view. Again death is inextricably bound to this process. As in war, when one ideology inflicts its point of view onto others, death is the result.

If everyone is to be entitled to a point of view, people have to tolerate each other's points of view, and there must be some way in which all points of view can coexist peacefully. This can happen if one point of view is not given predominance or power over others. As we have seen in previous chapters, the novels do not put one character's point of view above others. Rather, the narrator shows all points of view while paradoxically controlling all points of view. Although the concept of 'authenticity' is relevant in discussing the theme of death, one person is never completely in possession of an 'authentic' point of view rather everyone shows varying degrees of this trait. Therefore, the text does not valorize the point of view or dreams of one character to the exclusion of others.

Rather than setting out dichotomies, the text shows us that things exist in a union. Some critics show an unwillingness to confront this, and this can lead them to fall into the same errors that Frame's work points out or satirizes. Evans shows this in the chapter on Intensive Care in his book Janet Frame. Instead of viewing creation and destruction to be parts of a whole in Frame's novel, he makes a division between dreams and imagination. Dreams, he states, have a 'destructive, sapping nature', while

imagination has 'vital, humanizing capacities'.[2] By setting these two similar concepts in opposition to one another he imposes a dichotomy which may not be compatible with the philosophy of the text.

Intensive Care consists of three parts. Tom Livingstone, the main character of Part One, has fought in World War One, and the novel chronicles some of his war time experiences and the after-effects of these on him. As a soldier, he was implicated in asserting the dominance of one set of values over that of another. However, although the side Tom was fighting for, in theory, were the people who retained their point of view and values, the war changed Tom's outlook for the rest of his life. Tom is unable to forget the death and destruction he experienced in the war:

> . . .and the fact of the bomb forgotten, that it had been dropped not only on cities of the world but large areas of human imagination and what was growing from the devastation was beginning to reveal its hideous deformities or, if nothing grew, the barrenness made a grim shelterless world without, and within, in that part of the mind where once inhabitants had been able to retreat and recuperate. (64)

The constant exposure to war and death has dire effects on Tom's life. Although we have seen in previous chapters that 'facing' death can lead people to come to recognize their own existence, being exposed to death does not seem to do this for Tom. As a contrast to Tom's experience, we can consider once again comments by Jeanne Delbaere, in her article, "Death as a Gateway to Being":

> Usually people ignore death. They dismiss it as someone else's, see their own demise as a future reality not yet real, stop the fissure

> which the death of others has opened in the order of things and go on living quietly inside the protective barriers which they build around themselves. When faced with their own annihilation however, all men give up their conventional attitudes and become their authentic selves.[3]

Tom demonstrates that being 'authentic' is not simply a matter of confronting your impending death. Tom has an inner life, but as a result of the war, his imaginary world of dreams is not one of 'recuperation and retreat'. Tom's inner world does not make his life 'authentic'. He never realizes the 'reality' of his life because his inner world is too complete. He lives totally in his imaginary world of death and destruction, which has very little relationship with his actual life or living.

Tom constructs an ongoing dream through which he lives. He dreams of his wartime girlfriend, Ciss Everest. He dreams of his wartime experiences. He dreams of the perfect family he would rather have than the one he actually has. He dreams of killing his wife. Because of this dream world he lives in, he never makes any close relationships with anyone. As he is so immersed in his own inner world, the people around him do not appear real to him.

From his own imaginative point of view, he constructs how he wishes his life was. However, while his imagination is creative, it is at once destructive. He destroys others' right to their own point of view, by inflicting his point of view onto how he thinks they should act. Unfortunately for those around him his solipsism is not complete. When 'real life' interferes with his dream world, Tom symbolically or actually kills the people who represent the intrusive reality.

When Tom is wounded in the war, he is taken to hospital, where he falls in love with Ciss Everest, a nurse there. Ciss Everest inadvertently becomes a large part of Tom's inner world of dreams. Upon his return home to his wife his memory of Ciss remains. His constant dreaming

of her, and his wishing he had married Ciss and had a family with her, has negative repercussions on his wife and family. When Tom has retired and his wife has died, he has a chance meeting with Ciss. She is in the Culin Hall Recovery Unit dying of cancer, when he is admitted for a broken leg.

Whether or not Tom 'actually' meets her in the terms of the reality set out by the novel is a point of ambiguity. Naomi, one of Tom's daughters, is also in the Recovery Unit about the same time Ciss is a patient there. It is possible that the event of Tom seeing Ciss is part of his dream world. This is hinted at when another character asks Tom if he saw his daughter, when he went to England:

> 'Didn't you see her in England? What did you go traipsing halfway across the world for, if not to see her?' (68)

However, whether Ciss' death is symbolic or actual our interpretation remains the same.

Meeting Ciss Everest holds a two-fold horror for Tom. Firstly, she does not remember him, showing that she hasn't spent her life in love with him, as he has with her. Secondly, she does not resemble how he remembered her. During the war she was beautifully blond-haired and violet-eyed. In the Recovery Unit she is old and frail with a 'transformation' or a wig in place of her blond hair.

The shock of meeting Ciss and realizing these things about her leads him to kill her. He takes a pillow and holds it over her face, suffocating her. Tom feels she is dead from his point of view, because she does not live up to the dream he had of her. When she does not match his creation of her, he cannot cope and wants to destroy her:

> The next moment he had the privacy of his nightmare ripped open with a brutality that he had often practiced himself but he could not forgive in others. (26)

However, the killing goes both ways in Tom's mind. Tom feels Ciss has killed him, because his life was his dream of her, and she has not acknowledged it. He feels she had destroyed his life because she has inadvertently denied his point of view:

> . . .she had denied his existence, for since he had known her, his whole life had been built upon the memory of her. (30)

By creating his dream about Ciss, Tom avoids the 'reality' of his life in New Zealand after the War. However, to accommodate this dream he must create other destructive dreams to account for the 'reality' which cannot be completely ignored. When 'reality' interferes with his dream world, he imagines a way of killing or destroying whatever it is that makes things less than perfect from his point of view.

Tom works at the cement factory where he tends the 'flame' of the furnace. In reality Tom's job is in jeopardy because of the advance of technology. An automatic flame monitor is to be installed and will replace Tom's job. Tom copes with his redundancy by constructing a dream in which he has the chance to destroy the new machine. In the dream he takes a hammer handed to him by his boss, and smashes the machine to pieces.

Tom's creation of his dream of Ciss has a destructive effect on his wife and family. To placate the 'reality' which can not help but impose on his dream, he has dreams of destroying the people around him. Tom symbolically kills his wife Eleanor in two ways. He dreams about actually killing her, in a fantasy about pushing her into a slurry pond at the cement factory. In this dream murder she conveniently leaves no trace as she disappears into the mud. Tom also symbolically kills her by destroying her point of view, or identity, by dreaming that she is Ciss not Eleanor. She becomes dead in his imagination; he pushes

aside the 'reality' of her in favour of a dream.

