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Janet Frame: Fiction, Reality, and the In-between

Abstract:
This article attempts to unveil some of the mysteries and controversies surrounding the public image of Janet Frame. It looks closely at Frame's posthumously published autobiographical novel *Towards Another Summer* and her autobiography, both of which portray a female writer as a protagonist, modelled on the author. It explores the relationships between the author and her fictional proxies in connection with Frame's idea of personality and her understanding of truth and reality, as expressed in interviews, autobiography, and fiction.

It is normally expected that nonfiction writing be aligned with real facts, characters, and life events, while the world of imagination is more likely to be associated with fiction. The article, however, demonstrates that in Frame's case, the distinction between fiction and reality is impossible and unhelpful. The absence of clear boundaries between facts and imagination becomes a characteristic feature of both the author's fiction and autobiography and is a deliberate technique that she uses to convey her ideas on the subjectivity of reality. Generating both interest and confusion, this feature of Frame's writing feeds the aura of mysticism around her, adding to the development of her public image that may have very little to do with her private self.

Key Words: genre, truth, reality, identity, boundaries

In 2014, following the posthumous publication of Janet Frame's novel *In the Memorial Room*, C.K. Stead wrote a review in which he highlighted the resemblance between the book's fictional characters and real people—a resemblance that he found biased and offensive. Taking a strictly autobiographical perspective, he treated the novel as a *roman-à-clef*, claiming parts of it as 'a literal recounting of Frame's experience' and 'a vehicle for her personal grumbles and deeper anxieties' (p.173). Besides the similarity with factual events and circumstances, Stead found it 'difficult to see [. . .] quite as "fiction"', the protagonist's philosophical speculations too closely resembling 'half-serious self-inspection by Frame in her own person' (p.174). Admitting that mockery and the unflattering portrayal of recognised people alone cannot be enough to condemn the novel, he claimed the work was 'unsatisfactorily incomplete' on grounds of its lack of shape and uncertainty of direction. Lastly, at the end of the review, Stead expressed his doubt about whether Frame herself would have wanted the novel published (p.178).[1]

The autobiographical nature of Frame's work intrigues many of her readers who, like Stead, become conscious of the extent to which the author draws on her life experiences. Ironically, as a writer of autobiographical fiction himself, Stead was aware of the complexities of the relationship between fiction and reality. When asked how much the characters in his autobiographical novel *All Visitors Ashore* took after real people, he replied:

> Of course it is true that, to some extent, I drew on Janet Frame for Skyways and I drew on Frank Sargeson for Melior Fabro but they became fictional characters and went their own way in the novel. (cited in Gabrielle 2015, p.17)

Like Stead, Frame too insisted she only used real stories and people as a starting point for her novels. In her autobiography, she claimed she felt alarmed that her fiction was perceived as autobiographical:

> Pictures of great treasure in the midst of sadness and waste haunted me and I began to think, in fiction, of a childhood, home life, hospital life, using people known to me as a base for the main characters, and inventing minor characters [. . .] later when the book was published, I was alarmed to find that it [Owls Do Cry] was believed to be autobiographical . . . (1991, p.148)

As most of Frame's other comments on autobiographical truth, a statement like this cannot be fully trusted. Stead and Frame are not the only writers who blur imagination and reality in their fiction. In her writing, Frame complicates a common and already complex issue, which confounds even a critic as sophisticated as Stead.

This article discusses Frame's public image as a reclusive and 'exceptional' figure. It focuses on Frame's novel *Towards Another Summer* and her autobiographical trilogy, *To the Is-Land* (published in 1982), *An Angel at My Table* (1984), and *The Envoy from Mirror City* (1985). The novel and autobiographies engage actively with the ideas of truth and reality, identity and belonging. They portray a female writer as a protagonist, who is modelled after the author and refer to numerous analogous events from Frame's childhood in New Zealand (*To the Is-Land*) and her life as a writer in London (*The Envoy from Mirror City*). This article explores the relationships between the author and her fictional proxies in connection with Frame's idea of personality, as presented in her interviews, autobiography, and fiction. It looks at how differences in narration, including the temporal aspect of narration, affect the image and reliability of the protagonist in the novel and the autobiographies. It argues that fiction

1. Frame never offered In the Memorial Room for publication. It was published by Pamela Gordon, the author's niece, in 2013.

and reality inform one another in Frame's writing, and that the origins of this feature stem from the author's views on truth as a blend of facts and imagination. It demonstrates how the consistency of Frame's ideas on truth and reality across different time periods and genres lays the groundwork for the formation of her public persona, which might influence the reader's perception of her fictional works.