Tom denies his children their own point of view, or identity, by always thinking of them as the daughters he might have had with Ciss Everest. From his point of view they are 'Cecily and May, never Pearl and Naomi' (44). To relive his memories of the war he gets them to re-enact war scenes and play war games, as well as scaring them with relics such as his old gas mask. The bar tender at the local pub informs the reader of what could be taken as the community's view of Tom and the way he treats his family:

> 'He's a tough old bloke. . . .His wife hadn't much of a birthday party with him, let me tell you. They say he drove her to her grave.
>
> 'And those two kids of his - I saw them once or twice - as scared as I've ever seen. It's a wonder they didn't turn mental. Tom Livingstone was a war case, I heard.' (77)

Tom's war games show that merely facing the reality of death does not lead to living more 'authentically'. Tom does not achieve any balance between life and death. He concentrates solely on death without reflecting on what this could add to his life. The inability to see death as a part of a whole, in union with life, makes Tom's life a meaningless dream of destruction. Tom destroys any relationship he might have had with his daughters through his obsession with the war and his hesitancy to carry on living after it. After their mother dies, both daughters leave Tom as quickly as they can.

Pearl, his eldest daughter, marries and moves to Auckland, keeping in touch with her father only by cards and handkerchiefs sent to him on his birthday. Pearl denies the reality of her early family life by burying herself in the routine of suburban respectability, and we can guess, in huge amounts of food. As the years progress, Pearl becomes bigger and bigger. She has little control of her

body and little control of her emotions. Displays of her own emotions, such as crying, take her wholly by surprise. Symptoms such as these point to a person who is trying to get through their life without facing the problems they have. By doing this Pearl does not confront her own existence, and therefore displays traits of someone not wholly 'authentic'.

Like her sister, Naomi also leaves her father and her home town at the first opportunity. Like Pearl, she also tries to forget the 'reality' of her early home life. However, Naomi employs different tactics from Pearl to avoid her problems. Naomi creates an imaginary dream world about the perfect childhood she wishes she had. To create this dream she has to destroy her more accurate memories. Hence she kills off all others who might impose on her dream. In this way Naomi avoids confronting the existence of her unhappy life, and fails to be wholly 'authentic'.

Naomi features as a narrator in the novel, writing poems and dream sequences to 'Dear First Dad', which can be interpreted as an idealized dream version of Tom. Naomi imagines killing people to make her dream world a perfect place to be, where she alone has the attention of her father. She imagines that her sister is removed from the family by being sent way because she was adopted. In a more destructive fantasy Naomi dreams that she tragically and accidentally kills her mother, leaving her alone with her father. She fantasizes of their perfect life:

> 'Dear First Dad, our life was one of happiness and calm, as you wanted it to be; and always your wishes came first. What happy times!' (88)

Naomi 'kills' the 'real' Tom by imagining him as 'Dear First Dad' rather than the mentally deranged 'war case' that he was. Naomi denies Tom his own point of view by deleting her memories of him. By superimposing her own point of view over her original memories, she lives in a dream world of creation and destruction just as her father

does.

It is the reality of death that Naomi ignores. When her boyfriend Donald Parker goes to the 'gas bracket in the chemistry laboratory' (98) and hangs himself, she denies this to herself by ignoring it. As Donald watches the Guy burning, he realizes how he is probably going to be sent to war to die by the older generation. Naomi observes his face as he thinks this. However, her memory is one of denial:

> . . .and it was only in my imagination that Donald's face lost its rosy blush and became the face of a dead man, and I did not cling to him sobbing. . .and there was no startled sigh as if the world had witnessed everything, as if a fire had begun and could not ever be stamped out. . .(97)

After Tom's daughters have left, and he has made his trip to England he becomes friends with, and subsequently gets engaged to, Peggy Warren. However, just before the wedding Tom dies unexpectedly, collapsing outside the grocer's shop. Instead of naming his fiance as next of kin in his dying breath, he names Greg Newell, the grocer, who is almost unknown to him. Tom's death symbolizes his refusal to be someone else's dream, in the way he has used other people to be his dream. From Peggy's point of view she has created a dream of him as a potentially perfect husband. However, it is not her wishes or dreams that symbolically kill him. It is his unwillingness to take part in this process of being acted upon as someone else's dream. His naming the grocer as his next of kin symbolizes his unwillingness to commit himself to anyone beyond his own selfish realms.

Like his brother Tom, Leonard went to war and came back with a dream that placated the reality of his life. While in New Zealand, living a drunken life as a bachelor,

Leonard dreams of being a tavern owner in Greece, with a wife and children. The difference between the dreams of Tom and Leonard is that Leonard has no one to mistreat as a result of his dreams because of his largely solitary life. As the narrator notes,

> It was a happy life for the Livingstone family, for dreams are the smallest circle and like blood platelets on a square centimetre of blood, only the correct number of dreams are allowed and should others invade or overpopulate the result in dreams and blood may vary from ordinary discomfort to extraordinary disruption and death. (57)

Rather than people around him imposing on his dream and destroying what he has created, the reality of Leonard's experience at the War causes his dream family to disintegrate. His imaginary family is destroyed by the 'reality' of the war which Leonard has experienced, when his dream ends with his son being killed in a firing squad, and his daughter sick from mourning a dead lover.

Leonard is judged by many critics to have been favoured by the narrator because of his insightful love of literature when he was at school. For example, when comparing Leonard with his brother, Patrick Evans says Tom is a 'blind dreamer' but

> Leonard, however, was born with intelligence and imagination, qualities which have steadily been drummed out of him as he passes through the country's many institutions for instilling normality. He is left a social and human cripple, imaginative enough to be an outcast but not sufficiently imaginative to be whole.[4]

However, the way Leonard lives out the rest of his life does not indicate that his point of view or outlook

on life is valued above other characters' points of view by the narrator. Rather than favouring a particular point of view, the narrator thinks different points of view should be able to co-exist. It is the intolerance of others that makes Leonard's life end in despair, away from the things he used to value. We see Leonard is not given special treatment by the narrator when he does not get his dreamed for death in the peace of the hospital, but instead dies a death of loneliness and squalor.

Like his grandfather Tom, Colin Torrance is a person who lives his life almost entirely through dreams. He constructs a dream world from his own point of view, which seldom includes the actual point of view or feelings of the people around him. Colin's whole life appears to him as a dream:

> Oh, his dream was so real it could not be set beside dream or reality without contaminating both and itself, growing a mould of reality over his dream, of dream over reality. (135)

Colin leaves his wife and goes to Australia with his secretary, Lorna Kimberly, with whom he is having an affair. When Colin is involved in the affair with Lorna, it appears to him that the dreams he has constructed match the reality he is experiencing. However, after being reprimanded by her parents, Lorna returns to New Zealand. Upon leaving, Lorna reveals that her feelings were never what Colin had imagined them to be. She tells him the experience had been 'fun', and that she intends to return to her old life.

However, instead of going back to his old life, Colin clings to his dream that Lorna is in love with him. Unfortunately for everyone involved, Colin's dreams do not stay within the realms of his inner world of imagination. When reality interferes with his dream world there are dire consequences:

> . . .Colin had a dream. The people in his dream

> had density, lightness, and with a thrust of feeling could leave dents or red marks on his skin where their love or hate had touched him; and those who died were shatteringly dead and could not be pieced together in his waking life. (135)

Colin becomes totally obsessed with Lorna culminating in him breaking into her house, shooting her parents, Lorna herself, and then turning the gun on himself. Colin kills Lorna and her parents for the same reason that Tom kills Ciss. Colin thinks they have destroyed him in their minds because they have not adopted his point of view, and he cannot allow them their own point of view. Lorna reveals that things were never as Colin imagined them to be. And like Tom's attitude to Ciss, Colin feels Lorna has killed him because she has denied his existence by denying his dream:

> Then a terrible sensation of loneliness came over him and he saw his dream of the other night, that had kept him warm, receding, as he realizes that even his imaginings had cheated him. (153)

The third section of the novel is set in the future, after a third World War has taken place. In the previous wars covered by the novel, people were killed when their point of view did not match that of the people killing. War amounted to a conflict of points of view or ideology. Rather than working towards different points of view being able to co-exist, armed conflict between ideologies was seen as an answer. In the novel, after World War Three, New Zealand is subjected to a radical social experiment, named the Human Delineation Act. It is thought by those running it, that if everyone undesirable was removed from society, and those remaining were manipulated to hold the same point of view of each other, a perfect society would

be created.

The H. D. Act has much in common with the dreams of other characters we have seen in this novel. Through a dream about the future, some think perfection can be achieved. This dream is presented to the population as something positive and worthwhile. The public is persuaded to change its point of view to that of the H. D. Act with propaganda such as billboards of happy families smiling and eating breakfast together. 'Sleep days' are enforced where people have to sleep as a way to forget their old points of view and adopt the H. D. Act's way of the future.

However, what is ignored or concealed by the propaganda is the Act's inextricable connection with death. Without the death of the unwanted and of those who retain their own point of view, the imagined perfect society of the future can not exist. The people judged by the ruling class of bureaucrats to be abnormal or undesirable are to have their human existence taken away, either by being killed or by being classed as animals and sent to live in a factory. Like the dreams of other characters in the novel, the creation of a dream inherently results in destruction or death. For the wishes of the dreamer to be fulfilled, the reality that interferes with the dream must be destroyed.

Colin Monk is one of the bureaucrats in charge of implementing the H. D. Act. When he is selected for this job he has his own point of view. However, when he had undergone the propaganda of the organizers, including long sleep periods, it appears that his point of view has changed to be synonymous with that of the Act. Colin Monk sets about implementing the Act by informing his family and preparing computer records, while he hums to himself the propaganda jingle: 'Happy and Free with H. D.'

However, Colin's conversion is not complete. After the 'Deciding Day', Colin wakes up to horror of the H. D. 'dream'. Sick and worried, he calls his colleagues to his house to read a manuscript by Milly Galbraith, a woman who was 'deathed' on Deciding Day. Although Milly had been

judged by society to be 'doll-normil', her manuscript belies a greater intelligence than anyone thought she had. The preservation of Milly's point of view through her manuscript, and Colin's change of heart show that divergent points of view will always arise in human society. At the end of the novel, Colin asserts his own point of view and the reason he wants it to be maintained:

> These notes are at random. I do not know what will happen to me. My wife and children are dead. I am not a literary man. I just wanted to describe the time of the fires in Waipori City. (266)

Although Milly is 'doll-normil', she is able to reveal things to Colin which he was unable to see for himself when he was immersed in the point of view of the H. D. Act. Colin is unable to comprehend the other side of, or the 'lining' of the Act, such as the destruction it entails. By imagining Colin's twin brother Sandy, the reconstructed man, Milly can see that there is more to Colin's personality than blind acceptance of the Act. While walking in the neighbourhood before Deciding Day Colin encounters Milly who tells him:

> 'Many people' she said - again contradicting the verdict of herself as 'doll-normil' - 'many people never know their own twin.' (180)

Because Milly can see two sides of things, she aware of her imminent death. By facing this death, she shows traits of authenticity that has been mentioned previously. Unlike her parents she does not try to cover up the fact that she will die on the day after her twenty sixth birthday. However, Milly's 'authenticity' and imagination does not set her point of view ahead of others by the narrator's standards. Rather than being a beacon of moral guidance to the other characters and the novel itself, Milly plays a more complex role.

Because Milly does not have the power of someone from the dominant ideology, she cannot exert her point of view onto others in an overt fashion. However, she does act covertly to achieve this in some situations. She wishes she could control Samuel Cat and make him conform to her wishes in the same way that her family and society seek to manipulate her:

> I knew that if I called out, Samuel, come down this instant, he wouldn't come because he was annoyed with me, he was not in the mood to be patted. How I hated him! I wanted something alive to pat and be friends with, but not something that would climb up the 'Livingstone pear tree if I started to pat it, something that would be pleased for maw and say would I like to be patted in return. (210)

The end of the novel confirms that a single point of view will never suffice in any kind of human society. As we see in the case of Colin Monk, the sleep days and propaganda of the H. D. Act are not enough to tie the whole population to one point of view. The use of death to eradicate differing points of view is shown to be ineffective. There are other ways for people to exert their point of view beyond death. Milly Galbraith lives on because her point of view is not forgotten, made possible by her surviving manuscript.

Divergent points of view will always develop, just as there will always be different types of human beings. The things the Act tried to eradicate in the hope of making a better society are exactly the things that people in the new society come to value:

> But did I say the <u>beautiful new people</u>? I have forgotten to mention the surge of nostalgia for things and experiences animal, how even in spite

> of the Classification and sleep days the animal in man could not be subdued, and had the government kept to its original plan the so-called human race might have been exterminated. And now the nostalgia for that called - miscalled - animal, that the deformed, the insane, the defective, the outcasts, the unhappy have become the new elite. (266)

In conclusion, we can see the paradoxical nature of the value of dreams and imagination. The construction of dreams usually entails some kind of destruction to make this creation possible. Just as life is dependent on death to give it definition, to create a dream other things must be destroyed to accommodate it.

Individuals such as Tom and Leonard Livingstone, Tom's daughter Naomi and his grandson Colin, all destroy something to accommodate their dreams. Inherent in this destruction is the removal of the points of view of those who inhabit the dreams. This destruction can be symbolic or actual. Some, like Colin actually kill people when reality intrudes too far into their dream. Others, like Naomi, symbolically kill people by dreaming about their removal, to make her dream world perfect.

In the wars and radical social policy which form a background to the novel, we see the same process repeated. A definition of war is that it comes from one person's dream or point of view that they force everyone else to share. Death is thought to be the solution for dealing with those who do not share this dream. The radical social policy implemented in the H. D. Act demonstrates the same objectives as war. Death was thought to be able to remove the unwanted and facilitate the whole population to hold the same point of view.