Frame was famously unwilling to give interviews or public speeches. Her characteristic avoidance of publicity and social situations compounded a perception of her as an unreal and mystical figure. She was seen as 'New Zealand's most reclusive author' (Smellie 2000, p.80) who 'expressly prefers seclusion to self-promotion' (Rivers 2001, p.33). Patrick Evans, Frame's first literary biographer, confessed that through all the years that he had been writing about her, he had hardly got to know the 'real', authentic Frame (1993, p.16). Frame's refusal of publicity suggests the common belief that the literary critic acts as a stalker, persecuting the author with unwelcome and obsessive attention. In her letter to Evans, Frame accused him of being 'one of the Porlock people' (King 2000, p.419), referring to the unwanted visitor who interrupted Samuel Taylor Coleridge as he was writing his poem 'Kubla Khan'. It is possible that Evans's early criticism on Frame was one of many contributing factors to her withdrawal from public life.

Another work of nonfiction that vastly contributes to the myth of Frame's solitary disposition is Michael King's biography of her *Wrestling with the Angel* (2000), which heavily relied on Frame's autobiography. The book was well received and praised as an 'impressively detailed research [that] closely tracks Frame's life' (Rivers 2001, p.33). According to Andrew Dean, King's reading of Frame was conducted through a strictly literal model as if her autobiography was a historical document, 'one subject not to literary analysis, but to the ordinary problems of historical exegesis' (2011, p.53). Harry Ricketts notes that Frame only agreed to collaborate with King on the condition that there would be neither analysis of her writing nor quotes adopted verbatim from her interviews with him. Thus, Ricketts refers to King as a 'framed' biographer, 'writing with his subject at his shoulder, and able at any point to produce the red pencil. Hardly ideal' (2001, p.1653). The idea of the partiality of King's text further bolsters Frame's enigmatic persona.

Encouraged by notorious literary critics, like Evans and King, the image of Frame as a recluse has boosted her celebrity status significantly. Not everyone, however, has been satisfied with the widespread public 'version' of Frame. In an interview, the author's niece Pamela Gordon criticises Evans' portrayal of Frame as 'someone who was gifted in a feral mad way', insisting instead that Frame's work was 'a product of her discipline, ambition and education' and that she was 'a self-directed, conscious artist' (Gates 2013). The fact that Frame did not want to be a national author does not mean that she was not well-travelled, connected and supported by friends and family.

Jane Campion's movie *An Angel at My Table*, a 1990 film adaptation of Frame's autobiography contributes to Frame's public image. Originally produced as a television mini-series, the film has won multiple local and international awards and introduced Frame's writing to a broader audience. In her article, Alexis Brown explores what happens when an autobiography is taken up by film. She argues that from a project of faithful adaptation, the movie has become 'an unconscious projection of Campion's own emotional landscape', a 'hybrid existence of both identities, melded into an apparent unity in the filmic personage of Frame' (2016, p.111). Like all previous attempts to 'capture', interpret Frame, whether through literary criticism or historical enquiry, the cinematic adaptation of Frame's text extended, distorted, and reshaped the image of the author, offering another 'version' of her.

As a writer, Frame was never interested in ostensibly 'pure' genres of nonfiction, such as an interview or a critical essay, which require a greater degree of straightforwardness, clarity, and comprehensibility. Notably, of all genres of nonfiction, she chose the one that

is closest to fiction to address a wider audience. On the one hand, in proposing to tell the story of a 'real' person, autobiography claims to be factually 'true'. On the other hand, being largely retrospective, autobiography cannot avoid being creative, imaginative, and blurring the borderlines of the genre. Refusing to follow the conventions of autobiographical writing, Frame allowed herself a higher degree of freedom, playfulness, vagueness, and irony by merging aspects of the 'real' and the 'imaginary'. Not only did Frame deliberately avoid genres that might have potentially restricted her flexibility, she continued mixing facts and her imagination in both her 'nonfictional' autobiography and her 'fiction' novels to the extent that the distinction between the two no longer seemed relevant.

Towards Another Summer (1963) was not offered for publication during Frame's lifetime. In the acknowledgement section of this posthumous publication, Pamela Gordon, Frame's literary executor and niece, pays tribute to her fellow board members of the Janet Frame Literary Trust for 'sharing the responsibility for the decision to offer this manuscript for publication' (2007, p.205). She notes that the novel was 'too personal' to publish during the author's lifetime. Likewise, in his biography of Frame, King refers to the text as 'embarrassingly personal' (2000, p.245). The gap of forty-four years between the time that the novel was written and introduced to the public has a major impact on its perception. In 1963, Frame was at the beginning of her writing career, and was unknown to a wider audience. By 2007, three years after the author's death, she had become a celebrity, whose life story was familiar to the public.