However, the removal of people's points of view and their resultant physical or symbolic deaths is seen to be unsustainable in the novel. Most dreamers have their

dreams interrupted or destroyed when they are unable to take away the point of view of the dreamed about. War and Social Reform seem to homogenize the points of view of those remaining. However, the banished people's points of view live on through remains such as manuscripts. In the end, as the novel shows, point of view can never be homogenous in human society. Divergent points of view always arise. In the same way as the narrator considers many points of view, humans have to allow different points of view to co-exist to ensure survival.

NOTES

[1] Janet Frame, Intensive Care (1970; Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1987) 77. All subsequent page references in this chapter are to this edition.

[2] Patrick Evans, Janet Frame (Boston: Twayne, 1977) 174.

[3] Jeanne Delbaere-Garant, "Death as the Gateway to Being in Janet Frame's Novels," Commonwealth Literature and the Modern World, ed. Hena Maes-Jelinek (Brussels: Didier, 1975) 147.

[4] Patrick Evans, "The Provincial Dilemma: 3. New Zealand as Vietnam in Fiction: The World Wars in New Zealand," Landfall 31 (1977): 13.

CHAPTER FOUR

Daughter Buffalo

Daughter Buffalo does not fit into the narrative expectations of this thesis as neatly as the other novels examined, yet it undeniably incorporates the theme of death. Ideas explored in earlier fiction resurface in the treatment of the theme, but they are at once addressed and subverted. The main characters, Turnlung and Talbot, discuss death and their 'death education', but they do so in a seemingly inconsistent manner. They want to acknowledge death as part of their lives, but they turn away from it when they have an opportunity of moving towards achieving this. They long for death to finish their lives, while they realize that death cannot be complete as life is an integral part of it. However, it is extremely difficult to attribute any characteristic to either Turnlung or Talbot. This is because the process we have observed earlier, of characters creating each other from their own point of view, is intensified to the stage where they are reflections of the one personality rather than separate entities as characters.

Daughter Buffalo does not live up to some readers' narrative expectations of a novel. The plot does not develop, rather the novel appears to be formed by a series of essays. More unconventionally, almost a quarter of the narrative is told in the form of poetry. Turnlung and Talbot are not consistent characters who follow logical progressions of thought as our expectations of fictional characters might dictate. Rather, they seem to show different levels of realizations, which do not seem to follow a regulated pattern.

This inconsistency is reflected in Turnlung and Talbot's awareness of their construction of each other from their own points of view. Just as Tom in Intensive Care constructs other people's lives and deaths in his own mind, Turnlung and Talbot are constructions of each other's consciousnesses. They create each other's lives from their own point of view. That Turnlung and Talbot

are figments of each other's imaginations in their quest for knowledge about death is shown in the way they are able to finish each other's sentences:

> And what was all this lofty talk of death? I asked myself, when, if the truth were known. . .
>
> 'It's never known,' Turnlung said, answering a remark I had not even voiced.[1]

Although Turnlung and Talbot want to think about and acknowledge death, what they know is characterized by unknowing. Although they discuss how no one single truth can be discovered, this does not stop them from trying to achieve this.

Rather than being consistent separate characters, Turnlung and Talbot represent different aspects of each other's personalities and previous death education. Talbot, who narrates Part One, sees Turnlung to be a personification of his grandfather, who he never had the chance to know. When he meets him he feels that he 'was a child and the man speaking to (him) was Grandfather' (19). Talbot senses that Turnlung could represent all stages of his life cycle when he looks at him and thinks:

> . . .and I saw myself as an old man, I was face to face with myself and I didn't know how to act. (20)

From Turnlung's point of view, Talbot is someone to whom he can tell the extent of his 'death education'. Talbot is a doctor specializing in Death Studies so Turnlung feels he can validate his experiences by talking to someone who is supposed to 'know' about death.

Turnlung and Talbot construct each other's lives in order to talk about death. However, when we reach the end of the novel we find both characters have constructed each other's deaths as well. Talbot finds Turnlung dead in his room when he goes to visit him one day. He claims to have

no previous knowledge of Turnlung, but arranges for his body to be delivered to the morgue. When he later tries to find where Turnlung's body is there is no trace of him. He asks the people at Turnlung's Embassy if they know of his published works but they have never heard of him. The Epilogue tells a similar story of Turnlung trying to find Talbot. The voice of Turnlung reveals that he is an old man living in a rest home in New Zealand, who has never left the country in his life. In trying to find Talbot he fruitlessly searches for mention of him in medical journals.

The surprise each character shows in his failure to find the other demonstrates their obliviousness to their own processes of constructing each other. As well as ignoring the creation, they ignore the destruction inherent in it. To create another person from your own point of view is also to destroy them symbolically, or to deny them the freedom of retaining their own point of view. In turn, in a work of literature, the narrator controls all points of view, therefore the characters' lives or deaths, by deciding how much of whose point of view they will present. This demonstrates that creation and destruction are conceptually very close. To create someone's point of view is to destroy that person's point of view, through narratorial displacement of that person's unmediated point of view. Like life and death, creation and destruction are not opposites, rather they exist together as part of a union.

Turnlung, who thinks of himself as a writer, shows an awareness of this process when he describes himself observing some silkworms. To observe them and describe them he has to destroy them. Although his first instinct is to leave them to their 'privacy of death', he is unable to ignore them, because he so much wants the work of art, the silk:

> Yet I want that silk! I want that silk so desperately that I interfere, as artists must

with the process of life and death. (30)

He takes the silk, unravels it, plaits it, then keeps it in front of him 'as a trophy of life and death' (30). This trophy can be likened to all works of literature, or creations, because creation always entails some form of destruction or death.

As well as the characters constructing each other, the reader brings constructions in the form of expectations, as a way of constructing or destroying the text. Applying the precepts of Rilke is an example of the expectations we might bring to a text. By acknowledging death we have the expectation that the characters will possess greater wisdom or will live more meaningful lives. By setting up the expectation, we predict characters will either demonstrate adherence to this philosophy or will completely negate it.

However, the characters of Turnlung and Talbot do not live up to the expectations of consistency or seem to fit into a Rilkean philosophy of acknowledging death. Our expectations are at once built up and destroyed. Although Turnlung and Talbot seem to think about death and want death to be part of their lives, the text can portray them doing things contrary to these ideals. Although they might see the inherent closeness of life and death, the text can narrate their desire to compartmentalize their knowledge and experiences. Rather than assuming that the characters are aware of our expectations, we must at times see the characters in a far more paradoxical role. In displaying the thoughts of these characters, the narrator's intentions are often much more for the purposes of irony than moralizing about favoured attitudes.

Although the intentions of the narrator does not seem to be to set one character's point of view ahead of the others, some critics have thought this to be so. As with criticism on the other novels considered previously, some set particular characters ahead of others because they think they possess greater wisdom or knowledge.

In his article "Alienation and the Imagery of Death", Patrick Evans outlines what many critics who follow him take to be a given precept in the work of Frame. Here he aligns Frame's work to that of Patrick White, whom he judges to be a 'distinguished writer of novels of the "visionary elite"'.[2] Because of their 'alienation' from general society some characters in his novels apparently have more insight or vision about the world around them. Linked to this 'vision' is the capacity to acknowledge death in life.

Heather Roberts repeats many of Patrick Evans' claims in her article "Two Cultural Attitudes to Death":

> Death has in all of Frame's novels been the motif by which she distinguishes her authentic from her inauthentic characters, her 'visionary elite' from those whose vision extends no further than plates of pikelets. In Daughter Buffalo we get an extended treatment of this theme which has fascinated her for so long. Turnlung is her authentic character.[3]

Although Turnlung might acknowledge death this is not shown by the novel to be the one key to living fully. Rather, two things have to be acknowledged at two different levels. Death has to be acknowledged as part of life, but at the same time, death has to be acknowledged as something unknowable. Rather than simply contemplating death, the unknown and unknowable has to be contemplated in moving towards authenticity.

That death cannot be known is demonstrated when Turnlung and Talbot, who claim to want to get to know death, turn away from it when they have the ideal opportunity to integrate it into their lives. In his death studies, and by meeting Turnlung, Talbot has many opportunities to make up for the negligence he perceives in his family's behaviour when they denied his dying grandfather a place in the family. However, although Talbot might want to help

and acknowledge the elderly and dying, when he gets the ideal chance to act he turns away. When out doing field work he observes a dying man:

> I wanted, as a medical graduate, to feel impelled to act, either by examining the man or by calling the police or an ambulance, but I was shocked to find myself bound by the prevailing mood of the street: Let him die. (80)

Talbot has a similar experience with Turnlung, after he has (sub)consciously recognized him as a personification of his grandfather, and after he has made love with him. He promises that the dying Turnlung can come and live with him, but later backs out claiming that it would not be suitable. He feels afraid because he knows that Turnlung has lost the knowledge he thought he possessed as he approached death, and he thinks Turnlung wants to rob him of his knowing:

> I knew that for Turnlung to be denied clear seeing at the end of his life was like being sentenced to living death, and yet I felt that he had known what would happen and - this thought suddenly removed from me my feelings of safety - he had steered himself toward me, sensing that he could survive by emptying his life into mine. I felt afraid. I understood now why my mother had refused hospitality to my grandfather, though I did not forgive her refusal, and I did not forgive my own when I heard myself making it. (147)

Turnlung has similar experiences of turning against the elderly and dying, even when it appeared to him to be against his own wishes and values. He admits that although he is against relegating death away from life, he encouraged his Aunt Kate to go into a rest home:

> . . .and I, who thought an institution to be the last place in the world for anyone to die, heard myself telling Aunt Kate of an uncle I knew on my mother's side who had spent his last days in an old people's home; how happy he had been. . . .Then when Aunt Kate spoke of dying, I, who imagined I was being well educated in death, insisted she would live to a hundred. (50, 51)

With typical inconsistency, Turnlung wants to obtain knowledge of death, and take part of the experience of dying, while at the same time realizing that this is an impossibility:

> I wanted to enter the community of the dying. If there were tests to be passed I knew neither the questions nor the answers. I could learn nothing. The sources of information - the dead - were inaccessible to me. (28)

However, this inaccessibility does not stop Turnlung and Talbot from looking for knowledge of death. But, rather than thinking about how knowledge of death can add meaning to their lives, they concentrate solely on it with the result of destroying the life they have. Talbot does this with his relationship with Lenore. He prefers the companionship of his dog to that of his girlfriend. However, his relationship with his dog Sally is one that concentrates on death. He mutilates the dog in experiment after experiment until the dog finally dies. Lenore leaves him when Sally finally dies. Unlike Talbot, Lenore realizes that life and death cannot be divided neatly into separate areas of study as Talbot thinks he can do in his Death Studies department. She is aware that any knowledge is incomplete and believing otherwise is merely a result of our own constructions. Lenore symbolically refers to this when she talks about her work at a clinic for sexually

unfinished children:

> 'Tell me', she said, half asleep, 'how can I make those parents understand that some children are born unfinished, that the state of being unfinished is their natural state, that we have to do the finishing? (84)

In many ways Turnlung is waiting for death, obviously, it might seem, as a way to 'finish' his life. He is not fully aware that this anticipated 'finishing' is a construction he has made himself, as no one can be sure what the experience of your own death entails. As explained earlier, Turnlung often turns away when he has the chance of coming closer to another's experiences of death. This has been seen to be because, on one level, death is unknowable. But paradoxically, death though unknowable, also is part of life. Although Turnlung and Talbot claim to want to accept death as part of life, they also show a strong tendency to want to compartmentalize death away from life. Rather than seeing the two as concepts that form part of a union, they want to regard them as two separate entities. This is demonstrated when Turnlung explains the meaning of his name:

> I said that to survive, from the moment we are born, we must be capable of turning against. Before birth we are against air, against breathing, yet we survive to breathe and love the air, we become turncoats, turnskins, turneyes, turnmouths, turnhearts, turnlungs. And having known life we are against death even when all messages from the country of death convince us that our final role must again be that of turncoat, turnheart, turnlung. (27)

The emphasis on turning against, reinforced by Turnlung's name, shows a reluctance for him to see death

as a part of his life. This reluctance is shown in incidents from his early life which he considers to be part of his death education. As a boy of ten he witnesses the 'concentrated adhesiveness of living and dying' (57). One summer day he sees on the street two dogs copulating who were unable to separate from one another. Across the street a linesman also was adhered to something. He had received an electric shock from the line he was fixing and the current which had killed him was preventing him from disconnecting from it. Turnlung, the young boy, wonders, 'Why need loving and dying be such a state of prolonged attachment?' (59)

Talbot also does not fully realize that life and death are part of a union. He wants to be able to study death as an entity in a University faculty rather than considering it as part of a whole. What he does not realize is that his switch from the field of Embryology to Death Studies is not a radical change. To study Embryology he has to examine abortion brains, embryo which have already died. Although on one level he realizes that life and death are never complete or separate, he wishes death could mean complete nothingness. When he considers what death might mean, he thinks:

> I had in mind a pure personless darkness like the original void of the universe. It's a romantic notion I had; it was unscientific, as the genes and chromosomes of the embryo had already been given a generous helping of centuries of humankind and it would seem to be too late to rescue or retrieve the simplicity of nothingness - supposing that nothingness is simple, or supposing that there were indeed room for nothing in the fullness and complexity of the life cycle. (15)

It is our connections with other human beings that prevent life and death from being complete or separate entities. In their own misguided but genuine way, Turnlung and Talbot

do try to form alliances or 'families', but these do not seem to be with others who have the capacity for human memory. The memory of others allows the ones who die to 'live on' by being re-membered. The others who remember are usually in the form of close friends or family. However, in the case of Talbot, he makes a family with his dog Sally. Because of her lack of human language, she has no means of communicating her memory to others.