Following King, most reviewers of *Towards Another Summer* took autobiographical perspective on the novel. For instance, Catherine Taylor remarks that the book 'feels personal to [her] too, although [she] never knew or met Frame' (2015). Rachel Cooke describes the novel as 'a piercing, poetic revelation', possessing a 'visceral honesty all of its own' (2008). Typically, reviewers point out the likeness between the protagonist and the author, reading the novel as a very personal story about loneliness, which has corresponded well with the public image of Frame as a recluse. A few critics approached the text as a work of fiction. Kim Worthington suggests that the novel be regarded as 'a self-deprecating comedy of manners, the tale of a social misfit' as well as 'a display and celebration of creative prowess' (2008, p.7). Likewise, omitting any assumptions about the author's life in his analysis, Marc Delrez examines the text through its use of embarrassment 'as a decentring strategy allowing [it] to work towards an exposure of so-called social normality' (2015, p.579).

Towards Another Summer belongs to the category of texts identified by Dorrit Cohn as 'indecisive' or 'intermediate' in terms of genre. The existence of such narratives, however, does not mean they cannot be classified either as fiction or nonfiction. In *The Distinction of Fiction* (1999), Cohn contests popular poststructuralist views that *all* narratives are fictional. She argues that a fictional narrative 'achieves something entirely alien to historical narrative' (p.9) and that it is 'unique in its potential for crafting a self-enclosed universe' (p.i). This article adopts Cohn's understanding of fiction in its constrained sense of a non-referential narrative rather than a narrative in general. Despite the widespread perception of *Towards Another Summer* as a 'true' story, the text remains a work of fiction since its speaker does not identify with the author in whose name the text was published.

While the question of whether and to what extent *Towards Another Summer* can be seen as 'personal' remains to be discussed, Frame's autobiography was both intended to be and received as personal, as was clearly suggested by its genre. Its first volume, *To the Is-Land*, was first published in the USA in 1982, close to the end of the author's writing career. According to King, the publication was extremely successful, turning Frame from 'unrecognised and unhonoured by the community at large [...] [to] a nationally known figure, a best-selling author and holder of one of the country's [USA] highest civic awards' (2000, p.451). In New Zealand, the

sales of the book were unpredictably brisk and reviewers' responses, in general, were highly positive. In the *New Zealand Listener*, Lydia Wevers wrote:

> As her fiction is the work of a rare imagination, so her autobiography is a work of rare intelligence [. . .] many literary autobiographies concentrate on the development of a refined sensibility and an illustrious group of friends at the cost of a sense of the real life from which talent has drawn its material. But Janet Frame [. . .] recalls her past selves with such honesty that it seems to illuminate one's own life. (cited in King 2000, p.461)

While seeing imagination as an exceptional quality in Frame's fiction, Wevers praised the author's autobiography for her 'sense of real life' and 'honesty'. Likewise, in her conversation with Frame, Elizabeth Alley highlighted the writer's 'honesty' by giving the interview the title 'An Honest Record'. Although this event was a rare occasion of Frame speaking publicly about her writing, which the title supposedly suggests, the interview came across as inconsistent and contradictory. On the one hand, Frame insisted that she was 'always in fiction mode', looking at everything 'from the point of view of fiction' (Frame to Alley 1991, p.161). On the other hand, she repeatedly claimed her autobiography was a 'true' story, 'my story', 'ordinary me without fiction or characters' (p.158). By claiming her autobiography was a 'true'—as opposed to 'untrue'—story about her 'real' self, Frame simultaneously reaffirms the autobiographical nature of most of her fiction, as her autobiographies frequently recall episodes from her earlier novels. *In Towards Another Summer*, although the characters have fictional names, most of the places (Fifty-Six Eden Street, Oamaru, for example) correspond with place names in the autobiographies. The families of a young female protagonist depicted in *Owls Do Cry*, *Towards Another Summer*, and *To the Is-Land* have much in common, including the character of an epileptic brother, the event of an elder sister's death, and the internment of the protagonist in a mental hospital.