Turnlung tries desperately as he approaches his death to find someone or thing who will hold his memory so he will live on in remembrance. Again he chooses an entity that does not have the capacity for human language. Turnlung tries to make a family for himself by imagining that Talbot and himself have jointly adopted an inmate of the zoo, Daughter Buffalo. By forming a family Turnlung hopes to stop being an individual by merging himself with others. He wants to become part of 'we' rather than being 'I':

> Talbot Edelman and Daughter Buffalo - they and I -
> have suddenly become We. How good it is to be not-I. (176)

By manipulating language Turnlung feels he can reconstruct his identity or the life he has formerly perceived for himself. Just as being within or without a family is a construction of self to Turnlung, so is his life or death. Although Turnlung wants to experience a 'complete' death, he is at once half aware that the processes of memory and language will prevent this from happening. Talbot reiterates what Turnlung has tried to explain to him on this subject:

> . . .I merely accepted what happened as further evidence of the deceitfulness of death and loss, where dead becomes alive, lost is found, empty is filled, and I think I understood what Turnlung had been trying to tell me in the park, that

> government is not by life and death but by language. (132)

Life and death are governed by language, because language is what we use to describe or construct life and death. As explained previously, we use language to attempt to describe something which cannot be known. The prediscursive reality of death gives a book, or any other form of language, a quality of seeming to circle the issue without getting to the heart of the matter. At the end of Daughter Buffalo, the characters and the readers are still without 'death education'. As language is only an intermediary between the experience of death and the explanation of death, the book can only have limited success at making us more aware of death.

The large amount of intertextuality in the novel reinforces the concept that death is an unknowable thing for which we construct different meanings. There is a strong element of other texts within the novel. Talbot's grandfather reminds the young boy of a 'character strayed out of War and Peace' (9). Turnlung's friend, the school teacher, assumes the position of first person narrator to describe to us the effects of how other texts about death shaped or reflected her grief over the deaths of her two sisters. This intertextuality in a novel concerning death highlights how our perceptions of death are themselves a text. What we think we know about death is just another text about death, which one day may make up part of another text about death.

The telling and retelling involved in this intertextuality is reflected within the novel itself. The poetry which makes up about a quarter of the novel largely serves the function of recounting what has already been told to us previously within the novel in the form of prose. Turnlung, as the narrator, retells his death education, his meeting Talbot, and his experience of adopting his daughter, Daughter Buffalo. This retelling is a demonstration of the processes of memory. Turnlung remembers

his experiences and recreates them in the form of poetry. By creating poetry Turnlung leaves a type of testimony of his life, which goes some way to ensuring that he is not forgotten. By living on in his poetry Turnlung's death is never complete.

The importance of memory in the processes of constructing a meaning for death is given even greater importance in Frame's later novel The Carpathians, which is examined in detail in the next chapter. In Daughter Buffalo, memory serves as a way of attempting to know death. Turnlung and Talbot's reminiscing draws on their memory of the education they have had of death as experienced by other people. Through this remembrance death is never complete, as the memory of the one who has died lives on. However, no amount of memory can completely negate death, or give complete knowledge of what death is. This is because knowing or not knowing death operates on two levels. Death has to be acknowledged to be unknowable, but it also has to be acknowledged to be part of a union with life. Because of this union, death can never be complete, just as knowledge of death can never be complete.

NOTES

[1] Janet Frame, Daughter Buffalo, (1972; Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1986) 112. All subsequent page references in this chapter are to this edition.

[2] Patrick Evans, "Alienation and the Imagery of Death," Meajin 32 (1973): 296.

[3] Heather Roberts, "Two Cultural Attitudes to Death," Landfall 33 (1979): 24.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Carpathians

At the time of writing this thesis, The Carpathians, published in 1988, remains Frame's latest novel. Although it appeared sixteen years after Daughter Buffalo, and is preceded by other novels and her autobiographies, it still holds themes in common with that novel and the others this thesis considers. Death, although examined through the use of different metaphors, remains a major theme.

However, in her article "The Rhetoric of Rejection: Janet Frame's Recent Work", Carole Ferrier states that Frame has worked herself into a 'dead end' by writing the three books The Rainbirds, Intensive Care, and Daughter Buffalo, with the main theme purportedly about death. She sees a development in her work that goes from the descent of characters into madness, to one of physical decay and death. Ferrier posits that this is a much 'gloomier' view because while madness in some ways can be cured, there is no cure for death. Writing in 1978, Ferrier cannot imagine how Frame could further develop the theme of death, after the conclusions that seemed to be reached by her last three books:

> Frame's habit of drawing on characters who are in the process of, or in an advanced state of retreat from their society had in a sense led her into a cul-de-sac from which there is little chance of escape. It would seem that in this cul-de-sac death is the only reality that matters and the life to which it is opposed lacks an equivalent force. . . .She had published almost nothing for the past few years, and one wonders if she is grappling with, or is in fact submerged by, this central problem in her work.[1]

However, Frame continued to produce work after these three novels, and as The Carpathians demonstrates, she has continued to write about death. Rather than writing about death being a block to the creative process of fiction

making, the novel shows us that death and destruction are vital to creation. The process of memory is a large part of the theme of death. Without death, or physical absence of a person or thing, there would be no need to remember. Remembering is done with the help of language, including fictions such as novels. By acknowledging the part destruction plays in creation, the narrator is able to explore the processes of fiction making more fully.

A brief plot summary of the novel could go as follows. The novel focuses on the thoughts and activities of wealthy philanthropist, Mattina Brecon. As her husband, Jake, has suffered from writer's block for thirty years, she travels the world buying real estate and trying to 'get to know' the people in the hope that it will provide material for her husband to write about. The novel describes in detail what is her latest and is to be her last trip away. She goes to Puamahara in New Zealand, lured by the prospect of finding out about the legend of the Memory Flower. There she meets Dinny Wheatstone, the imposter who steals points of view, and whose novel makes up a section of the text. Mattina returns home after the Gravity Star has worked its effects on the residents of Kowhai Street, an event predicted by Dinny. Mattina passes her point of view to Jake when she returns home. After her death, as a result of terminal illness, Jake visits Puamahara himself. The book concludes with the readers being told that Mattina and Jake have been dead since the author, their son John Henry Brecon, was seven years old.

Mattina travels to Puamahara because she is interested in finding out more about the legend of the Memory Flower. This legend is about a young woman who 'released the memory' of the land when she tasted a certain fruit - 'where Eve tasted her and Adam's tomorrow'.[2] After this her main function was to be a story teller, recounting the memory of the land. Eventually this woman vanished, and in her place grew a tree, called the Memory Flower. Death predicates memory, because without death there is physical

existence, therefore no need to remember:

> The Memory Flower always grows from the dead. Where are they, the long dead, the recently dead, the poets, the painters, the toilers, the housekeepers, the murderers, the imposters: all who have held the memory blossom? (15)

By remembering stories as the woman in the legend did, time and distance became distorted. Things that happened in the past, appear to have happened quite recently by being relived through memory. The concept of the Gravity Star is closely linked to this phenomena. The Gravity Star is a scientific finding of a galaxy which is 'relatively close and seven billion light years away'.[3] When the Gravity Star's effects are felt near becomes far and far becomes near. This destruction of the confines of time causes past and present to merge into one. In this way, the Memory Flower has the power to dissolve oppositions which have formerly been perceived, such as the concepts of near and far. In her manuscript, Dinny Wheatstone describes Mattina contemplating the Memory Flower:

> . . .the Memory Flower had merged to banish the painful opposites and contradictions of everyday life. . . .it seemed that lost become found, death became life, all the anguished opposites reverted to their partner in peace yet did not vanish: one united the other; each two were lost and found. (114)

This merging of opposites, especially life and death, reminds us of the Rilkean ideal of viewing life and death as part of a union, rather then perceiving them to be irreconcilable opposites. Towards the end of the novel a poem by Rilke is directly referred to, which indicates that the narrator has his works firmly in mind when exploring concepts such as the Gravity Star and the Memory

Flower. As Jake walks around Puamahara thinking about what he has seen and what Mattina has told him, he muses:

> . . .with Kowhai Street the first place to experience the overturning of the old ways when distance is near and the eastern mountains of Puamahara could be the Carpathians; and weight became lightness; and the trees, as in Rilke's poem, have their roots in the sky. (194)

Frame mentions the influence of Rilke in "An Honest Record", an interview with Elizabeth Alley. When talking about the title of Part Four, 'Housekeepers of Ancient Springtime', she comments:

> 'Housekeepers' is my word, but I was reading a poem of Rilke's, 'The Orchard', and he wrote of ancient springtime.[4]

In her thesis, "Allegory and the Fiction of Janet Frame", Judith Dell Panny's research reveals more specifically what the significance of Rilke's poetry is to The Carpathians:

> The phrase 'housekeepers of ancient springtime' alludes to Rilke's series of poems entitled 'Verger' meaning 'orchard' which are his most positive affirmation that life and tradition endure through art. . . .In its positive philosophy, The Carpathians shares the spirit of the 'Verger' poems.[5]

Life and tradition endure through art because of its function in aiding remembrance. The philosophy is positive because without life enduring through memory, death would be pervasive. Fiction makers, metaphorically referred to as 'housekeepers', sort through old memories when selecting material to write about. In this way they order and keep

new what has happened in the past. Language, which must be used in the processes of fiction making, acts as a type of Memory Flower itself. It is made up of elements that derive from different times and cultures. It is this two-fold use of memory and language which connects fiction closely to concepts such as the Gravity Star. Re-sorting memory distorts time and space in a way similar to the effects of the Gravity Star:

> Poets who live in unimaginable reality have always known of the Gravity Star; now all have been given the fact as an everyday physical truth. (12)

As well as aiding memory, works of fiction and fiction writers have another important connection to the concepts of the Memory Flower and the Gravity Star. As mentioned before, the Gravity Star merges concepts which were once thought of as contradictions or opposites. This includes concepts such as life and death, or creation and destruction. Through the use of language, writers simultaneously create and destroy. Although writing is traditionally thought to be an act of creation, destruction also must be seen as inherent in this. In the Note at the beginning of The Carpathians, we are reminded that all characters in literature are creations on paper rather than actual living persons:

> The characters and happenings in this book are all invented and bear no relation to actual persons living or dead.[6]

As well as the fiction writer not being able to completely 'create' the characters they write about, the processes used in writing potentially have strong destructive elements. Mattina is a type of fiction maker because we are told in the text that she kept notebooks about the people in Kowhai Street. However, while she wishes

to be able to keep these people alive in her memory, she also realizes the potential this has for destruction. To observe something from your own point of view, is to construct meaning for yourself and apply it to the observed. By observing and questioning her 'subjects', the people of Kowhai Street, Mattina is faced with the possibility of inflicting her point of view or prejudgements onto them, therefore destroying what may have existed before observation:

> And now Mattina. . .musing on each of the residents of Kowhai Street, wonders if her questioning might destroy the answer. 'Who are you, really?' (70)

Dinny Wheatstone, the imposter novelist restates this when she is talking to Mattina. Fiction makers can take a dimension away from the ones they write about, and as a result can 'flatten' their subjects:

> But closeness can obliterate; and we novelists end up flattening the characters with ourselves. . . (43)

However, it is not simply through closeness that Dinny Wheatstone realizes she as a novelist can 'flatten' her characters. As an imposter, she can also 'flatten' her characters by taking away their points of view. By occupying different points of view to her own, Dinny can supersede the points of view of the people she writes about.

Dinny has 'leave to occupy all points of view' (44) because she has no single strong point of view of her own, which would prevent her from using others:

> 'Imposturism or imposture comes from the central core of your being because there's nothing else there. Your central being never develops a self; that's not a disadvantage entirely, though you

> do have to fight for your point of view, almost as if you were dead.' (44)

The importance of holding your own point of view is explained in the Note at the beginning of the novel. J. H. B., the persona the narrator assumes as the identifiable author, refers directly to some of the processes he went through to arrive at the work of fiction he has created:

> Writing this, my second novel, I became absorbed not in my power of choice but in the urgency with which each character equated survival with maintaining point of view, indeed with being as point of view.[7]

The Gravity Star potentially has the same power as an imposter in the ability to remove point of view from others. Once the Gravity Star is discovered it is only a matter of time before its effects are felt all over the world, however at first it is only a gradual process. Mattina wakes one night to hear the people of Kowhai Street wailing, then, on going outside, she sees a mysterious rain falling, which contains the remains of lost languages. The residents of the street have been deprived of their language, their memory, their point of view, therefore their lives as they knew them:

> The people of Kowhai Street had experienced the disaster of unbeing, unknowing, that accompanies death and is thought by man to mark the beginning of a new kind of being and thought and language that, in life, is inconceivable, unknowable. . . .They were alive, yet on the other side of the barrier of knowing and being. (129)

Mattina escapes the immediate effects of the Gravity

Star. The next morning she narrowly escapes being taken away by the people with the stretchers by hiding in the garden. Because her point of view is preserved, she is alive. Her point of view has superseded those she has observed, that is the residents of Kowhai Street, therefore she is still alive and they are dead. What appears to influence her survival is her remembrance of New York and other events in her life:

> Remembering and thinking about her life gave Mattina courage to try to discover the effects of the midnight rain in Kowhai Street - her memory having given her temporarily a secure, fearless place to be. (147)

Mattina's memory forms for her an extra dimension which facilitates her survival. However, when deprived of memory, and their language, the people of Kowhai Street cannot continue to exist.

In her article "Memory as Survival in the Global Village", Jeanne Delbaere-Garant hints that who perishes or survives the Gravity Star is a moral judgment the author is giving:

> The two-dimensional cardboard lives of the residents have not prepared them for a new language to replace the old one. Reduced to a pre- or post- linguistic state, they are helpless to counteract the effects of a new galaxy and, wholly deprived of words and of their human nature, they are eventually disposed of and erased from the surface of the earth.[8]

However, in light of this thesis' argument, the narrator is not killing off characters because they are judged to live 'two-dimensional cardboard lives'. Conversely, who dies and who survives the Gravity Star is a result of the narrator who has the power to control

all points of view. Rather than moralizing, the narrator is demonstrating how characters in fiction can supersede other character's points of view, while in turn, the superseding characters are being controlled by the narrator.