Janet Frame, the autobiographical character, shares many characteristics and views with her fictional protagonists, such as Grace. Frame, as an actual writer, is and is not each of her fictional proxies. Most of her protagonists reveal a part of her but never the whole 'real' Frame. While a fictional character is locked within the story and limited, the identity of any living person is never fixed. However, fictional characters surpass the author in a way that they can further explore hidden perspectives and unrealised possibilities of a real person by having a range of experiences that she cannot possess. As Frame puts it in her interview, the difference between herself and her character Greta in *The Adaptable Man* is that she—the actual writer—is only interested in gardening, as she is interested in everything, while the character she creates is, in fact, an intense gardener (Frame to Alley 1991, p.158). By half self-replicating and half-inventing her fictional characters, the writer lives through various experiences and breaks the limitations of one single personality. The process of writing fiction broadens and blurs one's personality.

While opinions of Frame's characters are not necessarily her own, there is a consistency of her ideas on truth, reality, and identity in her interviews, autobiographies, and fiction. This reveals the blurring of different genres in her works. In her interview, Frame emphasises how important it was for her to write the 'true' story of her life in her autobiography (Frame to Alley 1991, p.158). A similar longing for truth and authenticity is shared by her protagonists Janet and Grace. In *The Envoy from Mirror City*, Janet identifies herself as the person who is 'always searching for the "truth"' (Frame 1985, p.72). Likewise, in *Towards Another Summer*, Grace is a 'passionate seeker for Truth' who 'would have the world without and the world within stripped of all deceit [. . .] carefully removing deceit layer by layer' (Frame 2007, p.142). Whether in

Frame's interviews, autobiographies, or fiction, it is important not to anchor oneself to the literal meaning of truth. To Frame, truth is a complex philosophical concept, which has less connection with fact or reality:

> Why should she not speak the truth at least once in her life? The need to tell Phillip and Anne, to stand in the big untidy kitchen and say, aloud, I saw a woman change to a bird, was so desperate that Grace did not know how she would be able to prevent herself from telling. (2007, p.104)

In her early literary career, Frame said that she found it impossible to reconcile 'this' and 'that' world, and so she had to choose 'that' world (1965, p.31). By 'that' world she implies the world of bedtime stories, songs and tales she grew up with, the 'pocket' of poetry where words are 'instruments of magic', while 'this' world is the world of 'depression and wealth' (1965, p. 26-27). Over time, the amalgamation of the two worlds, reality and imagination, becomes a characteristic feature of her writing. She no longer needs to choose one world over another, since the two worlds do not oppose each other but are mutually inclusive.

Throughout *Towards Another Summer*, Grace claims to be 'a migratory bird, not a human being' (2007, p. 23), implying that one could be anything and that the notion of personality is fluid, and its borders are blurred. Her definition of identity as a set of daily habits is nothing but ironic:

> Her eyes were shining, her face was flushed. Oh how wonderful to possess an identifying characteristic! Late, early, tidy, untidy, I'm fearfully slow, I'm always ready on time, I'm so good with children . . . (Frame 2007, p.47)

Grace seems excluded from society because she does not possess a sense of belonging and a stable self-awareness. And yet, for her, what the reader might think of as defining characteristics are actually enclosures. While longing to belong and have an identity of her own, Grace continuously rejects the notion of fixed identity comprised of unchanged characteristics.

The autobiographical Janet and the fictional Grace are not exactly the same person. While neither of them can stand in place of the actual writer, the differences in the way their stories are narrated affect the image and credibility of each protagonist. *Towards Another Summer* is seemingly written in an objective limited third-person point of view, voiced by a covert narrator. This impression, however, is rather misleading. Even though the narrative voice belongs to a third-person narrator, the entire story is presented from Grace's perspective. Two other characters, the journalist Peter Thirkettle and his wife Anne, at whose place Grace stays for a weekend, are portrayed exclusively through Grace's perspective. The main character's inner conversation, thoughts, and memories dominate the text, and the reader is hardly able to form an independent opinion of the Thirkettle family through their brief remarks in conversation with the protagonist. For example, when Phillip suggests that after the kids grow up, Anne should return to teaching so that he can devote himself to writing, the only response from Anne that is available to the reader is '[w]e'll see about that', which is barely enough to form any definite conclusion about the character's feelings and views on the topic. Meanwhile, it is Grace's thoughts and assumptions in response to Peter's statement that take about half of a page: 'Grace felt alarmed and afraid at his words [. . .] I don't want to return to teaching, she thought, trying to subdue her panic. I can't.' (Frame 2007, p.126). For a time, Grace becomes Anne; hence, her emotional response to Phillip's remark is as follows: 'Phillip had been speaking to

Anne. Yet Grace had been Anne. It was Grace whom Phillip addressed now' (Frame 2007, p.127). The secondary characters' inner worlds remain inaccessible to the reader. The narrator's portrayal of the couple's life tells the reader more about Grace than them.

In the middle of the story, Grace's monologues become longer and more frequent, taking up to a few pages or even a whole chapter (Chapter 19, for instance) with omitted quotation marks. This omission creates confusion for the reader to know who is speaking. For example, it might be hard to say whether 'she', suddenly emerging in the middle of Grace's monologue, refers to Grace or whether Grace talks about herself in the third person:

> I like reading. Once the words are on the page they never change; when you open the book the print never falls out. She's learning to read; she's in the primers; she's going to be a school-teacher when she grows up; she goes to Wyndham District High School . . . (Frame 2007, p.154)

Grace's several long internal monologues reveal her desire to take control of her personal story. Yet, the author prefers not to grant her protagonist the authority to narrate, watering down her voice with the voice of a subjective and unreliable narrator. The fact that the narrator entirely shares the protagonist's point of view reduces the narrator's role to a mere formality. By using a third-person narrator to tell Grace's story, Frame draws a line between herself and the protagonist as if to suggest that 'Grace is not quite me'. Meanwhile, the protagonist's active presence increases her reliability.

The narrative techniques that Frame uses in her autobiographies are essentially antithetical to those which are used in *Towards Another Summer*. The first-person narration gives autobiographical Janet Frame the authority and control that fictional Grace lacks. Most critics have interpreted Frame's formal attempt to create an autobiographical self as her desire to gain control of her public image. The image of Frame as a feminist and public intellectual mostly derives from her autobiographies, where she takes the active position of a privileged interpreter in contrast to the more passive, third-person narration employed in her fiction. Both Susan Ash (1993, p.30) and Gina Mercer have viewed Frame's shift towards autobiographical narration as a conscious act that unravels the myths surrounding the author's persona, which were constructed by male biographers and critics. The attempt at creating an autobiographical self has been seen by Mercer as particularly successful due to the seemingly simple and accessible format of autobiography (1994, p.225).

The protagonist and the narrator of the autobiographies, who are formally the same person—Janet Frame—become two distinct characters: '[w]riting now, I am impatient with my student self that was so unformed, ungrownup, so cruelly innocent' (Frame 1991, p.25). The narrator is the grown-up successful writer Janet Frame recalling her younger self—Janet the protagonist. The past tense reduces the spontaneity and immediacy of the character's experience in the past. The author admits the impossibility of recalling a authentic past experience :

> Many of my student days and experiences are now sealed from me by that substance released with the life of each moment or each moment's capture of our life. I remember and can relive my feelings but there is now a thirst for reason in what had seemed to be so inevitable. (Frame 1991, p.25)

The perspectives of the protagonist and the narrator may not always be in agreement when this happens; the older Frame 'refines' the story of her younger self. For example, the use of brackets sometimes facilitates this refinement:

> The ignorance of my parents infuriated me. They knew nothing of Sigmund Freud, of The Golden Bough, of T. S. Eliot. (I forgot, conveniently, that at the beginning of the year my knowledge of Freud, The Golden Bough, T. S. Eliot, was limited.) (Frame 1991, p.27)

There is, of course, a profound difference between how the protagonist felt or thought in the past and how, at the time of narration, the narrator thinks she previously felt and thought. In the autobiography, the narrator's point of view dominates while the protagonist's role remains submissive.

The choice of genre imposes certain constraints on the relationships between the protagonist and narrator. According to Ash, while in her fiction Frame avoids encasing her characters in any authorial consciousness; in the autobiographies, she sets up a relation of transgredience (being outside of the other) between the narrator and the narratee:

> The writing-I grants itself the privilege of all-encompassing knowledge of the self it creates through art. And from this vantage point, naturally, it can claim authority to finish off, to complete, that self. (1993, p.34)

The completed submissive image of the protagonist in the autobiographies has a contrast to the image of Grace as being present and disobedient, free to express herself and 'be herself':

> I was four. We explored under the house and found it 'good' [. . .] Life in Wyndham was full of excitement! [. . .] Oh my mother was so brave and so swift! [. . .] You see it was my father who drove the train . . . (Frame 2007, p.75-77)
> Mother and Father, then. Mother leaving school early to become a dental nurse [. . .] Mother, a rememberer and talker [. . .] Mother, fond of poetry and reading [. . .] Father, known as "Dad" . . . (Frame 2000, p.14-15)

In *Towards Another Summer*, Frame's emphasis on the consciousness of her protagonist, the extensive use of monologues with minimum narratorial comments and omitted quotation marks create a kind of character who is real and believable. In comparison with Grace's childhood stories, narrated in her own voice with the use of exclamation marks and informal language, the memories of Janet Frame in the autobiography come across as less immediate, more orderly, and even-tempered.