Mattina survives the Gravity Star. However, this is not a result of her living a more meaningful life or, in other words, being more authentic. The people who died when the Gravity Star worked its effects had their point of view superseded by Mattina as a result of her observing and writing about them. This is demonstrated to us by one of the few people who survives being the one person who Mattina found difficult to categorize when she is making her notes. In her typescript Dinny Wheatstone describes Mattina's inability to fit Connie Grant into her otherwise neat descriptions of the residents of Kowhai Street:

> Yet Connie Grant's distress clung to her, giving an untidy aspect to her clean collection of facts. (93)

However, Mattina's memory gives her only temporary protection from death. Although she seems to retain her memory, or point of view, as a character in fiction herself she is always vulnerable to another character's point of view superseding her. On her return to New York she is diagnosed for the illness she was suffering from when she was visiting Puamahara. As she is dying from this disease she tells her husband, Jake, all her memories from her trips around the world, including the most recent one to Puamahara.

Mattina had always wished that Jake could feed on her memories and partially take over her point of view as a way of curing his thirty year old writer's block. As she talks to him on her death bed, Mattina notes:

> . . .and now her own being, her self, her point of view which, she noticed, was shifting almost imperceptibly to Jake. . .(165)

When she dies, Mattina's point of view is entirely superseded by Jake's. Jake relives Mattina's experiences by going on a trip to Puamahara as she had requested he did, to see for himself the places and people his memory had possession of.

The novel ends with both Mattina and Jake having their 'actual' existence denied by the intrusion of the 'author'. John Henry Brecon is a character which the narrator has created to fill the role of the writer of The Carpathians. In a note signed by this 'author', he comments:

> And perhaps the town of Puamahara, which I in my turn visited, never existed? Nor did my mother and father in the way they are portrayed, for they died when I was seven years old, so I did not know them. (196)

The 'author' John Henry Brecon appears to be able to supersede all points of view. However, he himself is merely a character whom the narrator is at once describing and manipulating, and whose point of view is stolen. The controlling narrator has the same power as the Gravity Star to work its effects at any time to decide and preside over its subjects' lives and deaths.

NOTES

[1] Carole Ferrier, "The Rhetoric of Rejection: Janet Frame's Recent Work," South Pacific Images, ed. Chris Tiffin (Brisbane: Academy Press, 1978) 202.

[2] Janet Frame, The Carpathians (Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1988) 11. All subsequent page references in this chapter are to this edition.

[3] The Carpathians. This quote comes from a Note which appears before pagination starts.

[4] Janet Frame, interview, "An Honest Record," by Elizabeth Alley, Landfall 45 (1991): 164.

[5] Judith Dell Panny, "Allegory in the Fiction of Janet Frame," diss. Massey U, 1991, 239.

[6] The Carpathians. This quote comes from a Note which appears before pagination starts.

[7] As above.

[8] Jeanne Delbaere-Garant, "Memory as Survival in the Global Village: Janet Frame's The Carpathians," A Shaping of Connections: Commonwealth Literature Studies - Then

and Now: Essays in Honour of A. N. Jeffares, ed.s. Hena Maes Jelinek, Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (Aarhus: Dangaroo Press, 1989) 217.

CONCLUSION

When making a conclusion to this thesis, it is helpful to consider the conclusions of the individual novels which have been examined. The last few pages, or the last few lines, of all five novels this thesis considers, are characterized by the intrusion of a narrator which up till this point we, the readers, have been largely unaware of. This process has relevance to many of the themes this thesis considers.

In Owls Do Cry, the Epilogue seems to determine what becomes of all the characters the novel has described. A voice, distinguished by italics, breaks into the text to amend what has been described. Although the Mill manager's wife reads who is reported to have done what, the italicized voice tells us it was actually done by people with different names. For example, the paper describes a social security clerk who has embezzled money, and his wife who subsequently commits suicide, followed by the intruding narrator who informs us:

> And their names were Albert Crudge and Faye Crudge, though the paper said other names.[1]

In The Rainbirds, a similar process is repeated. In Chapter 35, the last in the novel, the narrator intrudes and speaks directly to the reader, unlike the inconspicuous manner in which the rest of the novel is related:

> It all happened many years ago now but people remember it and will talk of it if you ask them.[2]

The narrator is referring to the story of the Rainbirds which has just been told. By setting the story in the past we are at once reassured that it actually happened, and feel as though the story has taken on a mythical quality. In other words, the intrusion of the narrator causes us to reassess what we thought we knew about the novel.

Intensive Care does not have a separate Epilogue or

chapter in which the narrator appears to materialize. However, the last few lines of the novel alerts us to the character who narrates the third and last Part of the novel. Colin Monk, the person in charge of the Human Delineation Act, reminds us of his presence when he says:

> These notes are at random. I do not know what will happen to me. My wife and children are dead.
>
> I am not a literary man. I just wanted to describe the time of the fires at Waipori City.[3]

By telling us that he is 'not a literary man', the narrator seems to be trying to convince us that it is not a novel we have just read, but a true story.

The intrusion of the narrator in the Epilogue of Daughter Buffalo has the reverse effect of this. Although the rest of the novel leads us to believe that the characters and their travels took place in the form in which they are presented, the Epilogue challenges this interpretation. As the narrator, Turnlung, quotes:

> One of my old friends, a writer five years younger than I, is always pleased to remind me, slyly, that as far as he knows I have never left my native land, 'except in imagination'.[4]

The narratorial intrusion at the end of The Carpathians causes the readers to stretch their imaginations. As explained at the end of Chapter Five, the narrator, whom the reader has been persuaded to forget, re-emerges to explain himself in one short paragraph. John Henry Brecon, the main character's son, tells us his parents are long since dead and the story he tells is a product of his own imagination. In this way he ensures his own existence, and the nonexistence of his parents as they have been portrayed.

The intrusion of the narrator at the conclusion of all five novels works to different effects. However, there

is one thing they all have in common. They cause the readers to re-evaluate what they thought they knew. By drawing attention to themselves, the narrators force the readers to the realization that though they are describing a situation, they hold merely one point of view or perspective on this. They self-consciously relinquish any omniscience that the reader might have credited them with.

As we have seen in the novels, no single character's point of view is favoured by the narrator. Rather their life or death is determined by who is holding the point of view. The same process is repeated in the conclusions to these novels. The narrator holds the point of view, yet we are reminded that this is not an invulnerable position to be in. The narrator still merely holds one point of view or perspective, and therefore can never dictate a full and impartial version that the reader is obliged to believe.

Life and death, as judged by a character or narrator, therefore is very subjective. Rilke's philosophy of viewing life and death as parts of a whole rather than opposites gives us an insight into this process. By acknowledging death as part of life we are able to move towards a more balanced or 'authentic' position, where neither life nor death is dominant or pervasive.

NOTES

[1] Janet Frame, Owls Do Cry (Christchurch: Pegasus, 1957) 209. In the novel this sentence appears in italics.

[2] Janet Frame, The Rainbirds (London: W.H. Allen, 1968) 205.

[3] Janet Frame, Intensive Care (1970; Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1987) 266.

[4] Janet Frame, Daughter Buffalo (1972; Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1986) 209.

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