By the end of the first volume of the autobiography, there is a short chapter called 'Imagination', which begins with a passage where the narrator contemplates the nature of time, memory, and writing:

> Where in my earlier years time had been horizontal, progressive, day after day, year after year, with memories being a true personal history known by dates and specific years, or vertical, with events stacked one upon the other, 'sacks on the mill and more on still', the adolescent time now became a whirlpool, and so the memories do not arrange themselves to be observed and written about, they whirl, propelled by a force beneath, with different memories rising to the surface at different times and thus denying the existence of a 'pure' autobiography and confirming, for each moment, a separate story accumulating to a million stories, all different and with some memories forever staying beneath the surface. (Frame 2000, p.178)

The two concepts of time are seen here as characteristics of different stages in life: time is linear during childhood and a whirlpool during adolescence. Time is also linked to literary genres. Autobiography demands horizontal, progressive time, while fiction can be used to describe a whirl of memories. The notion of 'a separate story accumulating to a million stories' can be connected with an important metaphor of a 'mirror city', which appears later in the third volume. On the one hand, Frame challenges the idea of a 'pure' autobiography, suggesting that her autobiography cannot belong to this category. On the other hand, she hints at the artificiality of her autobiography, and present events in a chronological order: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

In *Towards Another Summer*, memories of childhood intervene into the protagonist's present outside a particular order. These are unwanted 'dangerous memories' which 'her past life keep[s] erupting and spilling on her' (Frame, 2007, p.98). For instance, fear-filled childhood memories of industrial school, where Grace's father used to threaten to send her sister Isy, overcome her when she suddenly spots a building with the same name on a map of Winchley (2007, p.98). Overwhelmed by images from the past, Grace starts walking towards Winchley Industrial School. On her way, she continues to recall her past school years, family conversations, her sister Isy and her death. Her journey is both physical and spiritual.
The example of Winchey Industrial School also demonstrates Frame's view on the nature of truth and reality. The industrial school in Winchley is real in the sense that, according to the map, it exists as a place in the neighbourhood. Yet, for Grace, it is only a replica, a shadow reminding her of the 'real' industrial school from her childhood and her past trauma and fears. The school has no particular significance for the protagonist. These fears constitute what is 'real' for the protagonist. They belong to the inner reality with only a partial, relative connection to the outer world of objects. Notably, Grace's attempt to find the industrial school in Winchly ends up being unsuccessful. Unlike the map that she follows in the book, there is no industrial school in the town, meaning that the past is gone, the 'real' destination that Grace thought she was approaching can never be reached.

Narrative and time in Frame's autobiography are different from those in her fiction. Yet, from time to time, in her autobiographies, Frame returns to familiar 'fiction' devices, giving way to the symbolic—as opposed to realistic—mode to convey her thoughts. The analogous moments between *Towards Another Summer* and the autobiographies demonstrate the consistency of the author's ideas of truth and reality across different genres and time periods, verifying her words that she is 'always in fiction mode' (Frame to Alley 1991, p.161). This consistency sets up a foundation for the formation of the curiously public private author that we associate with Frame. It is a celebrity figure whose face is easily recognised by people who may have never read her.

Stead's assessment of Frame's *In the Memorial Room* could be accurately extended to all her works. Indeed, many of Frame's characters take after real people; the philosophical speculations of fictional protagonists and the writer, based on her ostensible nonfiction, tend to closely resemble each other. Although Stead sees this tendency as particularly problematic in Frame's *In the Memorial Room*, the similarities are hardly exclusive to any of Frame's texts. Frame understands the value of multiple personas and uses them throughout her writing to blend autobiography and fiction. Like her character Grace, she is 'a migratory bird, not a human being' (2007, p. 23). She is always in between, in a state of transition, expanding boundaries of identity and belonging. Any attempt to interpret, categorise, find the 'real' Frame only creates another 'version' of her. There is a wider compulsion, throughout Frame's writing, to fly beyond, evade or confound formal categories which corresponds to her views on truth, reality, and the role of the imagination as an 'in-between'.

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